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Notes on Hebrews (Part 1) (Jan 1967)

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In any studies of the Epistle to the Hebrews it is imperative that we first look at the background of the Epistle and attempt to determine various facts concerning it. This becomes very difficult for the author is more concerned about the content of his message than he is about subservient details, such as his own name or the name of the church to which he was writing. We shall deal briefly with the following questions: When was it written? To whom was it written? From where was it written? By whom was it written? Why was it written?

If these questions are satisfactorily dealt with we will then be in a better position to dig for the gold in this mine of divine truth.

When Was it Written

There are numerous references to Judaism with its still-existing ritual which make it improbable that it was written after A.D. 70 when Jerusalem was destroyed by Titus. The writer reminds his readers of great persecution endured in the past (10:32). Some commentators feel that this is perhaps a reference to the martyrdom of James the Just in A.D. 62.

We also know that Timothy had just been set at liberty (13:23), which probably took place just after the martyrdom of Paul in A.D. 67 or 68. Summing up, it would appear that the Epistle was written between the

years of A.D. 62 and 70 and more specifically toward the latter part of A.D. 68.

To Whom Was It Written

There are several clues as to the recipients of the letter. We know they were Jews for the writer speaks as if the heathen world was nonexistent. He writes as if the readers were living in the very shadow of the temple service. They were a long-established church (5:12), and had suffered persecution in the past. It would seem that the church most likely to receive such a letter would be the church at Jerusalem.

From Where Was it Written

There is really only one clue as to the location of the writer at the time of writing the Epistle. We read, “They of Italy salute you” (13:24). From this we may gather that the writer was in Italy, probably Rome, at the time.

By Whom Was it Written

This question has been asked by every generation since the Epistle was written. What do we know about him?

1. He was a Jew; he was well acquainted with Jewish life and thought.

2. He was a friend of Timothy (13:23).

3. He was not an apostle, at least not one of the twelve, but classifies himself as one who was taught by the apostles (2:3).

4. The Greek, we are told, is very rhetorical and polished. This would indicate that the writer was eloquent and well educated.

5. He was known to his readers and speaks with authority.

Paul seems to be excluded by (c) and (d) above. Scholars in the Greek language seem to agree that the greek in Hebrews is more polished than that of any of Paul's writings.

Luke is excluded, for in all probability he was a Gentile doctor.

If we were asked to make a choice we would lean very strongly to Apollos. His qualifications are outlined in Acts 18:24. He was an eloquent man and mighty in the Scriptures. We learn in verse 28 that he mightily convinced the Jews. Paul admits in 1 Corinthians 3 that the teachings of Apollos were linked to his own, "I planted, Apollos watered." This appears to be just the relationship that exists between Paul's writings and the Epistle to the Hebrews. Dean Farrar states that the Epistle was written either by Apollos or by someone who is to us entirely unknown. It must be noted, however, that the writer in this treatise is extolling the matchless name of the Lord Jesus Christ, for compared to all in Heaven (the angels) or in earth (the prophets) His is "the more excellent Name" (1:4). In the light of this all earthly names fade into nothing in the beauty of that Name which is above every name.

Why Was It Written

There are many reasons why the writer felt it necessary to write this letter. We shall name just a few: (a) Some time had elapsed since their conversion (5:12). (b) Some of their teachers and leaders had died (13:7). (c) They had been subjected to fierce persecution (10:31-34). (d)

They were concerned about the delay in the Lord's coming (10:36-37). (e) They were sluggish in spiritual intelligence and service (5:12, 6:12, 12:12). (f) There had been a dimming of the brightness of their early faith (10:32). (g) There was a tendency to listen to new doctrine (13:9, 17). (h) There was a neglect of collective worship and a tone of spurious independence against their leaders (10:25, 13:7, 17, 24).

Would it not seem that these dangers which confronted the early Christians are inherent in the Church today? The writer prescribes the antidote in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. In reading through the Epistle one feels like the three disciples who ascended the holy mount, when we reach the summit in chapter 13 we see "no man save Jesus only." Our separation is unto Him in all the glories of Godhood and humanity (13:13). The Epistle, then, begins with the Church admiring the glories of the Son of God and ends with that same Church, outside the camp, pledging allegiance to the same Saviour and offering the sacrifice of praise to God continually.

"What think ye of Christ is the test to try both your state and your scheme.

You cannot be right in the rest unless you think rightly of Him."

Notes on Hebrews (Part 2) (Feb 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 2, Feb 1967.

The key phrase of the Epistle to the Hebrews is found in the words, “So much better” (Chap. 1:4). The Epistle outlines the spiritual significance and yet the inadequacy of the Old Testament covenant, and shows the superiority of its fulfilment in the Lord Jesus Christ.

This divine treatise, for such it is, may be logically divided into four distinct sections: the excellency of His person (Chaps. 1-4), the establishment of His priesthood (Chaps. 5-8), the evidence of His propitiation (Chaps. 9-10), and the enrichment of His pathway (Chaps. 11-13).

It is an interesting observation that the Lord Jesus is seen in each of these sections as being seated. In the first (1:3), He sits down as Saviour in the dignity of His person after making purification for sin. In the second (8:1), He sits down as Priest in the dignity of His office after He experiences the pathway by which He leads His people home. In the third (10:12), He sits down as Victor in all the dignity of accomplished redemption after satisfying the claims of justice by His death on the cross. In the fourth (12:2), He sits down as the Pattern in all the dignity and beauty of perfect humanity.

The positions in which Christ sat down are significant. In Chapter 1:3, He sat down “on the right hand of the Majesty on High.” In His humiliation He was surrounded by the defilement of sin, yet, even in death remained undefiled. In His exaltation; He, therefore, is associated with the Majesty on High, and in this we see His

competence. In chapter 8:1, He sits down “on the right hand of God.” As Priest He is able to touch the sceptre on our behalf. Here we see His compassion. In chapter 10:12, “He sits down on the right hand of the Throne of the Majesty in the heavens.” This becomes the place of honour and distinction because of His victory on the cross. We rejoice to see the completion of His work. In chapter 12:2, He sits down “on the right hand of the Throne of God.” The throne is suggestive of grace. As the Author and Finisher of faith He has reached the goal and now dispenses mercy and grace to His own in order that they follow the path He has trod. Here we see His contribution to all our needs.

Chapter One

In verse one we have the glory of the Old Testament prophet; and in verses 4-6, we have the glory of the angels. Just as the stars fade before the glory of the rising sun, so does the glory of the prophet and the angel before the sevenfold glory of the Eternal Son (Vs. 2-3).

Verse one reveals the expressed glory of the Everlasting Word. As the Word, the Lord Jesus made the inaudible God audible. As the Light, He made the invisible God visible. As the Word we hear through Him the voice of God, and as the Light we see through Him the character of God. As the Alpha and Omega He is the sum total of divine communication to man. This verse reveals His voice “as the sound of many waters.” As the rivulets run down the mountains to unite in the harmony of a placid lake, so the voices of the prophets unite in the harmony of the voice of the Son of God.

Having created the worlds and purchased the inheritance, Christ now has the right to administer these. The word “heir” is used three times in the Epistle to the Hebrews (1:2, 6:17, 11:7). In the first, we see the Guarantor; in the second, the guarantee of the inheritance; and in the third, we have the gateway by faith to the inheritance.

“He made the worlds.” There are four words for “world” in the Hebrews: “Aiones,” the eternal ages (1:2), the same word as “ever and ever” (1:8); “kosmos,” the material world (10:5), “oukoumene,” the inhabited world (1:6); “ge”, the physical world (1:10).

Let us now look at the essential glory of the Eternal Son. In verse 3, we have the display of His glory, the description of His person, and the dimensions of His power.

The brightness or effulgence of His glory is an unusual statement, the word brightness being used only here in the New Testament. It means not only reflection but independent existence. It is the manifestation of a glory that essentially belongs to the Godhead.

Christ was “the express image of His person” (Lit, the stamp of His essence). The word translated stamp or image here actually is the Greek word for character. It is only used here in the New Testament although it is found in the writings of Philo. He uses it to describe man as a coin stamped with the being and type of God. The stamp of God’s essence was inherent in Christ. In a much lesser degree man was made in the image of God. He was created to reflect the moral, rational and regal image of God in the Universe. That image has been

defaced by sin, but will be restored in all who will share in the fruits of redemption.

His power holds the Universe together: “Upholding all things by the word of His power,” or better, “Maintaining all things by the utterance of His dynamics.” Maintaining implies sustaining as well as movement and deals with all changes and transformation since time began. “Upholding” is the same word as in Mark 2:3-4, where they brought the palsyed to Christ. It is used seven times in John 15 concerning fruit-bearing. The concept in the Hebrew passage is that of the absolute and complete dependence of the Universe on Christ.

His excelling glory now claims our attention in verses 4-6. Here His superiority over the angels is threefold: in name (V. 4), in nature (V. 5), and in position (V. 6). The term “more excellent” is from the word “diaphores” which is found three times in Hebrews and once in Paul’s writings. It has the thought of variety. “The more excellent name” (1:4) is descriptive of the varied facets, of glory in the person of the Lord Jesus. “The more excellent ministry” (8:6) describes the variety of graces in all that He said or did. The “divers washings” (9:10) are the results of the variety of guilt in the sinner. Paul uses the word in Romans 12:6, to describe the variety of gifts in the church.

The comparative, “by so much,” appears four times in the Hebrews and indicates superiority beyond measure. As Christ proved Himself to be “so much better than the angels”: the persuasive Godman. “Christ is counted of more glory than Moses, by so much, as He that built the house has more honour than the house” (3:3): the

priestly Governor. “By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament” (7:22) the positive Guarantor.

We shall now consider the exhibited glory of the Firstborn (Vs. 5-14). In these verses there are seven quotations from the Old Testament. In these the goings forth of the Firstborn are traced from pre-incarnation times to the great eternal state. The first two refer to His eternal Sonship (Psa. 2:7. 2 Sam. 7:13-14), the third to His coming in glory (Psa. 97:7), the fourth and fifth to His exaltation and rule (Psa. 104:4; 45:6-7), the sixth to the expansion of His millenial rule (Psa. 102:25-27), and the seventh to the culmination of all things when the kingdom shall be delivered up to the Father, and God shall be all in all (Psa. 110:1).

Notes on Hebrews (Part 3) (Mar 1967)

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If in chapter one Christ is all glorious in His Deity, in chapter two He is all perfect in His humanity. In chapter two there are two main divisions: the great salvation (1-4); the great Saviour (5-18).

The Great Salvation (2:1-4).

The greatness of this salvation is seen in that the Divine Trinity gives it authenticity and value. To turn from it is to turn from the voice of God to the mere opinions of men. Four arguments are presented as a warning not to neglect it:

The greatness of its message: The word “Therefore” refers back to chapter one where Christ, after making purification for sins, is seen taking His seat on the throne as Saviour in all the dignity of His person. Because of Atonement made by Christ, there is a message of deliverance for the sinner from the debt of sin, from the defilement of sin, and from the dominion of sin.

The greatness of its Author: Christ first proclaimed this salvation, and then died to give it a solid foundation in His own propitiation.

The greatness of its authority: Its attestations are so strong that man is left without excuse if he neglects it. By the word of the Lord Jesus, the witness of the Father, and the power of the Holy Ghost, it is presented as worthy of man’s acceptation.

The greatness of the doom of those who neglect it: Although its message is full of the love of God, it reveals also the power of His anger: “Behold (in it) the goodness and severity of God.”

The expression in verse one, “Let them slip,” is really a metaphor; the picture of a boat that has slipped its anchor and is drifting to destruction. The drifting is not so much from the words of this salvation as it is from Christ Himself.

Word Studies

The word “ought” has the meaning of necessity and occurs three times in the Epistle: “Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed” (2:1): the revelation of divine truths; “For then must He often have suffered” (9:26): the revelation of divine atonement; “He that cometh to God must believe that He is” (11:6): the revelation of divine truth.

The word “neglect” is found five times in the New Testament: “They made light of it” (Matt. 22:5): the blessing of fellowship; “Neglect not the gift that is in thee” (1 Tim. 4:14): the blessing of service; “Neglect so great salvation” (Heb. 2:3): the blessing of security; “I regarded them not” (Heb. 8:9): the blessing of divine instruction; “I will not be negligent” (2 Pet. 1:12): the blessing of fruitfulness.

The expression “recompense of reward” is one word; in this or another form it is used four times in Hebrews: “Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward” (2:2): the payment of sin; “Cast not away therefore your confidence which hath great recompense of reward” (10:35): the prospect of faith;

“He (Moses) had respect unto the recompense of the reward (11:26): the purpose of suffering; “He (God) is the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (11:6): the potency of prayer in the Holy Ghost.

The will of God is mentioned five times in Hebrews: “Gifts … according to the will of God” (2:4): the will of God for the equipment of the Church; “I come to do Thy will, O God” (10:7-9): the will of God expressed in the Son; “By which will we are sanctified” (10:10): the will of God embraces the saints; “After doing the will of God” (10:36): the will of God gives rest. “To do His will” (13:21): the will of God enriches the obedient.

The Glorious Saviour (2:5-18).

In these verses the greatness of the Man Christ Jesus is seen in four phases: He is greater than Adam in His sovereignty (5-9): the Ruler; He is greater than Joseph in His suffering (10:13): the Saviour; He is greater than Boaz in His strength(14:15): the Kinsman; He is greater than Aaron in His sympathy (16:18): the Priest.

Greater than Adam in His sovereignty: “The first man was not a savage. He wore the crown of reason, conscience, and moral freedom.” Psalm 8 is quoted in verses 6-8 to show: Adam’s dignity in the divine plan to rule; Adam’s delight in the divine pleasure to fellowship; Adam’s dominion in the divine power to subdue.

Adam fell under divine probation and consequently lost his power and right to represent God as prophet, priest and king. Man, therefore, is like a prince dethroned and in disgrace. Will God’s plan in the creation of man be lost? Decidedly not! The purpose of the condescension of Christ was to lift man out of his disgrace and

degradation, and restore to him the dignity he lost through the fall.

The humiliation of the Lord Jesus, according to this chapter, had a fourfold necessity: to satisfy and glorify God (V. 10), to scatter the domain of Satan (Vs. 14:15), to sacrifice Himself for sin (V. 17), and to succour the redeemed the whole way home (V. 18).

Greater than Joseph in His suffering: The sufferings of our Lord Jesus Christ are referred to three times in this chapter: He suffered to deliver us from death (V. 9), to lead us to glory (V. 10), and to secure us against the perils along the way (V. 18).

“Death” is mentioned five times in the chapter: three times it is related to the sufferings of Christ; through death He entered priesthood (v. 17). This follows the order of the Book of Leviticus where the first seven chapters are occupied with sacrifice, and where the eighth deals with priesthood. Death is the basis upon which Christ brings many sons unto glory (V. 10). Through death Christ delivers His people from disabilities in worship: the fear of death, the liking for sins, and the weaknesses of nature (Vs. 14-18).

Greater than Boaz in His strength: The redeemer of articles or persons in the Old Testament had to meet three requiremnts: he had to be a kinsman, had to be willing and able to redeem, and be prepared to be the avenger of a slain relative. The Lord Jesus met all these: He became our kinsman by assuming humanity, apart from sin (V. 14); He was both willing and able to redeem (10:7); and in death, He avenged us of our enemy (V. 14). The truth of redemption is linked with that of inheritance. Like Boaz’ love for Ruth which led him to

buy both Ruth and the inheritance, our Lord loved the Church and gave Himself for her, and in so doing purchased both His people and the inheritance which is incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in Heaven for us.

It is interesting to note in the New Testament the three aspects of redemption intimated by the three Greek words: “Agorazo” means to buy and suggests possession (1 Cor. 6:20. Rev. 5:9). “Xagorazo” means to save being wasted and suggests purpose (Eph. 5:16. Gal. 4:5; 3:13). “Lutroo” means to liberate on receipt of ransom and suggests preciousness (Titus 2:14, 1 Pet. 1:18). All this is beautifully illustrated by the laws controlling the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25). For a brother waxen poor (Lev. 25:25), redemption would mean possession; for a dwelling in a walled city that was sold (v. 29), redemption would mean the restoration of a lost purpose; for a brother who was poor and fallen into decay (V. 35), redemption would show him how precious he was to his redeemer.

Greater than Aaron in His sympathy: The words translated “glory and honor” (v. 9) are the Greek equivalents of the Hebrew words “glory and beauty” in the description of the garments of Israel’s high priest (Exod. 28:2).

Three times over in Exodus 28 we read of “the engravings of a signet” in connection with what the high priest bore before the Lord: He bore the names of Israel upon his shoulders (V. 11), and upon his breast (V. 21), and he bore “the iniquity of the holy things” in the mitre upon his brow (V. 36). How well all this points to a greater than Aaron! His people are upon the shoulders

of Christ's strength (Heb. 2:18); the breast of His love (4:15), and upon the brow of His wisdom (4:16). The blessed Spirit whom He imparts to us is called the "Spirit of power, and of love, and of a sound mind" (2 Tim. 1:7). Only by His power and love and wisdom can we successfully live our lives approved unto God.

Atonement and priesthood through the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus lead to a fourfold relationship: We are sons with Him in the same family, "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" (V. 11); that is, all of one nature and one Father. Of course, Christ is the Son in a unique sense; and we are sons by adoption. We are worshippers with Him in the same choir, "In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto Thee." We are believers with Him in the same path of faith, "I will put my trust in Him" (V. 13). He has trodden the same path by which He leads His people home. We are children in the security of the Firstborn, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me" (V. 14). The picture is that of the firstborn to whom the father has committed the younger members of the family for care and protection. Similarly, Christ brings all safely home and says to all Heaven, "Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me," they are all here; I have lost none.

Notes on Hebrews (Part 4) (Apr 1967)

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Word Studies In Chapter Two

The word “subjection” (V. 8) is a military term which means marshalling or arranging in a new order. Thus the world to come is to be arranged in a new order under the Headship of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The word “lower” is found three times in the New Testament; In John 3:30, “I must decrease:” Man’s exaltation of Christ; the governed; in Hebrews 2:7, “Thou madest Him lower:” God’s exaltation of Christ: the Governor; in Hebrews 2:9, “Who was made lower:” God’s exaltation of Christ: the Goal.

Psalm 8 is quoted three times in the New Testament and refers to the glorification of Christ, in relation to the ages (Heb. 2:6), to death (1 Cor. 15:27), and to the Church (Eph. 1:22).

The word “captain” occurs four times in the New Testament: as the Prince of Life (Acts 3:15): Christ is the source of life; as “Prince and Saviour” (Acts 5:31): He is the lesson on suffering; “The Captain (Pioneer) of our salvation” (Heb. 2:10): He is the lover of souls; “Author and Finisher of faith” (Heb. 12:2): He is the Leader of His servants.

The word “taste” occurs three times in Hebrews: “He tasted death for every man” (2:9): the paradox of Eternity: “Tasted of the heavenly gift” (6:4): the perfections of salvation; “Tasted the good Word of God” (6:5): the pasture of enjoyment.

Chapter Three

In the first two chapters the writer, with magnificent language has skillfully proved that the Lord Jesus is: (a) greater than the prophets in His superiority, (b) greater than the angels in His supremacy, (c) greater than Adam in His sovereignity, (d) greater than Joseph in His sufferings, (e) greater than Boaz in His strength, (f) greater than Aaron in His sympathy.

Here in chapter 3 he goes on to prove that Christ is greater than Moses in His sufficiency. As the Apostle and High Priest of our profession (v.1), He is the antitype of Moses and Aaron. These two titles are combined to show us that by His prophetic direction, through the Word of God, and His priestly representation on our behalf at God's right hand, He is sufficient to enable us to realize and enjoy the rest of God.

It seems clear that three aspects of God's rest are before us in chapters 3 and 4. The rest of redemption is the rest of the soul in the sweet assurance of our acceptance in Christ, in all the value of atonement (4:10). This is the Sabbath of the soul. Then there is the rest of obedience (4:1, 11). Joshua (4:8) was not able to lead Israel into this rest because of the unbelief of the people. The third aspect is "the rest that remaineth" (4:9). These three aspects of God's rest have their counterpart in Matthew 11:28-30, Revelation 14:13. There are three conditions of heart mentioned in this chapter which resulted in defeat for Israel in the realization of God's rest: the hardened heart that provoked God to wrath (v.8); the erring heart that grieved God (v.10) and the unbelieving heart that resisted God's purposes of love for them (v. 19). Thus Israel came short of God's rest because they

doubted the power of God, the love of God (Num. 13:31, 14:2-3), and the Word of God (4:2).

The all-sufficiency of Christ in contrast to the limitations of Moses is described by three couplets of words; first, “in” and “over” (vv. 5-6); Moses was “in” the house, Christ was “over” the house; the second, “servant” and “Son” (vv. 5-6); Moses was a servant, Christ is the Son: third, “builded” and “house” (v.3); Moses, with Israel was the house, Christ was the Builder. To the Jew the greatest thing in all the world was the Law. Moses and the Law were looked upon as one and the same thing. By choosing his words carefully the writer proves that the Law itself, personified in Moses, falls far short of the One who is described as “so much better.”

The writer uses a very interesting word when he asks the readers to “consider Him.” There are three distinctly different words translated “consider” in the New Testament, but the one used here is most distinctive. It is the Greek word “Kataneo” — literally, to be observant. It does not mean merely to look at or notice a thing, but rather to fix one’s attention on that thing and learn the inner meaning of it after long and careful consideration. It is the same word that is used in James 1:24, concerning the man who, beholding his face in a glass goeth away and forgetteth what manner of man he was (He was not observant). So when the writer says “consider Him” he means that we should fix our attention on Him, learn from Him and make Him the object of our lives.

Another very interesting word used by the writer with respect to Moses is the word “servant.” Paul calls himself “a servant of Christ,” but uses the word “doulos”

which really means a slave. This is not the word used here. Frequently the word “Diakonos” is translated servant or minister and it has special emphasis on the function or task of the individual, but this is not the word used here. The peculiar word used of Moses is the word “therapon.” It is used nowhere else in the New Testament. It describes one whose service is that of freedom and dignity. We are reminded of the epitaph erected by God over the unknown grave of Moses, “There arose not a prophet in Israel like unto Moses whom the Lord knew face to face.” What a need today for men like Moses!

The writer in the latter part of the chapter introduces another great subject — the possibility of not entering into God’s rest. “The rest” to the Israelite was the possession of the land of Canaan. But the inheritance could only be possessed by conflict and victory. Chapter 4 develops the subject of “The rest” in more detail and what it represents in New Testament language. As the Sabbath rest is typical of our rest in Christ from sin and fear and rejection, Canaan rest, as used in this particular context, refers to that rest in the will of God that is gained in spiritual conflict and victory (Eph. 6:10-18).

There is one word used five times in this chapter. Its repetition underlines its importance. It is the word “today.” In effect, the Spirit of God is saying that the precious hours of life are the time to enter into all the blessings God intends us to enjoy and to accomplish the tasks He has given us to perform. A modern writer has suggested, “Be good to time, it is the thing of which life is made.” Today, all that is required for a life of godliness

and victory, is available to us from the rich storehouse of God's goodness, if only we lay hold upon it by faith.

In this connection there is a warning and an encouragement in a word that is used only twice in the Hebrew Epistle; it is the word "to fall" (4:11, 11:30). In chapter 4:11, it describes those only who fell through unbelief and in Chapter 11:30, it describes the walls of Jericho falling by the victorious faith of the Israelites. The walls of Jericho may represent to us those insurmountable barriers that so often confront the Christians. So on the one hand we see Christians who fall by a lack of faith and on the other hand we see problems and difficulties fall because of an exercise of faith. When we stop to consider it in its practical application, faith really makes the difference between a successful, vibrant Christian life and one that is weak, useless and defeated.

Finally, in our meditation on chapter 3, a very distinctive word is used in verse 10, "to err." There are three possible words that could have been used: (a) "Astokeo" — literally —not aiming at. This word is used only in 1 Timothy 1:6, 6:21 and 2 Timothy 2:18. In these three passages we have certain Christians coming short in the exercise of the three Christian virtues, love, faith and hope. (b) "Apoplaneo" — literally—to be seduced. It is used in 1 Timothy 6:10… coveted money and "erred from the faith." (c) "Planeo" — literally — to go off the path. This is the word that is used here. It is used on two other occasions in Hebrews: chapter 5:2 — the high priest "could have compassion on them that are out of the way" chapter 11:38 "… wandered in the desert." Hence the very people that erred (went off the path) are

the people subject to the aid and compassion of the Great High Priest.

The three words could be summerized as follows with the appropriate defence against such problems in our Christian lives: “Astokeo” — Our Object is Christ, “Apoplaneo” — Our Occupation with Christ, “Planeo” — Our Obedience to Christ.

The Epistle to the Hebrews (Part 5) (May 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 5, May 1967.

Hebrews Chapter 4

Rest is the repose of the soul in God. We taste its sweetness when we come to Christ (Matt. 11:28). We continue in its enjoyment when our lives are lived in the will of God (Matt. 11:29-30). Then when our little day is done here we shall enter into the fullness of God's rest where no opposing forces will ever disturb it for ever (Rev. 14:13). It is because of these opposing forces that would disturb our rest in God now, that the four exhortations of our chapter are given, "Let us fear," "Let us labor," "Let us hold fast," "Let us come boldly to the Throne of Grace."

A sad epitaph is raised over the history of God's earthly people, the nation of Israel, "So we see then that they could not enter in because of unbelief (3:19). They came short of God's rest because they doubted the power of God, the love of God and the Word of God (Num. 13:31, 14:1-3, Heb. 4-2). In chapter 4 the writer turns to the needs of God's heavenly people. Israel has been labelled a failure, but in chapter 4 the Christian, Israel's spiritual counterpart, has described for him in explicit detail three beautiful and necessary provisions that are designed to lead him into the enjoyment of God's rest. These are: the Word of God (vs. 12-13), the Great High Priest (vs. 14-15), and the Throne of Grace (v. 16).

But first, let us look in a little more detail at the rest of God (vs. 1:11) that He provides by His grace, and into which He would lead us.

As we review with joy the various aspects of this rest as unfolded in these verses, we cannot help but realize that God's provision along the way is meant to keep us from wavering. This rest acts as a goal or object in the Christian life. Just as the goal posts in a football game govern the movement and action of the players, so the rest of God establishes the perimeter and progression as well as the goal of the Christian life.

The writer painting his description of the rest of God, chooses four colors, as it were, to brighten the course of a life lived to the will of God.

(a) The color in Creation Rest (v. 4). Inasmuch as God did rest the seventh day from His work so the rest to the Christian will be a rest from work. The toils of the day will seem as nothing when we bask in the sunlight of His presence for ever.

(b) The color in Christian Rest (v. 3). The writer draws an analogy from the very basic Christian experience, that of believing. He says that when we believed we entered into rest. All that we were — untamable, disobedient and unlovable —we placed in the everloving hands of the God of Eternity. Our future was hopeless so this rest became to us a rest from worry. The Spirit of God is simply saying that all that we have entered into by faith down here, one day will be a grand reality when we rest in the comforts and perfection of Heaven and home.

(c) The color in Canaan Rest (v. 8). Canaan is ever in Scripture a picture of that which the Christian may

enter and possess by conflict. Rest came when the battle was over and the inheritance taken from the hand of the enemy. It became a rest from war. Paul draws a picture of this Canaan rest in Ephesians. In that Epistle there is an inheritance purchased at infinite cost (1:18-23) to be possessed by faith (v. 18). There are opposing forces to rob us of the enjoyment of that rest (6:10-18). The indwelling Spirit of God is the Earnest, down payment, with the greater and more wonderful things yet to come (1:13-14).

(d) The color in Celestial Rest (v. 9). The word for rest here is different from that used elsewhere in the chapter. It is the Greek word sabbatismos which literally means “to keep a sabbath.” It is really an Old Testament word referring to the sabbatic observations in the Book of Leviticus. Used in this connection we believe it has the thought of perpetuity. So our pilgrimage will soon be over and the journey done. It will be a rest from walking a rest that will never be interrupted. Is there any wonder the poet wrote:

“Stepping ashore and finding it Heaven;

Of taking hold of a hand and finding it God’s hand,

Of breathing a new air and finding it celestial air,

Of feeling invigorated and finding it immortality,

Of passing from storm and tempest to an unbroken calm,

Of waking up and finding it home.”

The first thing that God supplies in order that we enter in and enjoy the rest of God is His Word (vs. 12-13). This is the true Urim and Thummim (lights and perfections) in the breast-plate of our Great High Priest. This

provision, with its positive, powerful action of discerning right from wrong, is necessary in our Christian experience to save us from wilfulness. There are five things suggested here about the Word:

It is vibrant in its life. The Greek word for quick is zao, and literally means alive. It is the same word used by Paul in Philippians 1:21, where he said, “To me to live is Christ.” What is the lesson? Is it not this? The life that filters through the pages of the Word of God making it a living Book, will begin to flow through that individual who diligently addicts himself to it. Paul advises Timothy that the Word of God was vital if “the man of God was to be throughly furnished.” In other words the man of God must become a “master craftsman” in his use of the Word of God.

It is vigorous in its action. The word for powerful is not the word normally used. This word is only used twice elsewhere in the New Testament. It is used by Paul in 1 Corinthians 16:9, where he says that an effectual door was opened unto him and then in Philemon 6 where the faith of Philemon is said to be effectual. Both verses have the thought of something being active and operative. Such is the thought here. It really means life (the first word) in action.

It is vindictive in its judgment. First, he uses the analogy of the sword. The sword is always the symbol of judgment (Gen. 3:24, Rev. 19:15). Self-judgment is the most difficult and yet the most necessary experience the Christian will ever encounter. Yet it is only when the sword with its two edges, is allowed to work in us that we will be trimmed to a useful size for God.

Second, he uses the analogy of the judge. The word discerner comes from the same root as the word judge. Hence the Word of God acts as a judge of the thoughts and intents of the heart. Thoughts refer to what is deliberated and intent to motives. Thoughts point to my occupation and intent to my motivation. When these are judged in the thought-and-intent stage it is not too late to have a life in which actions are ruled by the Word of God.

It is violent in its operation. The word piercing literally means “coming through.” In doing so it divides the soul and spirit from the joints and marrow. That is it separates that which we can see and feel from that which is intangible. May we put it another way. That which is tangible represents the material or carnal things and that which is intangible represents the spiritual part of our being. The Word of God divides between the two. In its search for the sins of body, soul and spirit, it seeks our separation from all that would disqualify for God’s pleasure. Separation is always the loving response of the redeemed soul to the claims of the Son of God.

It is valuable in its revelation. The word for opened (v. 13) is the Greek word tetrakelismena and is rooted in another Greek word trakelos, meaning “neck.” What is the significance? When the priest offered the sacrifice he was obligated to ensure that the animal was indeed without spot or blemish. He, therefore, just before he plunged in the knife, took hold of the animal’s neck, held his head back and in so doing exposed the entire body of the animal to his scrutiny. The Word of God likewise exposes our whole life. It points out our failures; governs

our actions; guides us in our pathway that God has marked out for us.

The second provision of God to enable us to enter in and enjoy His rest is our Great High Priest. His ministry is designed to support us in our weakness. The Spirit of God emphasizes His two Names here. Jesus is His earthly Name for it was given to Him at birth. It is the Name that links Him to His people," Thou shalt call His Name Jesus for He shall save His people from their sins." The Son of God on the other hand unquestionably links Him to the Godhead, for He is one with the Father and the Spirit. In between these two Names is the word "priest." The Latin word for priest is pontifex and means bridgebuilder. Thus, the Lord Jesus Christ is linked to His people and to the Throne of God. As the divinely ordained Priest (bridgebuilder), He spans the gap.

The writer uses a word that carefully describes His sympathy toward His people. It is translated here, "Touched with the feeling of." It is the Greek word sumpatheo. It comes from two other words, sum, meaning with and patheo, meaning to suffer. Thus we have an High Priest who suffers with His people. Not only does He lead us home by the path that He Himself has trodden before us, but in all the grief that fills the heart, the Man of Sorrows has a part. Like the high priest of Israel (Exod. 28) that bore the names of Israel upon his shoulder and his breast, and wore the mitre upon his brow, so the Lord Jesus imparts His strength (Heb. 2:18), His love (4:15) and His wisdom (2 Tim. 1:7) to enable us to have our whole satisfaction in God.

The third provision of God for His people is the Throne of Grace (v. 16). This is designed to save us from

wandering. The word “boldly” is interesting here. There are two other words translated boldly in the New Testament. First, there is the Greek word tahmao which has the thought of presumption, forwardness or over-stepping one’s bound of authority. It is the word used of Joseph of Arimethea when he “boldly” craved the body of Jesus. This is not the word used here. Second, there is the word thareo which has the thought of being confident that something will happen, and, therefore, speaking boldly about it. It is used in Hebrews 13:6. This is not the word used here. The peculiar word chosen by the Spirit to describe the Christian as he approaches the Throne of Grace is the word parresia. It means to have absolute right. Based on the work of Christ the way to the Throne has been opened to the Christian. The Israelite stood without the tent in fear and trembling. The Blood of Christ assures the Christian’s right to the Throne.

Two things are dispensed from the Throne, grace and mercy. It is pardoning mercy for the past and helping grace for the future. Mercy for our failures and grace for our weaknesses.

It is to be noted that the phrase “in time of need” is one Greek word — ukairos. It is used only once more and means suitable assistance. It does not mean that we can secure help today for to-morrow’s problems. It does mean that today’s problems can find their solution at the Throne of Grace today. The reservoir is full. The resources are never diminished.

Perhaps the key to this whole passage is found in chapter 4:2. It is the word faith. It is indeed interesting that the verb to fall, pipto, is used in only two settings in

the Hebrews. In chapter 3:17, it describes those who through lack of faith “fell” in the wilderness. In chapter 11:30, it describes the “fall” of the walls of Jericho by faith. The walls could represent any obstacles that face the Christian and which are overcome by faith. Perhaps here we have struck the nerve-centre of the question, what makes the difference between a vibrant, successful Christian and a weak, defeated Christian? The answer is faith! Faith that appropriates all the provisions that God has made; faith that reaches out beyond the things of time and sense; faith whose horizons are not limited by hills and mountains or walls; faith that lays hold of the Throne of God and makes those unknowable, unfathomable spiritual things his very own.

Notes on Hebrews (Part 6) (June-July 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 6, June-July 1967.

Chapter 5

This chapter commences the second major section of the Epistle. This section continues to the end of chapter 8. If in the first four chapters we see the excellency of Christ's Person, in the second four, we see the efficiency of His Priesthood.

In this letter there are three priest-hoods brought into focus: the Aaronic, the Melchisedec and that of Christ. The first two were designed of God to be types or shadows of the Priesthood established by our Lord.

By way of introduction to the subject of priesthood it is important to note some basic facts: first, the terms "priest" or "priesthood" are really Old Testament terms used to express New Testament principles. Second, the function of the priesthood was always on behalf of the people of God. It had nothing to do whatever with the nations around. Third, it is indeed interesting that when the Romans wished to find a Latin word to clearly give the meaning of "priest" they chose the word "pontifix" which literally means "bridge-builder." Of course, the Roman system of religion has corrupted this word for its own ends. By giving a wrong meaning to the word it has built up a religious organization that has deceived millions.

The Aaronic priesthood was characterized by sacrifice or the shedding of blood. The Melchisedec priesthood, on

the other hand, was marked by the bestowal of blessings. Our Lord Jesus Christ, therefore, fulfilled in His death all that the Aaronic priesthood typified and in His resurrection and ascension He fulfilled all that the Melchisedec priesthood stood for. This latter aspect of our Lord's priesthood will be carried into the Millennium when He shall sit as a priest upon His throne and display His kingly authority in righteousness and peace (7:2).

In this chapter the writer lists three fundamental qualifications of a priest that find their perfection in Christ: (1) His is appointed by God on man's behalf to deal with things concerning man's relationship to God. Man, by his very nature, could not deal with such things. Our Great High Priest alone is the link between God and man.

(2) The priest must be one with man. He must have walked in the footsteps of man, passed through his experiences and thus know his problems (v.2). In this connection the writer uses a peculiar Greek word, metriopathein, translated here, "to have compassion." Barclay points out that this is one of those untranslatable Greek words. To the Greeks virtue was a balance or the right point between two extremes. They considered the word to mean the right point between extravagant grief and utter indifference. W. M. MacGregor defines it as "the mid point between explosions of anger and lazy indulgence." It means feeling toward men in the right way.

(3) His Priesthood was a God-established priesthood. This is the reason for the quotations from Psalm 2:7 and Psalm 110:4.

When it says that He learned obedience (v.8), it means that He learned the price of obedience by a practical experience of the path of faith. He emerges from that path as One who was made perfect. Not perfect as to character, for He was ever the holy, sinless Son of God, but perfect as to competence for the exercise of His priesthood. The word for perfect is TELEIOUN. The Greeks considered a thing to be teleioun if it carried out the purpose for which it was designed. Hence, a lawnmower would be considered teleioun if it cut grass. A horse would be teleioun if it carried its rider. It is function rather that physical perfection that is in view. Our Lord Jesus Christ is perfectly fitted to function as a priest since He has satisfactorily passed the acid tests for priest and has come forth as One who is Teleioun.

The latter part of the chapter has a practical application. The writer has two problems: first, the message he must get across to the readers was difficult; and second, the readers were dull to take it in; they had relapsed into a second childhood.

Maturity in the Christian life is made up of knowledge, experience and conduct, or the appropriation of truth by the mind, the feeling of truth in the heart and the obedience of truth in the walk. Alas, immaturity marked them and hindered the work of the Spirit among them. Their immaturity revealed itself in an inability to take in truth or spiritually to feed themselves. They were not able to feed others, to discern between good and evil or master the first principles of the oracles of God (vs. 11-14).

In describing their immaturity the writer uses the word nothros, translated “dull.” The word means, “slow

moving in mind, witlessly and senselessly forgetful." It can be used of a limb that has lost its feeling.

Today one of the major problems facing assemblies is to find men and women who can absorb the deeper things of God. In fact, we can see truth slipping away (2:1). It is being displaced by religious novelties and entertainment.

The writer reminds them that they needed to be taught again the first principles of the oracles of God (v.12). The word translated principles is the greek word stoiceia. Dr. Barclay gives us some light on the word, "In physics it means the four basic elements of which the world is composed. In geometry it means the first elements of proof like the point and the straight line. In philosophy it means the first elementary principles with which the student begins. In grammar it means the letters of the alphabet—the A.B.C's. In other words the writer is pleading with his readers to grow up spiritually. There is nothing quite so pathetic as someone who has not developed physically or mentally. So it is in spiritual things. Peter Pan, the boy who would not grow up, makes a charming play on a stage but becomes a tragedy in real life.

Notes on Hebrews (Part 7) (Aug-Sept 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 7, Aug-Sept 1967.

We come now to one of the most controversial passages of the New Testament. Many have erred by thinking that in it they have definite proof for the “falling away doctrine.” Others have interpreted it as a picture of Israel’s apostasy and rejection. With so many able expositors taking this last line of interpretation it behooves us to avoid all dogmatism. We simply point out a line of interpretation which we feel to be consistent with the whole context. Our readers can then judge if this is the logical approach to what all agree is a most difficult portion of the Word of God.

The writer of the Hebrews has declared (5:9) that Christ by virtue of His atonement has become “the Author of eternal salvation.” From chapter five and verse eleven to the end of chapter 6 he inserts a parenthesis to prove that statement. He first gives a solemn warning of the dangers of not going on, the tragedy of spiritual underdevelopment. Spiritual growth will always lead to the capacity to discern between good and evil (5:14).

It has been said that maturity is made up of three things, knowledge, experience and conduct. Or, the apprehension of truth by the mind, the heart and the will. It is in this context that we see the knowledge of Christ’s priesthood, the experience of its ministry, resulting in a life lived in the will of God. A life lived in unnatural babyhood will produce nothing for God. The

fruit of such a life will go up in smoke in “the day of our Lord Jesus Christ” (6:8).

A sample of spiritual milk is given us (6:1-2). These six things are in three pairs and constitute “the first principles of the doctrine of Christ.” The first two are inward, the second two are outward and the third two are onward. These describe the initial repentance and faith of the newborn soul. This is the foundation that is laid once and for all for the building up of Christian character. This results in an altered attitude to God (repentance and faith), to life (baptisms and laying on of hands—perhaps a reference to the reception of the Holy Spirit) and to Eternity (resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment. As the builder leaves the foundation to go on to complete the superstructure, so we leave the first principles of the doctrine of Christ to go on to build Christian character for God.

In chapter 5, he mentions with emphasis the tragedy of barreness, carnality and immaturity. In chapter 6 he goes on to encourage and exhort, showing the provisions made available for maturing under the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The writer, through the Holy Spirit, in this chapter uses four analogies or pictures to illustrate his message and to enforce the truth of eternal salvation: the builder who leaves the foundation to complete the superstructure, the garden whose soil is capable of bearing fruit, the man-slayer who has fled to the city of refuge, and the ship whose anchor is cast within the veil.

The Builder

“The foundation of repentance from dead works” had been laid in our conversion once and for all. The language employed in verses 4-6 leaves no doubt that true believers are meant. Let us examine it briefly: “Once enlightened” is really “once for all enlightened.” A once for all enlightenment is not external but internal — the revelation of Christ to the believing heart. The same language is used in chapter 10:32, “After ye were illuminated.” It is the bringing of a soul out of darkness into His marvelous light. “Tasted of the heavenly gift:” that gift is Christ. To taste and trust are synonymous in Psalm 34:8. The same word “taste” is used in chapter 2 to describe the dying of the Lord Jesus. It means to experience in a very real sense. “Partakers of the Holy Ghost:” the fellowship of the Holy Spirit is not possible to any but the children of God (Phil. 2:1). “Tasted of the good Word of God:” they that gladly received the Word were baptized. “The powers of the world to come:” not only the power to work miracles but “the expulsive power of a new affection” which enables the soul to live with the glory of another world before him.

The main difficulty in the passage is what to do with the word “impossible” in verse 4 and the phrase in verse 6 “To renew them again unto repentance.” Surely it is not impossible for a back-slidden soul to get back to God. I would be bold enough to say that it is not impossible for an apostate to get back to God. What then is impossible? We are told in verse 1 not to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works. The simple reason is that it is not possible to do so. It is utterly impossible to renew to that initial repentance and the experience of a soul when he first came to Christ. It is no more possible

to lay the foundation of repentance twice than it is for our Lord to die twice. We believe we could summarize verses 1-3 in two words — “grow up.” One of the tragedies in our day is spiritual retardation. We need men — not babies, soldiers — not weaklings, Abrahams — not Lots.

The Garden

A loose paraphrase of verses 4-8 may be as follows. “It is not possible for those who have had the ‘once in a lifetime’ experience of salvation to repent and be saved again. If that were so it would be necessary for the Son of God to be crucified the second time. In this He would be openly shamed in that it would admit that His first death was not adequate.”

However, when falling away does take place it is like a gardener who takes care of a garden. The soil is good and the rain falls in its season; a beautiful type of the high-priestly ministry of our Lord that falls like a gentle rain upon His garden beneath, His Church in which every believer is a plant of the Lord. That which produces fruit after receiving the rain is accepted, but that which beareth thorns is rejected. Our Lord compared the thorns in Matthew 13 to the pleasures of the world, the riches of the world and the cares of life. These, He says, choke the seed and lives are fruitless. Thus, our falling away affects our fruitbearing and the rejection is the burning of the thorns that choke the seed of the Word in our lives, rendering them unfruitful for God.

The writer of the Hebrews clinches this subject of fruitfulness by using the Old Testament illustration of Abraham, who, in the face of insurmountable difficulties,

became fruitful. The immutable things confirmed to Abraham the faithfulness of God: God's oath and God's promise. After he endured, he inherited. God will ever test faith, and the one who endures and yet believes God will bear fruit to the glory of God.

The Manslay Er

The Jewish believer, not having shaken off the grave clothes of Judaism, was in constant danger of enacting the crucifixion again. This he might do unwittingly, if in a back-slidden condition he offered any sacrifice on the Jewish altar. Christ can only die once. It was our sins that crucified the Lord of life and glory. Unwittingly we were guilty of His death. The avenger of blood pursued our sins to the cross and inflicted the punishment on Christ that our sins deserved. The sin question is now eternally settled. Maturity would teach us that the priesthood of our Lord assures our safety. The One whom our sins slew on the cross has now become the city of refuge as well as the Great High Priest. As the safety of the manslayer depended on, and was assured as long as the high priest lived, so we are eternally secure for our Lord is priest in that eternal city and His priesthood is based upon the power of an endless life.

There are three words translated "to flee" in the New Testament (a) "Ekphugo," literally to flee out of. This is the word used in chapter 2:3, "How shall we escape." It has the thought of danger around us. This is not the word used here. (b) "Phugo," literally to flee. This word is used in chapter 11:13, "Escape the edge of the sword." The principle thought is danger after us. But this is not the word used here. (c) "Cataphugo," literally, to flee alongside of or for shelter. This carefully chosen

word is translated here, “Fled for refuge” and has the thought of danger beyond us.

The Ship

Hope is the anchor and faith the cable. Here life is seen as a voyage through a stormy sea. The object of hope is Christ and the haven of rest where all storms will be past for ever. The support of our anchor is that it is both sure and steadfast. Sure, in that it has gripped the solid rock within the veil, even Christ who has already entered. Steadfast, in that no storm will ever break the cable between the soul and Christ. The ground of hope is the revelation of Christ as our Great High Priest. This revelation in Psalm 110 is hung on two great pillars, God’s oath and God’s promise. The guarantee of that hope is that the Forerunner has already entered. This guarantees the safe entry of the ship into the heavenly harbor and to the haven of rest for evermore.

Dean Farrar in the Cambridge Bible has noted the following on this verse. “The Christian anchor of hope is not dropped into any earthly sea but passes, as it were, through the depth of the aerial ocean mooring us to the very Throne of God.”

Finally, the writer uses a very interesting word to describe the Lord Jesus. It is the word “Prodromos” and is translated here Forerunner. It has a three-fold meaning: (1) One who rushes on. Our Lord Jesus has run the race and has sat down at the right hand of God. He is there in all the moral beauty of humanity and the pattern to which all will be conformed. (2) A pioneer: one who clears the way to ensure a home for others. (3) A scout: one who ensures the safety of the troops. He is

the Captain of our salvation and every son will be led to glory by and by.

The Old Testament priest never acted as a forerunner, only as a representative. The people could never follow. Our Great High Priest has entered into Heaven itself and by this very act has paved the way for His people to follow.

Notes on Hebrews (Part 8) (Oct 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 8, Oct 1967.

Chapter 7

In chapter 7 the writer returns to the subject of Melchisedec which he abruptly breaks off in chapter 5:10 to insert a parenthesis that goes to the end of chapter 6.

In order to follow the argument of the writer, it is necessary to appreciate the Jewish methods of Biblical interpretation. There were four of these methods: first, there was what the Jew called “Peshat.” This represents the literal or factual meaning. Second, there was “Remaz” which was the suggested meaning. Third, there was “Derush” which was the meaning arrived at after long and careful investigation. Finally, there was “Sod” which was the allegorical or inner meaning. It is this last method of interpretation that the writer, under the guidance of the Spirit of God, develops in our chapter.

It is important also to realize that Jewish expositors considered the silences of Scripture as important and crucial in interpretation as the utterances. This will be seen as the truth of the chapter is unfolded before us.

There are only three references in Scripture to Melchisedec: the personal (Gen. 14); the prophetic (Ps. 110) and the practical (Heb.); or, Melchisedec in history, in song and in argument.

Melchisedec in History

It is indeed incredible that out of two obscure passages in the Old Testament about an obscure individual, the

writer should develop a beautiful picture of the Lord Jesus Christ as our Great High Priest.

What is the difference between the priesthood headed by Aaron and that headed by Melchisedec? Aaron's priesthood could be summed up by the word "blood;" and that of Melchisedec by the word "Blessing." The first finds its fulfilment in the resurrection and ascension of the Lord Jesus to the Father's right hand. This aspect of Christ's priesthood will extend into the Millennium when Christ will sit as a priest upon His throne.

An examination of the historical Melchisedec will reveal that he was great in three ways: He was great as to his person. Here the silences of Scripture play an important part. He was without geneology; there is no record of his birth or death. According to the record he was without beginning of days or end of life. The omission of this record is deliberate on the part of the Spirit of God. Melchisedec was designed by God to be a perfect type of the Son of God, Who in reality had no beginning of days or end of life. As the Eternal Son He could have no geneology. As Melchisedec stood alone in his right as "priest of the most High God," similarly the credentials for the priesthood of Christ came not from man but were resident in the Lord Himself. Christ was not of the tribe of Levi but of Judah and of this tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood (v. 14). It is to be noted that the qualifications for the Aaronic priesthood were based upon geneology and age. The priests must be of the tribe of Levi and serve only between the ages of thirty and fifty. Melchisedec has no record of geneology or age. Both these assumptions are based on the silences of Scripture. They bring out the perfections and Eternity of the Son of God.

He was great as to His position: He is called “King of righteousness and King of peace.” In chapter 3:1 our Lord as the antitype of Moses and Aaron is “the Apostle and High Priest of our profession.” Here in chapter 7 our Lord is seen as the antitype of David and Solomon, King of righteousness and King of peace. The path to peace is always by the path of righteousness. It is the righteousness of God that deals with sin in the Epistle to the Romans and peace is the fruit; “Therefore being justified (or made righteous) by faith we have peace with God.” The very nature of the Kingdom of God is “righteousness, joy and peace (Rom. 14:17). Man has tried the avenue of escape, or of evasion and of compromise in his fruitless search for peace. The only way of peace is from the cross and the empty tomb (Rom. 4:25, 5:1).

He was great as to His performance: He blessed Abraham and received tithes from him. Melchisedec intervened at a critical time in Abraham’s life. Abraham was returning from the victory of the kings. The king of Sodom met him with a reward, but Melchisedec strengthened Abraham to resist that temptation. As a result, Abraham, in the language of God’s priest, refused the riches of Sodom. How like our Great High Priest! He succours them that are tempted and opens the path of escape. He strengthens to overcome and maintain the path of faith for His glory. As Abraham gave tithes, it was a token of his debt to Melchisedec as the priest of the Most High God. What a debt of love we owe our Lord Jesus! The token of our love to Him will be seen in the surrender of our all to Him. No blessing is ever showered upon us but what it demands a response of love and surrender from us.

These references to Melchisedec in history are to prove that he was designed of God to be a perfect type of Christ (Vs.1-3); that his priesthood was greater than Aaron's (v.4), and that Christ as Priest is the blesser of His people (Vs. 6-7).

Melchisedec in Song

The first verse in Psalms 110 is quoted four times in Hebrews to prove that Christ went back to Heaven from earth: as Saviour (1:3); Priest (8:1), Victor (10:12), and our Example (12:2).

The fourth verse is quoted five times to prove that the Lord Jesus was called of God (5:6), that His Priesthood is eternal (7:17), that He was made a Priest by an oath (7:21), that He is the Author of eternal salvation (5:9-10), to prove the firm security of our refuge (6:20).

Melchisedec in Argument

In the light of all this the writer points out three aspects of the greatness of the priesthood of Christ: It is great because of its perpetuity (v. 16). It is endless because He is deathless. It is changeless and therefore He is able to save us the whole way home, our entire Christian lives (24-25). It is flawless and therefore nothing can mar its purpose (vs. 26-28).

The consecration of the Old Testament priests was physical; they were bathed, clothed, anointed and sanctified. These physical acts indicated the temporary nature of that priesthood. Not so with our Lord's priesthood. There were no physical acts, it was spiritual in its nature and eternal in its duration.

It was great because of its promises: The writer points to three ways in which the priesthood of Christ is confirmed to us: first, it is confirmed by an oath (vs. 20-21). When God confirms by an oath it is to show the unalterable purposes of His grace and provision.

Second, it is confirmed by a surety (v.22). The word used for surety is “Enguos.” It is used for one who guarantees another’s overdraft at a bank or for one who goes bail for a prisoner. Hence the word has the thought of one who has the means and ability to guarantee the performance of what he has undertaken. It is a word only used here in the New Testament. Such an one is the Lord Jesus. He has undertaken to see us through our pilgrim journey to the Father’s house.

Third, it is confirmed by its inherent unchangeability (v. 24). The word unchangeable is “Aparabatos” and means unalterable or inviolable.

It is really a legal term used to describe the verdict handed down by a judge. It was used by a medical writer to describe the absolute scientific principles on which the very universe is built and holds together.

The word continueth is Paramenein and has two significant thoughts: to remain in office and to remain in the capacity of a servant. When used of the Lord Jesus it means simply that He will remain in office as a priest to serve His people in all their needs down here.

It is great because of the provision: It provides a person, the God-man Christ Jesus, who is divinely suited to meet all our need (v.26). Consider this description of His beauty and greatness: in character He was holy, in conduct He was harmless, in contacts He was undefiled, in communion He was separate from sinners, and in

exaltation He was made higher than the heavens. The real difference between Christ as Man and all other men is in the fact that He was manhood at its highest, man without sin.

The Old Testament priest of the Aaronic order was a man tainted by sin, offering repetitiously the same sacrifices for himself and for sinful Israel. The Lord Jesus was the sinless Son of God; He offered Himself without spot, once and for all, as a sacrifice for the sins of others. Now in resurrection glory He is the Son perfected forevermore. How was He perfected? As to His character He was holy, harmless, and undefiled, yet tempted in all points like as we, sin apart. As to His position He is made higher than the heavens and therefore alive forevermore. As to His sacrifice it needs no repetition (v.27). On the foundation of His “once and for all” atonement, He is hailed by God as priest after the order of Melchisedec. In this capacity He serves His people in all their weaknesses and leads them home by the very path that He Himself has trodden before them.

In summary, the Aaronic priesthood was made by the law. When it ended so did the priesthood. The Priesthood of Christ is established by an oath and is therefore permanent in duration. It finds its basis in “the once and forever” sacrifice of Christ that needs no repetition. The Aaronic priesthood was a group of servants subject to dismissal and death. Christ as the Son of God has established His priesthood in the power of an endless life. His resurrection and ascension were the seal of God’s approval on His work that settled the question of sin forever.

He is consecrated forevermore. He is a faithful and merciful High Priest. By the abiding efficacy of the one sacrifice He can be faithful to God and merciful to us. Faithful to the demands of God’s holiness and merciful in relation to our weaknesses.

Notes on Hebrews (Part 9) (Nov 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 9, Nov 1967.

This chapter eight of Hebrews concludes the section covering the priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is really a summation of all that was said in the three chapters that precede it: “Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum,” or this is the chief point (v. 1). That is, the Lord Jesus as priest has sat down at the right hand of God to enter upon His priestly ministry. He is now suitably seated in the true tabernacle to administer the benefits of His atonement to His beloved people. These benefits are described in verse 6 as a better ministry, a better covenant and better promises.

There was a Greek philosophy which taught that the world in which we live is but a world of shadows. Somewhere there is a real world of which our world is but a mere reflection. The writer applies this to the Old Testament priesthood. It was but a shadow. It, with all its rituals, pointed to the Priesthood of Christ which was the real substance. In this connection the writer combines two Greek words in verse 5. The first is the word Hupodigma, translated here example. It means simply a sketch, a plan. It is the word used by an architect for the rough sketch of a building. The second word is Skia, translated shadow. This word really means a reflection, a phantom or silhouette. It has the connotation of that which is unreal. Such was the Aaronic priesthood.

The writer uses a wonderful word in verse 6 to describe the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the word Mesites, translated Mediator. It comes from the root Mesos, meaning Middle

and suggests one who stands in the middle. It describes one who brings together two parties in reconciliation. Christ bridges the gap; He spans the gulf; He bridges the chasm between God and man. Let us now look at the three better things:

The Better Ministry

It is superior to the ministry of the Old Testament priests because it is exercised in a better sanctuary (v. 2). Its superiority is seen in its quality. It is a ministry that bestows rich and lasting benefits because it is based on a superior sacrifice (v. 3). It is a ministry of love, sympathy and succour that no earthly priest could ever give. It is therefore sufficient to meet our need the whole way home.

The Better Covenant

It is indeed interesting to note the word used here for covenant. The usual word for covenant or agreement is Suntheke. This word describes an agreement entered into by two parties on equal terms. It is also used to describe a marriage contract. But this is not the word used here. It is the word Diatheke. The difference between this word and Suntheke is that in this agreement the parties do not enter into it on equal terms. One party defines the terms of the agreement and the other party either accepts or rejects it.

In classical Greek this word was used to describe a will. In fact it is so used in chapter 9. We know that one party defines the terms of the will. By using this word the writer is seeking to emphasize that man did not make a bargain with God. He is saying rather that the terms of

the covenant were developed by God. They cannot be altered by man. Man had no say in their preparation.

It also says that this covenant is new. There are two words for new in the New Testament. The first is the word Neos which means new at a point of time. The pencil is new at the time it is manufactured. It may be exactly the same as the one that went before, but it is still new. The other word is Kainos which means new in nature and quality. This is the word used here.

How then is this covenant new?

First, it is new in its perimeter. It is to include the House of Israel and the House of Judah. We may add here that all the redeemed share its blessings. It is indeed remarkable that the two clauses used by Rehoboam in 1 Kings 12:14 that divided the nation are in direct contrast to what is said by and of our Lord with a view to reuniting the nation. Rehoboam said “I will add to your yoke,” our Lord said, “My yoke is easy.” Rehoboam said, “I will chastise you with scorpions,” of our Lord it is said, “the chastisement of our peace was upon Him.”

Second, it is new in its performance. Its fulness is described and assured in verses 10-13. It had been predicted in Jeremiah 31:31-34 and established on the solid foundation of our Lord’s atoning death (Luke 22:20). As to its contents, it is a revelation of the love and mercy of God (v. 12). It reveals the will of God, to be kept in the mind and treasured in the heart (v. 10). It brings

God nearer to man to be loved and known (v. 11) and removes all barriers to a realization of fellowship with God (v. 12).

Third, it is new in its program. The first covenant that was established at Sinai simply assured the people of perpetuity in the land and a long and prosperous life on earth if they kept it. But the new deals with spiritual blessings that effect a change of heart (v. 10), of relationship (v. 10), of mind (v. 11) and of standing (v. 12). The first covenant said, “Thou shalt not” and “Thou shalt.” In the new covenant God says, “I will.” The first covenant contained forms and rituals which were of a temporary nature and suitable for the childhood development of mankind (Gal. 4). The new has the fuller revelation of God which is suited to lead us to maturity in our relationship with God. It is interesting to note that the Spirit’s coming on the day of Pentecost was on the anniversary of the giving of the Law at Sinai. His coming was to make effective the truths of the new covenant in the lives of the people of God.

In describing the old covenant the writer uses two very descriptive words. The first is Geraskon, translated here “to wax old.” It means to age unto decay. It suggests that which had been useful in the past is now decadent and useless.

The second word is Aphanismos, translated here “to vanish away.” Barclay gives us some light on this word. He says, “It is used for wiping out a city, obliterating an inscription, or abolishing a law.” In choosing this word the writer is saying that the new covenant is so complete and new in quality that it cancels the old covenant and makes it redundant.

At the beginning of the chapter we are introduced to the One who established the new covenant. We are given two pictures of Him, even our Lord Jesus. In the one we

see His Majesty and in the other we see His Ministry. It is indeed remarkable that these two thoughts are brought together for they seldom are. No one combined the function of a king and the function of a servant so beautifully as did our Lord. A beautiful Old Testament illustration of this combination is seen in 2 Samuel 5:2. David had just been made king after the death of Saul. The tribes remind him of the words spoken to Him by the Lord, “Thou shalt feed My people Israel (the servant) and shalt be a captain over Israel” (the king). The motto of the prince of Wales was, “I serve.” But no one combines those qualities so effectively as does our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Better Promises

Three of these are mentioned by Jeremiah, the first is the law written on the heart (v. 10). The child is controlled by positive “do’s” and “don’ts”: the man by moral and spiritual principles. “During the pupilage of the Old Testament saints the divine laws were written “in tables of stone.” For the New Testament church which (dispensationally) has reached manhood, they are inscribed in tables that are hearts of flesh (2 Cor. 3:3). The ascendency of ritualism in any Christian church means therefore a return to “childish things” of the old covenant, a going back to the swaddling clothes of religious babyhood” (Pulpit Commentary).

The second is the knowledge of God. The Old Testament saint had a very dim apprehension of divine things. God revealed Himself by His identification with certain of His saints, He was the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. But the fuller revelation of God awaited the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. He fully declared the Father. Now

there is the knowledge of introduction which means salvation (John 17:3), the knowledge of communion (2 Peter 1:3), and the knowledge of God that leads to happy fruitful living (2 Pet. 1:5-8).

The third is the full forgiveness of sins. While this is the last mentioned it is the first in our spiritual experience. It is the removal of the barrier to reconciliation with God. This is followed by moral and spiritual renewal that enables God to write His laws upon the heart and flood the mind with Divine Light.

Notes on Hebrews (Part 10) (Dec 1967)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 13 No. 10, Dec 1967.

This chapter commences the section of the Epistle which we have labelled THE EFFICACY OF HIS PROPITIATION. The first part of the chapter is devoted to the task of describing the beauty of the earthly tabernacle, with particular emphasis on the great day of atonement. In chapter 8 the writer has been considering the fact that the Lord Jesus is the only One who can lead us into reality. He has described the earthly sanctuary as being a shadow, a nebulous reflection, a mere phantom. Here he describes the sanctuary in some detail and he has a specific reason for doing so. The Jew understood the magnificence of the tabernacle. It was indelibly imprinted on his mind. The striking figure of the high priest on the day of atonement, the beauty of the solid gold lamp-stand, the impressive brazen altar, the majestic coloring of scarlet, blue and purple, all were part of the Jewish way of worship. The writer is therefore saying that if the picture or shadow was so magnificent, what must the reality or substance be like. It must be beyond description.

The golden censer (v.4) speaks of reconciliation. The true holiest of all is now filled with the fragrance of a risen Christ. We are accepted in the beloved One and have become “a sweet odour of Christ to God.” The ark speaks of what God is for man. All that God undertook for man’s blessing is secured in Christ. The ark preserved all that was put into it. In the manna we learn what resources we have for the wilderness. This

heavenly food imparts the spiritual strength to meet all the temptations in the path of the child of God. In the rod, symbol of the priesthood of Christ, we see our fitness to enter the holiest. In the tables of the covenant we see the symbol of the will of God that marks the path the pilgrims of Zion are to walk. The mercy seat speaks of Christ the Propitiation and the centre of God's moral government among His people. The Cherubim suggests that all of God's attributes were harmonized at the Cross and the mercy of God is thus guaranteed to us. All this we learn in the holiest, the heavenly sanctuary where Christ ministers on our behalf.

There seem to be two distinct Jewish ceremonies in the mind of the writer as he pens this chapter. First, in verse 4 the golden censer was seen beyond the second veil which was not its usual place; it was always in the holy place. The only time it was taken from the golden altar in the holy place to the holiest of all beyond the veil, was on the day of atonement. Hence the first ceremony in view is the great day of atonement. This day was set aside as a preservative for the children of Israel as a nation and by the sacrifices and application of the blood an atonement was made for sin.

At the end of the chapter the writer uses three different Greek words concerning the Lord Jesus, all of which are translated "to appear." In verse 26 he says that the Lord Jesus has appeared to put away sin. Isaiah 53 describes this act in two ways: "He poured out His soul unto death," and "He bare the sins of many." This was beautifully pictured in the two goats, so prominent on the great day of atonement. The first one was killed and its blood poured out at the altar of sacrifice. The second goat bare the sins of the nation into the wilderness, a

land not inhabited. Our blessed Lord poured out His soul unto death. He entered the darkness of Golgotha, a land not inhabited, where no man had ever been. There the sin question was settled once and for all. He bare our sins upon the tree and exposed them to the judgment they deserved, a judgment that He Himself endured in our stead.

In verse 24 our Lord Jesus is seen appearing in the presence of God for us. This was impressively pictured as the high priest, bearing the blood of the slain goat, disappears into the holiest of all to appear on behalf of the people. While imperfection stamped the ritual of Israel, finality stamps the fulfilment in the work of Christ. This finality is seen in the word “eternal” in our chapter: He was offered through the eternal Spirit (v. 14), which offering purchased eternal redemption (v. 12) and leads to an eternal inheritance (v.15). As noted above, the censer was taken from beside the golden altar in the holy place, into the holiest of all. The fragrance eminating from the censer filled the holiest of all. So the Lord Jesus, as He appears for us, is Himself in all the value of His work the Propitiation and is therefore filling the presence of God with the fragrance of His intercession on our behalf.

In verse 28 the writer says that the Lord Jesus shall appear the second time. As all Israel waited with bated breath for the appearance of their high priest as he emerged from the tabernacle, so the Church of the living God waits for the coming of the Saviour. The necessity of the sin-offering is gone but He will appear to complete the work He has begun, the work of our salvation.

The second great ceremony in the mind of the writer is suggested by the phrase, “the ashes of an heifer” (v.13). This strange ritual is described in Numbers 19. If an Israelite physically associated himself with death, he was considered, under Jewish law, to be unclean. A red heifer was slain outside the camp and its blood sprinkled before the tabernacle. The body of the heifer was then burned and the ashes were laid up in a clean place outside the camp. They were thus near and available to the unclean. The ashes were then mingled with running water and applied to the defiled individual. The red heifer was slain once. It is the only sacrifice of the Jewish economy that was not repeated. The ashes speak of acceptable sacrifice and its abiding efficacy. It was unmixed in color, unblemished in person and unbroken in yoke. This beautiful picture sets forth our Lord Jesus Christ in the dignity of His consecration, red; in the beauty of His character, no spot or blemish; in the perfection of His walk, no yoke. He needed no compulsion to do the Father’s will. In the heifer we see what our Lord was internally and in what was consumed with it we see what He was externally: cedar, stately in His majesty; hyssop, lowly in His humanity; scarlet, beautiful in His character. All were reduced to ashes and preserved for the defiled. The application of the ashes and water to the defiled individual would therefore suggest the cleansing power of the Word of God in the believer’s life. This power, of course, finds its source in that one acceptable sacrifice of Christ. If the day of atonement had to do with the sins of the nation, the ashes of the heifer had to do with the sins of the individual. The first dealt with the guilt of sin, the second with the defilement of sin.

In contrast to these impressive and important ceremonies is the perfect offering of Christ (v. 14). Wherein was the Sacrifice of Christ superior? First, the Jewish ceremonies cleansed from ceremonial uncleanness only. An Israelite may keep all sections of the law outwardly and may appear fit to fellowship with God, yet have a heart that is filled with deceit. The Sacrifice of Christ, on the other hand, is described as "purging the conscience" (v. 14), cleansing the life through and through. Second, the Jewish ceremonies required repetition. The day of atonement, for example, was held annually. In describing the One Sacrifice of the Lord Jesus, we read that it brought eternal redemption. It required no repetition. Man was eternally freed from the bondage of sin. Third, the Jewish ceremonies provided no future. Each pointed only toward a repetition of the same. Not so with the death of Christ. His Sacrifice has provided an eternal inheritance. The Testator has died and all the benefits of the testament belong to the recipients.

The writer now answers two imaginary questions: (1) The death of Christ is certainly effective against the sins committed under the new covenant, but what about the sins committed under the old covenant? In answering this question the writer has a tremendous thought. He says that the death of Christ in its value was retroactive (v.15). Its effectiveness goes back in time to deal with the sins of the saints which were committed before the Cross.

(2) Why should the new covenant have to involve the death of the Testator? Was there no other way for the new covenant to be established? He answers this question in two ways. The first reason is really a play on

words. We have noticed that the word for covenant is Diatheke. In the secular use of the word it was used to describe a Will. It is on this secular use of the word that the writer builds his first answer. In order for a Will (Diatheke) to be effective there must first be the death of the testator. Used in the Christian sense, if the covenant (Diatheke) is to be effective the Author of the covenant must die. The new covenant must involve the death of the Testator.

The second reason goes back to a divine principle laid down in Leviticus 17:11, “The life of the flesh is in the blood… and it is the blood that maketh an atonement for the soul.” Sin involved death (Rom. 5:12, 6:23), the remission of sin must therefore involve the death of the Redeemer (v.22). To redeem from death and lead those who were in bondage to it and all its claims, into all the benefits of the new covenant, meant that a life must be given. That life must be so precious that it would be of more value than the lives of all mankind. Moreover it must be a sinless life in order to settle the question of sin (John 8:3-11). The Lord Jesus alone could meet these demands. As the uncreated and Eternal Son His life was more valuable than all creatures combined, and as the sinless Godman He was able to settle the question of sin, once and for all (v.26).

At the end of the chapter we are shown how the death of Christ has opened the way into Heaven itself. He has already entered and by virtue of His Blood (His life given in atonement) He appears for us before the throne of God. Apart from Him and His atoning death man must face death and judgment and a hopeless future (v.27).

Notes on Hebrews (Part 11) (Jan 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 1, Jan 1968.

The doctrinal section of the Epistle ends at chapter 10:18 while the practical section begins at chapter 10:19. In the first, we are inside the veil accepted in Christ. In the second, we are outside the camp rejected with Him. As the old covenant gave place to the new (ch. 8), and the earthly sanctuary gave place to the heavenly (ch. 9), so in chapter 10 the variety of sacrifices under Jewish law gives way to the one sacrifice of Christ. Repetition and remembrance of sins stamped the old law of the offerings; permanacy and finality mark the blessings of the atonement of Christ. The people of God now have the enjoyment of an eternal sanctification (v. 10), an eternal perfection (v. 14-perfection as to the conscience; compare 9:9) and an eternal forgiveness (v. 17).

The possessions of the saints in the new dispensation are seen in the three occurences of the participal “having” in verses 19, 21, 22. We have a sanctuary in Heaven, there we have a great High Priest who ministers on our behalf. We have a double fitness to draw near and worship in the beauty of holiness: the sprinkling by the blood that answers for the guilt of sin, the washing by the Spirit of the Word that cleanses for the defilement of sin.

This is followed by a threefold exhortation indicated by the three occurances of the word “Let” in verses 19-24. It is an appeal to the three virtues of the “new man.” Let

us draw near in faith; let us hold fast in hope (v. 23 J.N.D. Trans.); let us consider one another in love. These three refer to the collective gatherings of the assembly according to verse 25: “Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together.” Not only does it refer to our coming together in assembly capacity, but it is a warning not to forsake the ground of our gathering—the divine principles that are to be operative when the saints meet. These three appeals have their illustrations in the following three chapters: faith in chapter 11, hope in chapter 12 and love in chapter 13.

The first eighteen verses could be summarized as follows: the weakness of the law (1-4), the will of God (5-10), the work of Christ (11-14), the witness of the Spirit (15-18).

In his vivid description of the weakness of the law, the writer uses two extremely descriptive Greek words. The first is skia, translated “shadow” (v.1), and means a pale shadow, a nebulous reflection, a mere outline, a silhouette. It is always used to describe that which is unreal. The other word is eikon, translated “real image” (v.1), and means a complete representation, a detailed reproduction. If there had been photographs in the days when this Epistle was written, this would be the word for photograph. The writer in choosing this word indicates that the ceremonial law is not even a representation of the real substance and hence will never be able to lead us into reality.

The writer goes on to say that each year the law by the very ceremonies it demanded brought sin to remembrance. “Instead of erasing the sin, the law underlined it” (Barclay).

In the illustration of the will of God the writer quotes from Psalm 40:6-9. Here is one of the occasions when the writer quotes from the Septuagant, a Greek translation of the Old Testament, rather than from the Hebrew. From the Hebrew Psalm 40 reads, “Mine ears hast Thou opened;” whereas, the writer here says, “a body hast Thou prepared Me.” In essence the meaning is the same. The Psalmist is saying that he has so responded to the will of his God that he obeys implicitly all that he hears. The underlying principle in the passage is that the only valid sacrifice in God’s sight is obedience to His will. The writer then points out that these virtues were exemplified in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ; His life was the full expression of what He Himself said in the garden, “Not My will but Thine be done.” Ultimately, when He made an offering for sin it was really an offering to God (9:14) and was therefore consistent with the will of God.

In verse 11 the writer turns to the subject of the sacrifice of Christ. He first mentions the several offerings under Jewish law in verse 8. In these we see the variety of need in fallen man. The sin-offering had to do with the corruption of his nature, the trespass-offering with the deeds of that nature, the peace-offering had to do with the enmity of his mind against God and our need for reconciliation. The burnt-offering was linked with the sins of omission. The one sacrifice of Christ has all the virtue to meet the varied needs in fallen man. We have noted that the nation of Israel had been longing for a better solution for the problem of sin. The law, a mere shadow, could not lead them into reality. For centuries they had been waiting. The writer uses a phrase which would have caused a Jew to weep for joy.

“One sacrifice for sins.” No more are the daily sacrifices necessary. This one sacrifice was the culmination and the completion of all the ceremonial law. In that law no seat was ever provided for the priests of Israel. They stood day after day offering (v. 11). But the Lord Jesus Christ offered one sacrifice for sins and forever sat down. The standing priest of Israel indicated that his work was never finished. The Sitting Priest at God’s right hand tells of a work that will need no repetition.

In conclusion it is important to note that the writer ends the doctrinal section of the Epistle by repeating four times the phrase, “No More.” On Christ’s part there will be no more offering for sin (v. 18). On God’s part there will be no more remembrance of sins (v. 17); and on our part there will be no more conscience of sins (v.2). Upon these rest the security and hope of every Christian; we grasp the truth and make it our very own.

In verse 19 the writer becomes intensly practical. There is always a practical application to every doctrine. One of the dangers that confronts us today is to be wrapped up in doctrine that finds no expression in practical Christian living.

He begins by underlining three important facts regarding the person of the Lord Jesus Christ. It seems that in the mind of the writer he is basing his whole practical ministry on them. First of all, he says that the Lord Jesus is the living way into the presence of God (vv. 19-20). In so saying he uses a very interesting expression, “Through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.” What did he mean? In the Tabernacle there were two sections, the holy place and the holiest of all. These two sections were divided by a veil. In the holiest of all was

the ark of the covenant, the cherubim and the mercy seat. The Shekinah glory of God rested on the mercy seat. In the holy place the daily ceremonies took place when the priests acted on behalf of the people. Hence the priests and the people were separated from the glory of God by the veil. The only way by which the glory of God could be seen was for the veil to be rent. The Lord Jesus Christ was the Eternal Son of God. In Him was resident the very glory of God, but that glory was veiled in His flesh, that is to say His body. The only way for man to behold that glory was for the veil, that is to say His flesh, to be rent. This took place at the cross. The Holy Spirit is careful to add in the account of His death that the veil of the temple was rent in two, from the top to the bottom. Through the newly consecrated way, the entrance into the holiest is open to God's people. "Why stand ye then without in fear, the blood of Christ invites us near." Now we behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ; that glory is beheld that it might be reflected (2 Cor. 3:18).

The writer says that the Lord Jesus Christ is the High Priest over the House of God. As the Mediator He introduces us to the Father and as our Great High Priest He maintains us in fellowship with God.

Then he reminds us of the double fitness for fellowship with God: the sprinkled blood that removes the guilt of sin and the cleansing of regeneration that saves from the defilement of sin.

Having described the priceless possessions of the saints, he now begins to touch the practical part of the Christian life. In view of all this, he says, "Let us," Let us,"

First, “Let us draw near,” the writer uses a peculiar word translated “with full assurance of faith.” It is the word Plerophoria. This comes from two Greek words, Pleros which means “full” and Phero which means “to carry.” It is the picture of a full vessel being carried. The vessel is our lives. That which should characterize the Christian life is certainty and fortitude. There is no room for doubts. The new birth imparts the capacity “to be filled with all the fulness of God.”

Second, “Let us hold fast.” The word translated “hold fast” is the Greek word Katecho. This comes from two words, Kata which means “down” and Echo which means to hold or have. This particular word is used in Romans 1:18 to describe those who hold down the truth in unrighteousness. When the writer uses it in this context, he is suggesting that we should so take hold of the precious truths revealed to us that we should never let them go. By using the prefix Kate the writer is making the verb a very intense one.

Third, “Let us consider one another.” He cites two ways in which we can carry out this injunction. We should be present at every assembly gathering whenever possible. The church is a body of many members all of which are to work in harmony one with the other.

Then he says we are to consider one another by means of exhortation. Eliphaz, the comforter of Job, paid him tribute by saying, “Your words have kept men on their feet” (4:3). There is a type of criticism that is destructive. Our coming together is for the mutual building up of one another.

All this is in view of the Lord’s coming (vv. 35-37). These words are definitely linked with Habakkuk 2. We too

have seen the vision, and in the light of it, we are to run the race (Ch. 11).

Notes on Hebrews (Part 12) (Feb 1968)

From Food for the Flock, Vol. 14 No. 2, Feb 1968.

Hebrews 2

There are many references to faith in the Word of God, however, when an effort is exerted to discover the key to a successful Christian life there are three verses we should consider. In James 2 we see the Visibility of faith. Show me your faith by your works. Matthew 17:20 reminds us of the Vitality of faith, it is as a grain of mustard seed; i.e. it grows. Hebrews 2 tells us of the Victory of faith; it reminds us that faith links us eternally to the One who is all powerful and thus makes us victorious in Him.

It is important to notice that faith is not being defined in Hebrews 2. It is being described. The writer in a most beautiful way unfolds the fabric of the lives of great men and women of God and shows us what distinguished them in a world of sense and sin. It was faith, “Faith,” says the writer, “is the substance (evidence) of things not seen.” We do know that the things which are seen are temporal, whereas the things which are not seen are eternal. In other words faith is the evidence of eternal things. There is no doubt that the chapter is taking us beyond the mundane affairs of time and sense, beyond the cares of this world and beyond the temporal and unimportant. Faith takes us into the realm of the spiritual, eternal, unknowable and incomprehensible, and makes them our own. Faith links us eternally to the

everlasting throne of God and makes the God of Heaven become the God of man.

This chapter divides time into three periods, at least time before the Cross: the primeval (vs. 1-7), the patriarchal (8:22) and the Israelitish (23-38). Each respectively is headed by Abel, Abraham, and Moses. All three, in what they offered, emphasized faith in the sacrificial death of Christ. In the first we have faith in what was commanded, in the second we have faith in what was promised, in the third we have faith in what was endured. The venture of faith is illustrated in the three heads of these categories. Abel ventured on the blood of atonement for acceptance, Abraham on the promises of God for continuance and Moses on the recompence of God for the future. Three attitudes may be noted in Abraham's life; he obeyed God, not knowing where; he embraced the promises of God, not knowing how; he offered up his only son, not knowing why. In the exercises of such faith he earned the title of the friend of God.

Faith is the conviction of things not seen. It is the vision of the reality of the invisible (vs. 8-16) and of the accomplishment of the improbable (vs. 17-22). Moses endured because the eye of faith was on the invisible God. Abraham started out on the invisible path of faith (v.8) with his eye on the invisible city of God (v.10). He and Sarah and their seed greeted the invisibilities from afar (v.13). Their faith was pleasing to God for He is not ashamed to be called their God and He prepared for them a city (v.16).

But faith is not only the vision of the invisible, it anticipates the accomplishment of the improbable.

These men and women of faith trusted God against all odds. It was improbable that God would deliver Isaac (v. 19), that the younger should receive the blessing (vs. 20-21), that Israel should be delivered from Egypt (v.22).

Moreover, faith in God leads to a true estimation of things in this world. Moses' parents considered that preserving a man for God was greater than their fear of the king (v. 23). Moses valuation of the court of Egypt was small compared to the recompence of the future. Three motives urged him on to a wise choice: he had respect for the future (v. 26), he saw the invisible God (v. 27) and he was persuaded that the world's false show and glory would end in judgment (v. 28). Thus we have faith's achievements (23-34) and faith's endurance (35-38).

The chapter takes on a very interesting aspect when we consider the approach that the writer is taking. He sees the Christian life as a race and takes the olympic games of Greece as the illustration. The Christian is to run with the knowledge that the prize is before him. He is to exert every ounce of spiritual energy in order to win the prize. As he runs he is conscious that there are spectators. He looks a little closer at the crowd and makes a startling discovery, they are all olympic champions; they have run the race before and have been victorious. He will now apply every pressure, lay aside every weight and make a concentrated effort on winning the prize. The key verse to the above analogyis found in chapter 12:1, "Seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses… let as run." The obvious question still remains, "What can faith do for the Christian?" May we suggest five things from the chapter before us:

1. Faith overcomes the illogical,

2. Faith overcomes the impossible,

3. Faith overcomes the impregnable,

4. Faith overcomes the invisible,

5. Faith overcomes the irrecoverable.

First, Faith overcomes the illogical (vs. 1-7). The lives of three great men are before us, all lived by faith in the realm of the illogical. The lesson to be learned from Abel's life is that of forgiveness. He brought his offering to God not recognizing the reason but merely accepting that it was God's way of dealing with sin.

Enoch's life is a graphic lesson in fellowship.

"He walked with God, could grander words be written?

Not much of what he thought or said is told;

Not where or what he wrought is even mentioned;

He walked with God — brief words of fadeless gold.

"How many souls were succoured on his journey,

Helped by his word, or prayer, we may not know,

Still this we read — words of excelling grandeur,

He walked with God while yet he walked below.

"Such be the tribute of thy pilgrim journey,

When life's last mile thy feet have bravely trod,

When thou hast gone to all that there awaits thee,

This simple epitaph — he walked with God."

Noah's life could be summed up by the word fear. He was moved through fear to build an ark. His life was

lived in the fear of God. He recognized the awesome majesty of his Creator. Noah's life illustrates the principle "the fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom."

Second, Faith overcomes the impossible (vs. 8-19). Two lives come into focus here, that of Abraham and Sarah. In Abraham we see the principle of pilgrimage, whereas in Sarah we see the principle of production. The marvel of these two lives can only be ascertained by a study in depth. However there are three fascinating words used in the passage to describe the reproach of God's pilgrims such as Abraham (1) XENOI translated "stranger" (v.13). A stranger was always regarded with contempt and suspicion. (2) PAROIKEIN translated "to sojourn" (v. 9). A paroikos was a resident alien and was forced to pay tax. He was always regarded as an outsider. (3) PAREPIDEMOS translated "pilgrim" (v.13). This word describes someone who was staying only temporarily and had a permanent home elsewhere. The patriarchs saw beyond the impossible situation of life. Abraham, 'hitched his wagon to a star' that star being the very throne of God. Barrenness was turned into fruitfulness and faith was rewarded by an heir.

Third, faith overcomes the impregnable (vs. 20-22). Three lives, that of Isaac, of Jacob and of Joseph, hold our attention next. It is indeed incredible that of all the possible experiences in the lives of these three men, the writer chooses in all cases to speak of their death. What are the implications? It is faith accomplishing the improbable. In Isaac we see prophetic vision piercing to the future and overcoming the flesh. In Jacob we see faith giving serenity and magnanimity in death and overcoming Satan. In Joseph we see his assured

confidence at the end of life and faith overcoming the world as seen in Egypt.

In chapter three the writer speaks of the people who fell in the wilderness because they believed not. In this chapter, however, he speaks of the walls of Jericho (representing the multitude of difficulties in the Christian life) falling by faith. Faith makes the difference. We can either stand by faith or fall through the lack of it. We can by faith face the enemy positively and surely or we can cringe in the face of the impending conflict and fall in the face of temptation.

Fourth, faith overcomes the invisible (vs. 23-30). Moses is a graphic picture of the possibility of seeing beyond this life. He saw Him who was invisible. If there is one lesson that the life of Moses teaches us more than any other it would be the importance of placing first things first. The greatest danger confronting Christians today is that of total involvement in the things of this passing world to the exclusion of the enduring and eternal. Faith is the ingredient which always allows us to objectively place our values in the right perspective and consider the value of important things.

Finally, faith overcomes the irrecoverable (vs.31-40). The story of Rahab is remarkable. She should have been lost for two reasons: she was a citizen of Jericho, a city at enmity with God. Then she was a deeply-dyed sinner. From a natural point of view there was no recovery. But she had faith and that faith was expressed in doing what she was told. Faith is simply believing God. It is our response to God's revelation of Himself.

The chapter closes with a remarkable statement, "These all… received not the promise." They recognized that

the promise of God was not to be realized in their lifetime.

Notes On Hebrews (Part 13) (Mar 1968)

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The word, “Wherefore,” occurs three times in this chapter, and is designed to arouse a consideration of Christ, lest we be wearied and faint in our minds (vs. 1-3). It provokes a consideration of our conduct lest others be stumbled and depart from the path of faith (vs. 12-13). It also directs attention to the glories of another world to encourage a service for God with reverence and godly fear (v. 28).

Chapter 12 fixes attention on the future blessing of the Christian while, at the same time, it reminds him of the vigilant care he should exercise in the present. The details of the chapter may be expressed in four words; Discipline (vs. 1-11); Duties (vs. 12-17); Dispensation (vs. 18-24); Dangers (vs. 25-29).

Discipline in the Christian race (vs. 1-11). It is important to notice that discipline is not an end in itself; it is always executed in the light of a goal. Christ is the object of the Christian’s life (v. 2); all that he does, whether in secular or spiritual activity, should be done in the attitude of “looking unto Jesus.”

Discipline is emphasized because of the foe that pursues us. The world relentlessly shadows every step; it employs the “contradiction of sinners.” The flesh is after us, so we are to “lay aside every weight.” Let it be remembered that it was the stragglers that Amalek slew when he attacked Israel (Duet. 25:17-18). The devil harasses believers with “the sin which doth so easily

beset us," the sin of unbelief. These are in contrast to the faith of the saints recorded in chapter 11 which led them to victory. None of these can bar an entrance to Heaven. That is assured by the blood of Christ alone. Nevertheless, any one can disqualify for the race. Paul reminds the Galatians, "Ye did run well; who did hinder you?"

In this connection the writer uses a very descriptive word translated "patience." The word does not mean to passively bear things. Barclay says "It does not mean the weary patience which sits with bowed head, folded hands and mind resigned, and lets the tide of things flow over it and past it." Rather it means a conquering patience which turns the disappointing and unhappy experiences into victory. It depicts a patience that is not daunted by obstacles, depressed by delays, or defeated by discouragements.

What a beautiful example in the person of the Lord Jesus Christ! He is, at once, our goal and our companion along the way. The goal for Him was reached by way of the cross. He despised the shame for the joy that was set before Him. The Christians following in His steps, press on, enduring as He and remembering the glory of the goal.

Incidentally, the words "weary" and "faint" in verse 3 are the very words Aristotle used of an athlete, who, after surging to victory past the finishing line, flings himself on the ground in panting relaxation and happy collapse. In other words the writer is saying, "Keep on to the finishing line; do not relax before the race is run; keep going on."

The writer now turns to another aspect of discipline, that which comes directly from the hand of the Father. There are three objectives in the chastening of God's children: the motive, that they be profited (v. 10); the ministry, that they bear fruit for His glory (v. 11); the manner, loving and tender as God graciously molds us into the image of His Son.

There are four ways in which this training in the way of holiness may be accepted: we may forget it, despise it, faint under it (v. 5), or be exercised by it. If exercised by it, Christians may live in the current of His will (v. 9); may become partners of His holiness (v. 10) and may yield the peaceable fruit of righteousness (v. 11). In these they have the joy of a good conscience, the peace of fellowship with God, and a good testimony before the world.

Let us now consider the Christian's duties as outlined in verses 12-17. In this connection four members of the body are mentioned; these may suggest four areas of life in which Christian duties should be assumed. The hands suggest work. So often the work of God suffers through indolence. The Lord Himself condemned such inactivity when He spoke the parable of the father who asked his son to work in the vineyard; the son replied, "I go," but went not. God has set each member in the Body of Christ to function in his place and according to his capacity. It is through discouragement that the hands hang and defeat in our service for the Lord follows.

The knees allude to the devotional life before God. When prayer and worship are neglected, contact with God is broken. God only guides what He governs. We need daily

to present ourselves to Him in humble contrition asking that He live out His own life in us.

The feet picture the believer's walk. This does not refer to a literal walk but rather to the manner of life. Christians are to pursue peace and holiness (v.14), peace toward their fellowsaints and holiness before the Lord. God will not manifest Himself in our lives unless these goals are pursued. The word for holiness is hagiasmos. The root of this word means difference or separation. The Christian's life is different, his ideals are different; his motivation is different, his goals are different. Wescott says, "His life is the preparation for the presence of God."

The eyes, looking diligently, represent the outlook in life. The writer asserts that there are three things to watch for: (a) Lest we fail to keep pace with the grace of God. In Micah 4:6 the Prophet says, "I will assemble her that halteth" or "I will collect the stragglers." It is possible to lag behind, to drift away or to linger and fail to keep abreast of God-given opportunities. (b) Lest we have a root of bitterness. This expression comes from Dueteronomy 29:18 where it describes those who went after strange gods and influenced others to do the same, "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood." We must watch for those influences that would detach from Christ and destroy the true focus of Christian living.

(c) Lest we fall into a sensual, unhallowed life. The word for profane is babelos. Barclay gives us some light on this word. It was used for ground that was profane in contradistinction to ground that was consecrated. The ancient world had its religions in which only the

initiated could participate. Babelos is used for the person who was uninitiated as opposed to the man who was devout in his religion. The writer is therefore saying that we should watch lest we lapse into a frame of mind where there is no horizon beyond this world. The sad history of Esau is cited as an example.

The dispensations are now contrasted in verses 18-24, the terror and majesty of Mount Sinai with the tenderness and mercy of Mount Zion. In these are vivid contrasts; law and grace, fear and faith, solitude and fellowship.

There is a peculiar contrast between the blood of Abel and the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ in verse 24. The blood of Abel called for the revenge upon one individual and that for one transgression. The blood of the Lord Jesus which atones, calls for the pardoning mercy of God upon all men in spite of their innumerable transgressions. It speaks better things than that of Abel's. The only condition is that a soul repent and believe the gospel. Finally, the Spirit of God denotes, in the closing part of the chapter, that there are four dangers:

(a) There is the danger of being deaf to the voice of God (v.25). This is a very real thing in the life of the Christian. Often even in the secular world, as little as twenty-five percent of what is communicated is received and digested by the hearers. How tragic when this is true in spiritual lives! Spiritual success varies directly to sensitiveness to the voice of God. Certainly the injunction to the seven churches is a call to all, "He that hath an ear, let him hear."

(b) There is the danger of disobedience. The passage warns against refusing Him that speaketh. Obedience to the will of God is a principle that permeates the whole of the Word of God. James compares the life outside the will of God to a vapor that quickly disappears. We can only leave our mark for God in the world as we bring ourselves inside the current of the will of God.

(c) There is the danger of irreverence. We are to obtain grace whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. This infers that it is possible to live without acceptable service, reverence and godly fear, to live with the senses numbed and the conscience seared. In Philippians 4:8, Paul uses an adjective which, among other adjectives, describes things which should occupy our minds and hearts. The word is semnos, and is translated honest. Barclay says that it describes the man who moves through the world as if it were the temple of God. It describes that which has the dignity of holiness upon it. Arnold translates it, “Nobly serious.” The Christian should be in earnest; he should not be blase and nonchalant; he should consider his life a preparation for eternity.

(d) There is the danger of misinterpreting the character of God. “Our God is a consuming fire.” Isaiah says, “Who among us shall dwell with the devouring fire?” Then he gives us six marks of character which are necessary to a walk with God: “He that walketh righteously and speaketh uprightly; he that despiseth the gain of oppressions, that shaketh his hands from holding of bribes; that stoppeth his ears from hearing of blood and shutteth his eyes from seeing evil. He shall dwell on high: his place of defence shall be the munitions of

rocks:... thine eyes shall see the King in His beauty: they shall behold the land that is very far off" (Isa. 33:14-17).

The first step in winning a battle is to know the enemy; having been made aware of the dangers, let us now consciously lay hold on the grace made available to us and, like the saints of old, obtain a good report through faith.

Notes on Hebrews (Part 14) (Apr 1968)

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In the concluding chapter of the Hebrews the writer drives home some basic and fundamental truths. These show that Christianity is more than a dogma, more than a creed and more than a code of laws. It is a way of life, a transfiguration, a process by which the Eternal Son of the Eternal God lives and moves through the lives of His people.

In our chapter mention is made of the law of the sin-offering of which our Lord was the Antitype. The blood was brought in, the body was carried out. This sums up the teaching of the Epistle, “Within the veil” (Ch. 1-10); “Without the camp” (Ch. 11-13) “Let us draw near.” “Let us go forth.”

In this process of transfiguration, if the Spirit of God is allowed to have His way the results will be: contentment in circumstances (v.6), unwavering faith in Christ (v.8), spiritual stability in holy doctrine (vs. 9-10), patience in bearing the reproach of our rejected Lord (vs. 11-14); an acknowledgement of the rights of God, (vs. 17-18) and the unceasing sacrifices of praise toward God and well-doing toward man (vs. 15-16). In these sacrifices the requirements of the law in its two parts are fulfilled in us, loving the Lord with all our hearts and our neighbour as ourselves.

The chapter may be divided into three major sections: love (vs. 1-6), loyalty (vs. 7-14), liberty (vs. 15-25).

Love. The first thing the writer draws our attention to is the sympathy of Christian love. The Church is what we might call “organicly united.” If one member suffer all the members suffer with it. So often we tend to become critical, condemning, censorious, fault-finding and unsympathetic in our actions toward each other. While we must be unswerving in our loyalty to our Lord and the Christian assembly, yet we must never forget that love alone is the bond or cohesive force in Christian fellowship. “Let Philadelphia continue.” In the exercise of spiritual gift there is a manifestation of God’s power, in the exercise of love there is a manifestation of His nature.

Second, the writer turns to the pleasure of Christian fellowship. He, no doubt, is thinking of Abraham when he speaks of those who entertained angels unawares. There is nothing more commendable than a Christian home opened for the Lord, a house where Christ is the centre. Stewardship extends beyond money to all that we have.

Third, the writer considers the suffering of Christian servants. Tertullian, an early historian wrote, “If there happens to be any Christians in the mines, or banished to the islands, or shut up in prison for nothing but their fidelity to the cause of God and His Church, they become the nurslings of their confession.” The Word of God teaches that the union of the Body of Christ is such that what affects one member affects all: If one member suffer then all suffer and if one is honoured all rejoice.

Fourth, we now turn to the sanctity of Christian marriage (v.4). The advent of Christianity brought a new morality to the world. Of course, the same morality was

taught in the law of Moses, but Christianity put the stamp of universality upon it. The writer uses two words to describe the conditions that were prevelant in the world at that time. One word denotes adulterous living while the other describes such things as unnatural vice. They are translated here “whoremongers and adulterers.” Such impurity could not be tolerated in the Christian Church. The marriage bond was to be respected and honoured. The strength of the family unit became the strength of the local assembly.

Fifth, the writer turns to the satisfaction of the Christian life (v.5). The constant presence of the Lord not only meets our every need but it drives away all fear. Christ permeates and fills the Christian’s life. He therefore should not look at the world through coloured glasses, but look at it as it is. The Christian should not be concerned about the immediate future for his vision goes beyond the things of time and sense. Like Abraham, he should look for a city that hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. His horizons do not end with mountains, valleys, rivers or plains. His life is linked with the Throne of God and he need not fear what man will do unto him.

Loyalty. Verses seven and eight deal with Christian leadership. These verses describe the kind of leadership that is necessary for assembly welfare and progress. Christian leadership must be characterized by (a) loyalty to the Word of God. It may be necessary to resist the tide of public opinion. A leader must stand, provided he stands for principle and truth. With the rise of the young people’s movement among assemblies and the improvement in the standards of education there is a tendency to despise godly and spiritual overseers. Let us

remember that the tree of knowledge can never become the tree of life. The true overseer will gently, carefully and constantly pour the Word of God into the ears of the hearers thus giving the Spirit of God opportunity to work. He will attempt to mold the saints by the Word of God.

(b) A leader is one who has set his faith on the proper object, Christ. The object of his whole manner of life is Christ (v.8). The leaders mentioned in verse seven had passed on by death. Those of verse 17 were still living at the time of the writing.

(c) A leader is one who portrays Christ. The saints had been bereft of these leaders but the fragrance of their testimony remained among them. The issue of their manner of life was Jesus Christ. But why is the unchangeability of Christ emphasized here? Because He is the High Priest for all succeeding generations. Let the saints take courage. Others will be raised up of God to fill the places emptied by the death of these men.

Verses nine and ten bring into contrast the altars of Judaism and Christianity. “We have an altar,” Christ in all the value of His atonement. The Jews had an altar for expiatory sacrifices. We have no such altar. Expiation has already been made by the Son of God. He is at the same time altar, sacrifice and High Priest. The priests of the old economy have no right to serve at this altar. A new priesthood has been born in association with the One Judaism cast out. It functions outside that religious system and all systems that are patterned after it. However, the priests who served the tabernacle were meant to be a type of the new order of which Christ is the Head.

“Behold Israel after the flesh, are not they who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar?” (1 Cor. 10:18). Grace now shines with a lustre never seen before. The hearts of the priests of the new order are established but not by meats. (Lev. 6:1418, 24-30, Num. 18:8-11). The death of Christ reveals the grace of God in all its fullness. We are now partakers of the new altar. We feed upon Christ in all His atoning value.

Our Lord is now outside that camp. As the typical sin-offering He was crucified outside the city walls of Jerusalem. We must go forth unto Him. He is not only the altar at which we as priests minister, but He is now the gathering centre of His people. They share the outside place with Him. Our priestly functions have liberty only outside the religious systems of our day which follow the Judaistic pattern. In loyalty to our rejected Lord we can only be, as to fellowship, where He is acknowledged Lord.

Since the offering of Christ can never be repeated, the writer now turns to the offerings that are and should be repeated daily in the Christian’s life.

First, we can offer our praises. Down through the centuries the spontaneous note of praise rising from redeemed hearts has rejoiced the heart of God. Gratitude and praise are the ear marks of a healthy Christian life. The one who is enjoying the presence of God is, without exception, a man or woman of praise. Paul prayed for the Colossian church that it might be strengthened, that it might be filled “giving thanks unto the Father.”

Second, we can offer the fruit of our lips, that is a glad confession of our faith in Christ. Someone has said that

the Christian should neither be ashamed of the gospel nor a shame to it.

Third, we can offer the humanitarian acts of kindness to our fellowmen. Not only is the Christian's heart opened to receive Christ, but his eyes are opened to see the need around him. These are the double exercises of our priestly prerogatives, the requirements of the law in its two parts are fulfilled in us. Our Lord Himself has pointed out that loving the Lord and loving our neighbour are the two great pillars upon which the whole teaching of the law and the prophets hang.

The writer now turns to the government of the local churches of the saints. In verse seven he exhorts them to honour the memory of their deceased leaders. Here in verses 1719 it is incumbent upon them to obey their present guides. A twofold duty is required of the saints, to obey them and to pray for them.

A threefold exercise belongs to leaders: "They watch for your souls." They should seek to know the flock personally: its condition, character and need, to guide it safely through all the snares that are laid by the devil for its downfall.

They should not only know how to feed the flock but they should know the dangers to which the flock is exposed.

They will give account to the Chief Shepherd. The Judgment Seat of Christ must ever be before them. It will be joy or grief to them when each of the flock is examined for reward by the Lord Himself.

At the close of the Epistle God is revealed as the God of peace. Peace has been made by the blood of the

everlasting covenant and peace is enjoyed between God and His people.