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*THE WESTMINSTER NEW TESTAMENT*

HEBREWS AND  
THE GENERAL EPISTLES











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*THE WESTMINSTER NEW TESTAMENT*

GENERAL EDITOR

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PRINCIPAL OF NEW COLLEGE, LONDON

HEBREWS  
AND THE  
GENERAL EPISTLES

WITH INTRODUCTION AND NOTES

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"THE TEACHING VALUE OF THE BOOK OF GENESIS"

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## PREFACE BY THE GENERAL EDITOR

HAVING carefully selected the editors of the ten volumes of which the Westminster New Testament will consist, and having fully explained to them the purpose of the series, the General Editor is leaving them the greatest possible liberty ; and the editor of each volume is alone responsible for the opinions expressed in it. It is hoped that thus any lack of uniformity will be amply compensated for by the varied interest which the free expression of his own individuality by each editor will impart to the series. While the standpoint adopted is that of modern critical scholarship, only the generally accepted results, and not the vagaries of individual critics, are being presented, and in such a fashion as to avoid unnecessarily giving any offence or causing any difficulty to the reverent Bible student. As the series is intended especially for teachers, lay preachers, and others engaged in Christian work, their needs are being kept particularly in view, and the Commentary aims at being as practically useful as possible. A new arrangement in printing the text and the notes has been adopted, which it is believed will be found an improvement.

A. E. GARVIE.

NEW COLLEGE, LONDON.

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### I. THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

#### (1) CHARACTERISTICS.

On this head it must be at once said the teachers will have to exercise their highest powers in creating interest and to use their greatest stock of patience, partly because of the character of the Epistle, partly from the lack of interest in it felt by the Church at the present time. In the opinion of modern scholars the Epistle stands high. Professor A. B. Bruce speaks of it as "one of the most important of New Testament writings." Professor Gwatkin in his recently published *Church History*, vol. i. 62, regards it as "the work of a thinker of the first order." Upon inspection it will be found to contain a series of cumulative arguments developed with much subtlety and poetic power. Consequently it appeals to two classes of readers. It appeals to those who enjoy a fine intellectual demonstration and are willing to follow patiently the steps by which the writer mounts to his final position, leaving behind him the marks of his passage, in groups of discomfited theories and ideas. The Melchisedec section (iv. 14-v. 10) becomes of interest mainly to those who enjoy a subtle argument. In the next place it appeals to a different order of mind—the poetic. There is no question that we are dealing with a writer of considerable imaginative power. His vocation is to reveal, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, the "new and living Way" of our Lord Jesus Christ. Teachers have consequently to interpret much of the Epistle as they are ac-

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customed to teach the glowing ideals of a poet. They will require imaginative insight in themselves and in their class, a sympathy with the tremendous task which the writer sets out to fulfil. On the ethical side, where Bible readers expect edification, the Epistle is not perhaps as rich in material as are the other letters of the New Testament. There will be found, indeed, a central strand of earnest moral entreaty and exhortation running throughout. Repeatedly the course of the argument is broken to give room for an impassioned exhortation to the conscience of the readers. The Epistle, however, has not the many-sidedness of the rest of the ethical teaching of the New Testament Revelation. It does not give as much insight as we could wish into the actual life of the first recipients. The Epistles of St. Paul touch in so many points the life of the Greek cities of his mission sphere that we can almost live the life again. Here the appeal, varied in its tone, but of deep intensity throughout, is directed to one great end—the creation of a spirit of determined steadfastness and undeviating enlightened faith.

It must be confessed that this Epistle is not a popular one with modern readers. It has been said, possibly by a very ignorant person, that the whole of the argument against the worship of angels and the ancient priesthood is outworn. But ancient priesthoods survive, and in the present phase of missionary work at home and abroad, the Christian teacher never knows when he may have to use this method of dealing with such priesthoods. Whilst parts of the Epistle have an imperishable renown, and certain golden phrases are counted by every Christian believer as very

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precious, still the interest of the general reader is apt to flag when he attempts to read the Epistle from beginning to end. Consequently, every effort at clear exposition has to be made by any teacher who appreciates the book at its high intrinsic value and understands its due place in the unfolding of Scriptural truth. The divisions of the Epistle into sections and the detailed notes that follow are framed principally in the interests of clearness. They do not take the teacher into long detailed discussion of the various meanings of each word—for this he must go to Professor A. B. Davidson's great work—but they aim at putting the reader in possession of the meaning that fits the argument, whilst the headings and recapitulation should help to keep him alive to the process and unfolding of the theme itself as it passes from one stage to another.

### (2) THE STYLE.

The teacher is free to take the Epistle in his hand as an anonymous piece of literature. The title given to it in the Authorised, and unfortunately followed in the Revised Version—"The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews,"—is not found in the ancient MSS., and may be at the outset dismissed from consideration (see p. 20). The work is not even called "an Epistle." The American R.V., which is in most cases truer to the original than our own, gives here the proper title—"To Hebrews." At the close of the second century, churches and writers were unanimous in accepting this as the title of the book (Zahn, ii. 295). Even this may not here have formed part of the original



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letter, but may have been placed by copyists on the outside of the roll so as to distinguish it from other writings which were being circulated amongst the churches with it. It is probable that the letter was bound with St. Paul's Epistles in early times, and that it is from this circumstance that the idea arose that he was the author (Zahn, ii. 295, 304, 306). All the information regarding the identity of the writer, his mental outlook and personality, must be gathered solely from the Epistle itself, and since the style is the man, it is the style which is the first matter to be observed.

There is no opening salutation or expression of personal regard for the readers such as is found in the other Epistles of the New Testament. This at once raises a doubt whether we are about to read a work which can in any sense be called a letter. The opening passage is a statement of the author's main position regarding Jesus Christ such as we should expect to find at the beginning of a treatise, sermon, or set speech. Then, from the first verse of chap. i.-x. 25, we find that the unfolding of the theme develops in regular order. There is a passage of argument followed by a digression for purposes of exhortation. If these appeals to conscience (ii. 1-4, iii. 1-4, 15, v. 11-vi. 12, x. 19-39) were omitted the document would read as a smoothly flowing piece of reasoning, but, with these where they are, it gives the impression of the work of a prophet and speaker, rather than a letter-writer. Words of personal address occur, though sparingly: iii. 1, "Holy brethren"; iii. 12, "Brethren"; vi. 9, "Beloved"; xiii. 22, "Brethren." The writer associates himself with his readers, i. 2,

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ii. 1, 3, iv. 1, 11, viii. 1, ix. 24, x. 19, 22, xii. 2. In the last chapter (xiii. 22) the writer speaks of himself in the first person for the first and only time. He also refers to his writing as "A word of encouragement," as if he felt this was its chief characteristic. It is better, therefore, to regard it as half treatise, half letter, and to call it by the established and dignified name of "Epistle." Personally, I regard it as having been spoken to an assembly before it was written down. In several places, which will be indicated in the notes, we can detect the mannerisms of a speaker or preacher.

Dividing the document into three main sections, the teacher will point out—(a) That in i.–x. 25, students can discover passages which illustrate the writer's power of (1) reasoned exposition, and (2) of prophetic admonition. (b) That from x. 26–xii. 29 the style alters: the thought moves more rapidly than in the earlier and more argumentative part. (In x. 39 the word "faith" starts the writer into his highest vein of impassioned writing, in which he gives the roll-call of the heroes of faith, culminating in the supreme work of Jesus "Author and Perfecter of faith.") (c) That the Epistle closes with a section (chap. xiii.) which in many ways is different in style from the rest of the document, and bears close resemblance to St. Paul's manner of writing. The conclusion to which one comes after reading these three sections is that we have here the work of one who was master of several kinds of literary art, or, if we may regard him as a trained speaker, of different kinds of oratory. He could reason after the approved method of the schools, as an educated man amongst

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educated men: could move to high thought and action, as a prophet of Revelation: and lastly, could speak simply, in unpremeditated words, concerning the conduct of life like the ordinary letter-writer of the day.

The writer's prophetic genius as distinct from his more philosophic vein may be illustrated in the series of concise concrete phrases with which the Epistle abounds. They are the results, not of the analytic Greek habit of thought, but of the intuitive Hebraic genius for concrete word-painting, *e.g.* ii. 9, "Taste death for every man"; iv. 9, "A sabbath rest for the people of God"; vi. 4, "Tasted the heavenly gift . . . tasted the good Word of God, and the powers of the age to come"; vi. 19, "An anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast"; vii. 16, "Made a Priest after the power of an endless life"; ix. 11, "A High Priest of the good things to come"; x. 1, "A shadow of good things to come"; x. 20, "A new and living Way"; x. 29, "Trodden under foot the Son of God"; x. 33, "Being made a gazing-stock"; xi. 10, "The city which hath foundations"; xii. 1, "A cloud of witnesses"; xii. 9, "The Father of spirits"; xii. 15, "Any root of bitterness"; xiii. 20, "The blood of the eternal Covenant."

We look for illustrations from Nature and figurative expressions in all the writings of Hebrew and Jewish thinkers, but there are very few in this Epistle. It is in this respect a great contrast to the Gospels, to the Epistle of St. James, and even to the writings of St. Paul. (See, however, iv. 12, vi. 7, 8, x. 33, xii. 1, 13, 22.)

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### (3) THE BACKGROUND OF THE WRITER'S MIND.

In seeking for the specific religious truth or special revelation in the writings of the Bible much care has to be taken to realise the historical standpoint of the author. He brings with him to the reception of spiritual truth the ideas and thoughts which he had learnt from previous inspired writers, and his mind, if it is at all inclined that way, is also coloured by the philosophy of his times. In this case we have to understand his position with regard to the Old Testament, and also in a less degree to those philosophic ideas with which the Jews had been familiarised by Philo.

(a) *The Old Testament.* — It is regarded as authoritative, though not finally so; it is the record of what God spake to the fathers in the prophets. When citations are introduced they are regarded as the Word of God, i. 5, "Said He"; i. 6, 7, "He saith." This is not uniform, for in ii. 6 it is not God who is said to speak, but "One who somewhere testifies." In iii. 7 a new term is used: "The Holy Ghost saith" (cf. v. 5, vi. 13, vii. 17, ix. 8, x. 15). The next point of interest is to discover the parts of the Old Testament which the writer most frequently quotes. The following gives the result of such an inquiry:—

Chap. i. Ps. ii. 7; 2 Sam. vii. 14; (Ps. lxxxix. 26, 27); (Deut. xxxii. 43), (from Greek Version). Cf. Ps. xcvii. 7.

„ ii. Ps. viii. 4–6, xxii. 22; 2 Sam. xxii. 3; Isa. viii. 18.

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- Chap. iii. Ps. xcvi. 7-11.  
„ iv. Ps. xcvi. 7-11.  
„ v. Ps. ii. 7, cx. 4 (the Melchisedec Psalm).  
„ vii. Gen. xiv. 18-20 ; Ps. cx. 4.  
„ viii. Jer. xxxi. 31-34.  
„ x. Ps. xl. 6-8 ; Hab. ii. 3, 4 ; and Ps. xxxvii. 10 (composite quotation).  
„ xii. Prov. iii. 11, 12.  
„ xiii. Ps. cxviii. 6.

Of these twenty citations twelve are taken from the Psalms, one from Proverbs, seven from the Prophets and prophetic historians. These are direct citations, but it should be noticed also that similar ideas are found in many other Psalms. Evidently the Psalms form the chief groundwork of the argument, and were the part of the previous revelation which most influenced the writer. He knows his "David" (iv. 7). Besides the exact citations, the writer amalgamates sometimes several passages into one, as in x. 37, 38, which is made up of Ps. xxxvii. 10 ; Hab. ii. 3, 4, and a sentence of his own. Occasionally he makes verbal changes in the Old Testament account, as in xii. 21. The ritual books of the Old Testament are used freely for descriptive purposes in chap. vii.-x. ; and the historical books, including 1 and 2 Maccabees, in the eleventh chapter.

(b) *Greek Ideas*.—Dr. Bigg says, "The author of this Epistle (Hebrews) is not without a tincture of philosophy." This remark probably understates the fact. Greek ways of thought had for some centuries been penetrating to the Jews, and the writer makes allusion to Plato's teaching in this Epistle.

In viii. 5 he says that Moses was enjoined to make the Tabernacle and its furniture according to the pattern which had been shown him in the Mount. This pattern was taken from that of the heavenly Tabernacle, which was thought of as really existing in the other world. This is according to the doctrine of Platonic ideas. (See Bruce, *Hebrews*, p. 25.)

(c) *The Method of Interpreting the Old Testament*.—We have seen that the Psalms supply the Old Testament groundwork of his teaching; they are sometimes used literally and sometimes in a hidden sense, just as the author pleases. They are regarded—(i.) as affording ground for practical exhortation, e.g. Ps. xcvi. 7–11 in Heb. iii. 7, where the mention of the word “To-day” suggests the need of immediate decision, and the mention of “Rest” suggests the idea of a Sabbath Rest remaining for the people of God. (ii.) As giving authority to his revelation regarding the Sonship of Jesus Christ. The Messianic Psalms are quoted with great force; sometimes to us the method seems a little forced, as when in quoting Ps. xlv. in Heb. i. 8, the only verse which could be possibly regarded as Messianic is singled out. Although Ps. cii. is addressed to Jehovah, i.e. the Lord, it is quoted as applying to the Son. Ps. cx. does service in building up the theory of the Epistle in no less than four passages—i. 13, v. 6, vi. 20, vii. 17–21. It will be observed that on the whole in this use of the authoritative book the writer follows the natural sense, although he relies more on single words and ideas, less on the general sense of a Psalm, than we should feel justified in doing to-day. Two citations are made, more after the modern way of

scientific spiritual interpretation, namely, Jer. xxxi. 31-34 in Heb. viii. 8, and Ps. xl. 6-8 in Heb. x. 5.

(iii.) *The Allegorical Method.*—We are familiar with pictures that are not of value as pictures of life but solely in their hidden sense. This Epistle contains instances of an interpretation of a similar kind. Melchisedec is treated as partly an historical, partly an allegorical figure. (Cf. the treatment of Ps. xcv. 7-11 in Heb. iv. 1-11.)

## (4) THE THEOLOGICAL TEACHING.

It may be useful to the reader to have suggested to him in the Introduction some of the points of view from which the Epistle may be regarded if it is to yield to the student its specific religious truth. It is evident from the careful references which the writer makes to the Jewish faith and ceremonial, and from his grasp of the poetic books, that he finds in them much that is authoritative in respect to the character of God and the spiritual needs of man. His most comprehensive phrase for religion, which he uses twice (ii. 17, v. 1), is "the things pertaining to God." His mind rests upon these as the ultimate realities. His view is not the modern one, that we arrive at the truth regarding God through nature or through man, but through God to man. He would have agreed with Benjamin Whichcote, "If a man has wrong suppositions in his mind concerning God, he will be wrong through all parts of his religion."

(a) *Concerning God.* — *He is a Living God* (iii. 12, ix. 14, x. 31, xii. 22). "Father of spirits" (xii. 9); Father of sons (xii. 7); the people's God (xi. 16).

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*He has Power.*—This is expressed in the words “glory” (i. 2); “the Majesty on high” (i. 3); the throne of the Majesty in the heavens (viii. 1).

*He is a Builder and Maker.*—He builds all things (iii. 4); frames worlds (xi. 3); prepares a heavenly city (xi. 16); works by wonders, manifold powers and gifts of the Holy Spirit (ii. 4); makes a covenant (viii. *passim*).

*He is to be Depended Upon.*—Not unrighteous so as to forget (vi. 10); has unchangeable plans (vi. 17); cannot lie (vi. 18).

*He Enters Man's Life.*—By self-communication: He spoke of old time in the prophets; speaks to-day in a Son (i. 1); speaks from heaven (xii. 25). His word is a good word (vi. 5); it is living and searching like a two-edged sword (iv. 12).

*He has a Will to be Done* (x. 7, xiii. 21); can be pleased with service (ix. 14); and with consecrated will (ix. 14, xiii. 16).

*He is Entirely Good in His Dealings.*—Holy in character (xii. 10); that which he imparts is grace (ii. 9, xiii. 9); and peace (xiii. 20); nothing is hidden from His goodness: He reaches all (iv. 13); is Judge of all (xii. 23).

Evidently this conception of God is that which is unfolded in the later stages of Old Testament revelation.

(b) *Concerning the Spiritual Needs of Man.*—Various terms are used for what the writer conceives his readers and, by implication, all men need, salvation (i. 14); a great salvation (ii. 3); salvation to the uttermost (vii. 25); a bringing of sons to glory (ii. 10); they need a salvation that is complete and is as lasting as the life of God; this is expressed in the word eternal; eternal salvation



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(v. 9); eternal redemption (ix. 12). Man needs also "the world to come" (ii. 5); an eternal inheritance, (ix. 12); a better country (xi. 16); a city that hath foundations (xi. 10); a recompense of reward (xi. 26); or under a metaphor which the writer uses with great force and with evident appreciation of its appeal to the heart—"an entering into rest" (iv. 1); a Sabbath rest (iv. 9). Spiritual need is described also in terms of the soul and of the immediate present, as "tasting the powers of the world to come" (vi. 5); refuge (vi. 18); rescue from him that hath the power of death (ii. 15); sanctification (x. 29); a saving of the personal life (x. 39); a share in God's holiness (xii. 10); mercy and grace (iv. 16); or in sacrificial terms—perfection as touching the inner life (ix. 9); cleansing of the inner life from dead works (ix. 14); propitiation for sins (ii. 17); redemption from transgressions (ix. 15); a permanent priesthood (vii. 24); a high priest of good things to come (ix. 11). In consequence of all this need on the part of a man, a living way must be opened between his personal life and the life of God. God must be brought within reach and man must be able to move boldly towards Him. This movement is called "drawing near to God" (vii. 19, vii. 25, x. 1, 22); or entering the Holy Place (x. 19); or Faith (xi. 1); for Faith in this Epistle is regarded as a movement of soul, not in the sense that we use it as meaning the Christian Faith. "Faith in the Epistle to the Hebrews is a psychological faculty. In this sense it is as wide as the human mind, and even Rahab may be adduced as an example of it" (Inge). It is at this point that we reach the central truth of the Epistle, and that which is most original to the

writer—his conception of Christianity as the final Consecrated Way to God.

(c) *Concerning Jesus Christ.* — *Christ the Eternal Son.*—In the opening paragraph of the Epistle the veil is lifted, and a heavenly being is seen at the right hand of the Majesty of God. He is the Son of God (cf. iv. 14, vii. 3). He is the reflection of God's mysterious glory, as the face of one person may reflect the beauty of another. He is "the impression of His real nature" (i. 3) as the impression upon a seal bears a close resemblance to the stamp or signet. He "upholds all things by the word of His power" (i. 3); is crowned with a mystery of glory and with honour (ii. 9); is "holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (vii. 26).

*Christ the Eternal High Priest.*—The need of man for a priest to bring him to God is satisfied by the vocation of Jesus Christ, who is completely and finally what other priests were imperfectly. This is set forth in the whole description of His progress through earth to heaven, and in various significant titles and pregnant phrases. He is one who has made purification for sin (i. 3); "delivers from death and from the devil" (ii. 14); is "a high priest" (iii. 1); "a great High Priest" (iv. 14); "perfect in His vocation" (v. 9); "a priest who enters the Holy Place, having obtained eternal redemption" (ix. 12); a priest after the power of an endless life" (vii. 16); "a high priest of good things to come" (ix. 11). He is qualified for this priesthood by (1) His personal oneness with humanity; as Son over God's house (iii. 6); "bringing with Him other sons" (ii. 14 and iii. 6); "tasting death for every man" (ii. 9); "made like

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unto His brethren and touched with feeling" (iv. 15); "tempted in all points" (iv. 15); "learning obedience in His vocation" v. 8; "enduring the gainsaying of sinners" (xii. 3). (2) By His sacrifice. He is "one who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to God" (ix. 14). This is perhaps the most satisfying description of the sacrifice of the Cross given outside the Gospels. He is one who "offered sacrifice for sins, taking them away perfectly" (x. 12).

*Christ the Mediator.*—Not only is Christ regarded as a priest bringing men to God and to their proper life, but as a mediator of a positively new relationship with the Father.

He is "a surety of a better covenant" (vii. 22); "mediator of a better covenant" (viii. 6); "mediator of a new covenant" (ix. 15 and xii. 24).

*Christ the Pioneer of the Consecrated Way.*—This is another aspect of Christ's fulfilment of man's spiritual need for a perfect life. He is an Apostle (iii. 1); a Teacher or Revealer (ii. 3); Pioneer or Forerunner (vi. 20); one who dedicates a new and living Way (x. 20); a Captain and Completer of faith (xii. 2); an Author of eternal salvation (v. 9); a great Shepherd of Sheep (xiii. 20). This grouping of the writer's thoughts and revelations of Christ should afford the teacher a view of the central message of the Epistle. The conclusion reached is that—(a) regarded as performing all that men require a priest to do, the priesthood of Jesus Christ is eternally operative and final; (b) regarded as the authoritative Way by which the life of man comes into touch with the life of God, Christ is the "same, yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (xiii. 8).

### (5) THE ETHICAL TEACHING.

It has already been pointed out that there is a strong undercurrent of moral exhortation running through the Epistle, culminating in the historical exposition of Faith. Its scope, however, is simple (see *Introd. par. 2*). The chief Christian duty taught is constancy, and the doctrinal part of the Epistle is intended to supply motives for this duty. The Appendix, chap. xiii., contains exhortations of a more varied kind, such as we find in the Epistles of St. Paul. Christians are to show love to the Christian community (xiii. 1); to strangers (xiii. 2); to prisoners and to brethren who are persecuted (xiii. 3). Marriage is not to be despised, and when it takes place is to be kept faithfully under penalty of the judgment of God (xiii. 4). They are to free their character from the love of money (xiii. 5); to be loyal to the memory of their first rulers in the Church (xiii. 7); not to mind excommunication, but to bear the reproach of Christ (xiii. 13, see note); to offer up the sacrifice of praise in their synagogue or assembly (xiii. 15, x. 25); to do good and to communicate (share their goods with others (xiii. 16); to obey their present rulers or Church officials (xiii. 17); to pray (xiii. 18).

### (6) THE WRITER.

After this review of the style and contents of the Epistle, the next point of interest will be to determine from it, the character and identity of the author as far as it is possible to do from a single Epistle. It will be found useful to group

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the facts obtainable under these heads—(1) What may be learnt from the mental outlook of the writer? (2) What may be learnt from direct references to his own life?

1. *His Mental Outlook.*—From what has gone before it will be seen that the writer is a Christian Jew. He has that familiarity with the Scriptures and facility in quoting them which belongs to one who was trained in the Old Testament from his youth. He also follows the method of interpretation current in the circles of orthodox Jewish piety. He is deeply interested, with the interest of one who had penetrated its secret, in the ancient Jewish system for cleansing the faithful from sin; he makes no direct reference to the Temple at Jerusalem (the statement that Christians have no abiding city (xiii. 14) may refer to the Sacred City where Jewish worship was centralised), but goes back to Divine arrangements of ancient times. He perceives that the real stronghold of sacerdotal piety is the Levitical ceremonial, and that is the battlefield where the war between Jew and Christian must be settled. No one can study his method of dealing with the ancient religion, looking kindly upon its virtues and yet so decided in exposing its imperfections, without seeing how much the writer had gained from his ancestral faith. The Epistle gives us a glimpse of a mind which had more of the Priest in it than of the Pharisee or the Rabbi.

He was evidently drawn to the hope of the coming of a Christ by the Messianic Psalms. They gave his singularly alert mind an impetus to look for, and believe in, a new revelation when it came. He found a road open in his authoritative

Scriptures for a new experience, and expected the advent of a new Divine Personality who could give substantiality to his faith. This he found in Jesus. All the glowing thoughts, which his own Scriptures suggested, and his own inspired soul developed, became associated with Jesus. What he had been taught of the earthly life of Jesus appeared to him to be a complete preparation for the vocation of a High Priest in heaven. His own deepest religious feeling finds evident satisfaction in this view of the work of Jesus Christ.

The influence of the more emancipating side of the Old Testament—the poetic and prophetic writings—is, however, not the only influence which any one who wishes to understand this author has to notice. The Epistle would not have been written as it is, if the writer had not imbibed much of the Gentile culture of the day. It is far less Jewish both in style and matter than are the Epistles of St. James and St. Peter or the Gospel of St. Matthew. The latter, for instance, is quite alive to the fulfilment of the Messianic ideals in Christ, but his painstaking literalism is left far behind by the author of the Hebrews. Whilst St. Matthew seems to think that the events of Christ's life were moulded by some wish to fulfil ancient prophecy, our author has a deeper method of keeping up the continuity of the Jewish and the Christian religions. The new fulfils the old, not as an oak may be said to fulfil the acorn, but as a fresh addition of life, as a rose is grafted upon an old stock. When the new life comes the previous organism takes a lower place. This line of reasoning is the mark of a better education than could have been given in the Jewish Schools

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alone, and tends to show that the writer may have come from Alexandria.

2. *His Ethical Standpoint.*—Two strands may be here distinguished. There is in him the strong Hebraic tone which made the prophets—stern, devoted to truth. He experiences God as “a consuming fire.” There is also another strain—a gentler mood, a sweeter reasonableness. It is the mark of a nature which has considered all that the oneness of Christ with man’s temptations and sufferings really means. He is evidently much disturbed by the threatened apostasy of those whom he had once taught himself (xiii. 19), and treats them with much severity (x. 26-31); yet he breaks out into almost the tenderness of St. Paul at times; as in vi. 9, “But, *beloved*, we are persuaded better things of you,” and in xii. 7, “God dealeth with you even in suffering as with *sons*.” There was in him a strain of Christian love and sympathetic insight into the conditions of human life, blent with a Jewish passion for absolute righteousness. His is a fine moral nature in which the old and the new are joined in an admirable alliance.

3. *Direct References to the Writer’s own Life.*—He was not a personal disciple of Jesus but had been taught by some of the first disciples. This important fact appears in ii. 3, where the writer and the readers are both said to have received Christianity not through the Lord, but through His disciples. The writer had himself been their teacher and ruler (xiii. 19), but was no longer living with them; he was well known to them; he asks for their prayers on his own behalf and hopes to return to them soon. At the time of writing he is living in some unknown place where there is a Christian

Church, and the Italian members of the Church send a special message through him (xiii. 24); he has information about what is happening to the Christian Church elsewhere, and tells them "our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty" (xiii. 23). He hopes to make Timothy his companion in travel. Although he has been in some position of authority over them, they stand on an equal footing as members of the Church, and he calls them "Beloved, or Brethren, or Holy Brethren."

#### (7) THE AUTHOR'S IDENTITY.

Can we find any one in New Testament times who corresponds to the personality thus revealed? We have to find some one who has been a Jew, is now a Christian, with strong sacerdotal feeling; a master of the Old Testament, an educated literary man; an orator. It is a strange thing that his name should have been lost, both to history and tradition. Four claimants may be briefly considered—(a) St. Paul, (b) Barnabas, (c) Apollos, (d) Priscilla.

(a) *St. Paul*.—Briefly stated, the facts against his authorship of this Epistle are—(1) St. Paul could not be called a Christian who had been converted by those "who heard the preaching of Jesus" (ii. 3). He specially said he was converted not through human teachers but by revelation (Gal. i. 1, 12). (2) The style of the letter is entirely different from that of the Apostle; this can be verified by even an English reader if he will acquaint himself with St. Paul's rugged style, and compare it with the elegant smoothness of our author when he gets away from his Scriptural quotations. (3) The Apostle could



not have argued upon the theme of this Epistle without adding to it his own characteristic thoughts—that men are saved by faith and not by works of the Law. (4) St. Paul mentions the Saviour more than six hundred times in his Epistles, either as “Christ,” or “Jesus Christ,” or “our Lord Jesus Christ,” or simply “the Lord.” It would be strange if in Hebrews he had suddenly changed his usage and used, as is generally the case, the simple name “Jesus”; “Jesus Christ” only three times; “the Lord” twice; never the full formula, “our Lord Jesus Christ.”

(b) *Barnabas*.—It is much to be wished that more had come down to us about this interesting member of the primitive Church in Jerusalem. He became a member within two years of the Crucifixion, and became prominent in that Church as early as the year 38 A.D. (Acts ix. 27); he was chosen on account of his high character and spiritual experience to go down to Antioch to inquire into the condition of the Christian community there (Acts xi. 22). The points in favour of his authorship are—(1) that he was a Levite (Acts iv. 36), and therefore presumably specially interested in the sacerdotal system of his race; (2) there are some traces of a tradition according to which he once came to Rome. The importance of this fact will appear below, when the identity of the first recipients of this letter is discussed; (3) there may also be a link between him and this letter in the fact that in the Acts he is called “a son of encouragement,” *i.e.* a man of encouragement, and in chap. xiii. 22, this Epistle is called “a word of encouragement.” At the same time we know too little about him to make any confident assertion.

(c) *Apollos*.—St. Luke describes this man (Acts xviii. 24) as “a Jew, an Alexandrian by race, a learned man, mighty in the Scriptures.” He therefore fulfils at any rate two of the qualifications which we found to be necessary to the author of an Epistle like this. He was a learned man, a native of a city where there was a large number of Jews who combined Greek education with fidelity to their ancient faith. He was also, as St. Luke points out with his usual descriptive force, mighty in the Scriptures. He also fulfils the condition of being one who could have received Christianity from missionary disciples of Jesus, although when he met with Priscilla and Aquila he only knew the things concerning Jesus from disciples of John the Baptist (Acts xviii. 25, 26). Again the scantiness of our information prevents us from settling the matter in his favour.

(d) *Priscilla*.—This friend of the Apostle Paul, whose home was at Rome, is a favourite claimant at the present time for the authorship. Harnack has put forward the interesting conjecture that the principal part of the Epistle was written by her, and that the Epistle is therefore the only part of the New Testament written by a woman. In support of this, stress is laid upon the use of the plural “we,” and there seems to be little doubt that Priscilla, who is mentioned in the Acts before her husband (cf. Rom. xvi. 3), was a Roman lady of quality (Acts xviii. 26). The theory, however, gets into difficulties in face of the change to the personal pronoun “I” in chap. xiii., and the question is asked, Which of the two was going with Timothy to visit these Jewish Christians? We may also add that it may be doubted whether any

primitive Church, especially if it accepted St. Paul's teaching regarding the place of women, would have accepted a woman as teacher or ruler. It is impossible really to settle the question of authorship, and the only point on which a teacher should lay great stress is that it is certain the Epistle was not written by St. Paul.

### (8) THE READERS AND THE DATE.

*Their Faith and Nationality.*—They were Christians and Jews; the argument of the Epistle would have been unintelligible to Gentiles. Jewish sacerdotalism would have had no attraction for a Gentile, who was attracted far more by the priest-hoods of other and heathen religions. It is presupposed all through that they understood the ancient sacrificial system and the power of its priesthood to bring men to God and a perfect life. They also must have been people grounded in the Messianic Psalms and prophecies, which are cited by the writer in the manner of one who occupies well-understood common ground with his readers.

*Their Circumstances.*—Their knowledge of the Christian salvation had come to them through the first disciples of Jesus (ii. 3); they knew its rudiments (vi. 1-4); had tasted its power (vi. 5); had had a long Christian experience (x. 26, 32). They had enjoyed an organised Christian life: rulers past and present are mentioned (xiii. 7, 17, 24); charity towards other Christian Churches had been shown by them (vi. 10); they had simple Christian worship (xiii. 15). The outstanding feature of their life is that they had passed through a time of persecution. In the early days of their conversion they had

endured "a great conflict of sufferings" (x. 32), being made a notable spectacle by reproaches and afflictions (x. 33); had also shared a persecution wider than their own community (x. 34); had lost their earthly goods (x. 34). All this had taken place in former days, and now, although the reference is not so definite, another period of persecution is imminent (xii. 4-7).

*Their Great Temptation.*—The writer is intimately acquainted with their spiritual condition. They are being tempted to an awful apostasy: a fundamental change of front which would land them outside the pale of salvation. The temptation is not that they should go back to the legal form of piety such as St. Paul dreaded in the Galatians, but to a reliance on the sacerdotalism of the ancient Church (x. 26-31). Several causes of this terrible backsliding are given. They were less intelligent in their grasp of Christian principles than before (v. 11-vi. 2); they failed to see that the message which God gave through His Son was richer and more acceptable to common human nature than anything that had gone before; further, they were morally decadent, bearing affliction and the reproach of Christ less patiently than they had done in former times. The virtue they specially lacked was spiritual boldness (iii. 6, 14, x. 19).

*Were they Scattered Individuals, or a Local Church?*—The last question that arises is—Do these facts indicate that these Jewish Christians formed one church in one definite place, or were they like those whom St. James addressed, "Members of the Dispersion" in many localities? The reasons for believing that they formed one church are—(1) the warmth of the writer's appeal;

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(2) his intimate knowledge of their spiritual condition ; (3) the mention of special officers or rulers ; (4) the fact that he himself was known to them as a teacher or ruler ; (5) the fact that they had contributed to the saints of the other churches ; (6) the two persecutions : one at the beginning of their Christian life, and the other impending.

*The Locality of this Church of Hebrews.*—Experts are now tolerably agreed that the people to whom this Epistle was first sent lived in Rome. The following are the chief reasons in support of this hypothesis—(1) in xiii. 24 the writer says, “They of Italy salute you.” This implies that the writer was himself living in a church away from the capital where there were many Christians of Italian race. It is natural to suppose that these would like to send a greeting to their own compatriots in Rome. (2) The mention in this Epistle of a persecution which they suffered soon after their conversion suggests the great outbreak of cruelty under Nero. Compare Heb. x. 32–34 with Rev. xvii. 6, xviii. 24, and with the description of the Roman historian Tacitus. (3) There was a large settlement of Jews at Rome, and when St. Paul wrote to the Romans at the beginning of the year 58 A.D. the majority of the church were Jews (Rom. vii. 1, viii. 15, vi. 16, 17). There seem to have been several house-churches in Rome : one of these met in the house of Priscilla and Aquila before they were expelled from Rome, and the church held in their house continued to exist (Rom. xvi. 5). (4) In the year 96 A.D. Clement of Rome wrote his letter to the Corinthians, and in this letter there are unmistakable references to the Epistle to the Hebrews, such as we should expect if the letter was well known in Rome.

(5) If the exhortation in chap. xiii. 9, "be not built up by meats but by grace," and that of xiii. 4, "Do not despise marriage," be interpreted as a warning against asceticism, there is here also a connection with Rome, for it appears that abstinence from meat and wine—teetotalism and vegetarianism—were considered to be necessary to the Christian life, a tendency finding little favour with either our author or the Apostle Paul (Rom. xiv. 2, 4; 1 Tim. iv. 1-8; Tit. i. 15).

*The Date.*—If we identify the first persecution mentioned in this Epistle (x. 32) with that of Nero in the year 64 A.D., and take 96 A.D. as the date when Clement uses this Epistle, we get the two limits for the date. We then allow for all that is said implying that a very considerable time had passed since that persecution (v. 12, x. 32). Their church had become organised, and sufficient time had elapsed for them to become ripe enough to teach others. Timothy is mentioned as about to accompany the author on a journey upon his release from prison (xiii. 23). The letter therefore must not be dated too far into the century so as to make Timothy too old for travel. The year 80 A.D., when he would be a man of about fifty-five, seems to suit best the conditions of the problem.

## II. THE EPISTLE OF JAMES.

### (1) THE TEACHING OF THE EPISTLE.

(a) *Concerning God.*—It is good to draw near to God (iv. 8); to be a friend of God, and to be held righteous in His sight (ii. 23); to ask of Him

good gifts, and to praise Him (i. 5, v. 13-18); He gives to all men liberally (i. 5). All this follows from His revealed character: He is our God and Father (i. 27); the Lord and Father (iii. 9); the Lord (v. 4, 11); the Father of lights, who never changes in His disposition (i. 17); is full of pity and merciful (v. 11); "giveth grace" (iv. 6); cannot tempt to evil and is Himself unsusceptible to its influence (i. 13). On the contrary, He plans out man's life for him (iv. 15); hears the cry of the oppressed as Lord of Sabaoth (v. 4); brought us forth to be first-fruits by the word of truth (i. 18); and made man in His own likeness (iii. 9); has promised a crown of life to those that love Him (i. 12). He has spoken by His prophets, and a servant of Jesus Christ is a servant of God (i. 1). At the same time He is the only Lawgiver and Judge, able to save and destroy (iv. 12). As Lawgiver He has given a law fit not for slaves but for kings, which is itself the principle of all other rules and laws (ii. 8). He resists the proud, and it is not good to be at enmity with him (iv. 1-10). His judgment is mingled with mercy (ii. 13); He is a Judge who standeth before the door (v. 9); His coming is at hand (v. 8).

(b) *Concerning Christ.*—The writer is the servant of the Lord Jesus Christ, and it is good to hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ the Glorious One in the right way (ii. 1, see note).

(c) *Concerning Life and Character.* — Human character, in accordance with these ideas of God and His dealings, has a great range of possibility. Notwithstanding the pressure of evil desire, the growth of evil habit (i. 13-15), and the fact that "in many things we all stumble" (iii. 2), it is

possible to become "perfect and entire, wanting in no gift" (i. 4). There is in man a sense of duty, of "ought" and "ought not" (iii. 10); he may be wise with a fair and heavenly wisdom (iii. 13), and may lead a good life, full of activities, the laws of which he discovers by a humble-minded insight into the real condition of Christian life (iv. 10). There is a Word which when implanted saves souls (i. 21). The Epistle gives a clear picture of the man whose character the writer (1) admires, (2) abhors. (1) It is good to be one—who endures trial (i. 12); a doer of the word and of the perfect law, the law of liberty, the royal law (i. 23, 25, ii. 8); one who keeps himself unspotted (i. 27); is humble (iv. 10); patient (v. 7); a good learner (i. 19); sympathetic with those who are suffering, or sick, or in good spirits (v. 13, 14); a prayerful man (v. 16); one who has the gift of converting others to the truth (v. 19, 20); and whose own word may be depended upon (v. 12); who stumbleth not in word, and is slow to wrath (i. 19). (2) It is bad to be one who is—a "double-minded man," unstable in all his ways (i. 8); a hearer that takes a mere glance at the rule of life, and forgets (i. 25); who has a faith apart from loving deeds (ii. 26); whose mouth utters both blessings and cursings (iii. 10); a teacher who cannot control his tongue (iii. 1-8); who has bitter jealousy and the spirit of faction in his heart, and is full of wrath (i. 19, iii. 14); is a friend of the world (iii. 14); a toady to the rich (ii. 1); one who speaks evil of his brother (iv. 11); and defrauds his workmen of their wages (v. 4); who takes his life into his own hands, without thought of what God wills (iv. 15).



**(2) THE STYLE AND LANGUAGE OF THE EPISTLE.**

It opens with a salutation, but has no ending. It might have ended at any other place. There is no development of a single theme: it is easier for a student to discover its divisions than its unity. Yet if we gather the facts together, as in the previous part of the Introduction, we see that there is a unity of tone both in the theological and ethical outlook. It is the same writer that speaks to us throughout.

There is no Epistle in the New Testament quite like this. There is nothing obscure in its style; no sentence unfinished, or drawn out to great length. Its force does not lie, as in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in any brilliance of dialectical skill; nor in the strength of its appeal to the prophets of the Old Testament or other writers: neither does it make any appeal to the commandments or examples of Christ as in 1 and 2 Peter. It reaches home, because of its straightforward approach to conscience, and deep knowledge of men as they are. For this purpose the clear-cut, crisp sentences, and strong concrete imagery, serve admirably. There is both in style and manner much of that power which we find in the Great Teacher of the Gospels. In i. 23 there are what we may call germs of a parable. It would not be difficult for a master of the art to develop the idea of the two men looking at the mirror, and their behaviour afterwards, into a real parable (cf. ii. 15, 16). In ii. 1-4 we have a synagogue scene, as vividly portrayed as the Temple scene when the Pharisee and Publican pray (Luke

xviii. 9). In iii. 11, 12 the writer uses the common countryside image of figs, olives, and fountains in just the manner of our Lord. There are also in the Epistle signs that the writer had a share of the prophetic manner which characterised the teaching of the last days of the Earthly Ministry. The terrible scorn of rich and cruel employers (v. 1) takes the reader back to the great indictment of the Pharisees and hypocrites (Matt. xxiii.). Here again the undeveloped power of the servant of Christ stands in contrast with the full strength of the Master. Greek experts have worked out the resemblance between the language of this Epistle and that of the teaching of Christ (see larger Commentaries). There are forty-two close resemblances to the words of St. Matt. ; three to St. Mark ; ten to St. Luke ; twenty-seven to the Epistle to the Romans ; twenty-four to 1 Peter : thirty-two to the Wisdom of Jesus, Son of Sirach ; thirteen to the Book of Wisdom ; seventy-five to the Jewish Philosopher, Philo (see Mayor's Introd.). The Greek is generally good (Hort).

“Several words do not occur in literature before James. Whether some of these were coined by the author, or whether all of them were in common use in the locality where he lived, we do not know. But it is very clear that the author got his facility in the use of Greek, not in some rhetorical school, but from life. His language is comparatively free from mistakes, and even shows some feeling for the euphony and rhythm of the Greek tongue” (Zahn, i. 111).

## (3) THE READERS.

They are called the Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion. The Epistle corresponds to the life and needs, not of Gentile Christians, but of Jews and Jewish Christians. Prof. Moulton believes that it was written entirely for Jews, to win them over to the Christian faith. Hegesippus and Clement of Alexandria certainly preserve traditions that James was revered even by unbelieving Jews, although at the end, just before the outbreak of the Jewish war, he suffered the fate of many another "meditating theologian," and was hurled from the top of the Temple by fanatical Jews, stoned, and finally clubbed to death. It is more easy, however, to form an estimate of the moral and spiritual condition of the readers than their race or home: and of more importance in the realisation of the permanent message of the Epistle. They needed patience in view of trials: an abandonment of wordy disputations on religion: a serious practical faith. There is no mention made of the sins and temptations of the flesh (see note on iv. 4), which figure so largely in the Pauline and Petrine Epistles. This indicates that they were less open to the contamination of Gentile life in the cities of the Empire than were the communities to whom St. Peter and St. Paul wrote. Their moral danger arose from other causes—and amongst them, the presence of rich men in their communion proved a stumbling-block to the sense of real Christian human worth. It also led to positive wrong-doing. There is a background of social misery to the letter, although it is difficult to say whether the employers who defrauded their workmen were Christian Jews,

or unbelieving Jews. The social circumstances and the temptations arising from a mixed society of rich and poor were known to the writer.

#### (4) THE AUTHOR AND THE DATE.

The only clue to authorship is given in the salutation, where the writer calls himself "James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ." The points requiring attention in this statement are—(a) Who is this James? (b) If it is James of Jerusalem, does the Epistle agree with what we know of his position and literary gifts? (c) Are the character and purpose of the letter such that they fit in with the period of Christian life and thought to which James of Jerusalem belonged?

(a) *Who is this James, "Servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ"?*—He will have to be a man who could write with authority, expecting to be heard and obeyed by the "Twelve Tribes of the Dispersion." He does indeed call the "brethren" "my beloved brethren" (i. 2, 19), and places himself on an equality with them in regard to the new Christian life (i. 18), but at the same time he writes as "an elder brother accustomed to receive attention from his brothers." Now, neither James the son of Zebedee nor James the son of Alphæus held a position of this kind according to our records, but from two distinct sources—St. Luke and St. Paul—we learn of another James who is in this respect the man we want. St. Luke introduces him soon after the martyrdom of James, son of Zebedee. Peter has just escaped from prison and says to the brethren assembled in Mark's house, "Go tell these things to James and the

brethren" (Acts xii. 17). Again, in xv. 13-21 and xxi. 18, James appears as the well-known head of the Church left in Jerusalem, after the persecution. The Epistle to the Galatians adds similar testimony. In i. 19 the apostle says that when he visited Jerusalem for the first time after his conversion he saw none of the apostles, but "James the brother of the Lord only." In ii. 9 James and Cephas and John (in this order) are called "pillars of the Church," and in ii. 12 James is said to have sent a message regarding Church order to Antioch. Further, when Jude wrote it was sufficient to make himself known as "brother of James." The position then of James of Jerusalem was such that it would be natural for him to write with authority as in this letter. He is not conscious of any necessity, such as St. Paul felt, to press his credentials upon his readers. They took them as a matter of course.

The previous history of James is that he was a son of Joseph and Mary (Mark vi. 3; Matt. xiii. 55). He is called by St. Paul a brother of the Lord (Gal. i. 14). He lived with his mother after Joseph's death (Mark iii. 21, 31), but was not one of the Lord's intimate disciples (John vii. 3-10). Soon after the Resurrection he is found with his brethren in company with the Apostles, having himself received, according to St. Paul, a vision of the risen Christ (1 Cor. xv. 7). He lived on at Jerusalem, never becoming an Apostle, as he might have done, if "the apostolate of the Twelve was not the only office that could bear the name, but was extended to those who held a temporary commission to conduct particular missionary work" (Hort, *Introd. to James*). He had no gifts

as an evangelist, but remained in the Holy City to guide the poverty-stricken Church there, share its trials, and in 66 A.D., to bear a martyr's witness to his faith (see p. 31).

(b) *The Literary Gifts of James.*—Could a man brought up to speak Aramaic write an Epistle like this in Greek? The linguistic question is extremely interesting and important. It is receiving fresh light every day from the researches of scholars, and much more is likely to be discovered. Briefly put, it appears certain that Aramaic was the language spoken by the people throughout Syria and in countries eastwards as far as the Tigris. Our Lord spoke it; St. Paul spoke it (Acts xxi. 40) in addition to his Greek and ecclesiastical Hebrew; St. Matthew wrote his first draft of the Gospel in it; and, as will be urged in the Introduction to 1 Peter, Peter continued to use it in preaching and writing to the end, requiring the help of interpreters and scribes in dealing with Greek-speaking people. An epitaph has been found in Rome on Salome, daughter of "the father of the Hebrew synagogue," which shows that in Rome there was an Aramaic-speaking community at an early date. On the other hand, numbers of Jews spoke Greek as well. Matthew, as an official of the government, must have understood and used Greek: amongst the Apostles, Andrew and Philip have Greek names by which they must have been called from boyhood. Josephus, born 37 A.D., a native of Jerusalem, wrote in Greek (with assistance). His case throws light on the way languages were then acquired. Brought up to speak Aramaic, he learned Greek in Jerusalem so quickly, that at the age of twenty-six he was able to undertake a

mission to Rome, and to converse with the wife of Nero. The Greek Jews, who lived in the cities of the Empire, used Greek as their everyday language; even when they returned and settled in Jerusalem they had their own synagogue, where the Greek Bible was read and Greek service held (Acts vi. 9). "Many a merchant and artisan probably excelled the rabbis in knowledge of Greek; among the women also knowledge of that tongue was much more common than knowledge of the sacred Hebrew" (Zahn, i. 63). The first three thousand converts were, judging from their home names, Greek-speaking people: from the first the Church was bi-lingual, and it was so difficult to administer it unless some of the rulers could speak Greek, that the seven Greek-speaking deacons were appointed, all of whom have Greek names (Acts vi. 5). When the Jerusalem Church suffered its first check, two of its members went to Antioch and preached to Greeks (Acts xi. 20), whilst others, Aramaic-speaking missionaries, preached only to Jews (xi. 19). For about twenty years James presided over this bi-lingual community. It is not difficult then to suppose that in that time he acquired mastery of the Greek language; thousands of Jews engaged in commerce had to do the same: and if it is said that to write Greek generally good (see p. 30) and free from great mistakes requires far more skill than the speaking of it, there is no reason why we should not allow James some literary helper, out of the number of those who must, in those very years, have been turning into Greek the Aramaic stories and discourses remembered by the disciples of the Lord, which were the sources of the Greek Gospels (Luke i. 1).

(c) *Are the character and purposes of the Epistle such that they fit in with the period of Christian thought and life to which James of Jerusalem belonged?*—There are two points to be considered here—one negative, the other positive. (i.) The Epistle has little connection with the kind of Christianity that we find in the Pauline and Petrine Epistles, and in the sermons of the Acts, to take only two examples. Sin is seriously considered and faced; but it does not lead to any doctrine, connecting its forgiveness with the death of Christ, or with the power of Christ to forgive sins: the coming of judgment is predicted, but there is in the fifth chapter little of the apocalyptic enthusiasm that certainly moved the first Christian Church: and the name of the Judge is “the Lord,” not “our Lord Jesus Christ.” This, and many other remarkable differences from the norm of Christian thought, may be met by the fact that after all we have only this one Epistle of St. James. One letter does not, any more than one sermon, reveal all a man’s creed. Still, when he thinks fit James can discuss in a manner attractive to ordinary men the issue between faith and works, but even so, he states his views in a way that differentiates him from the other teachers. It is far more probable that to James Christianity was never quite what it was to St. Paul and St. Peter. Neither of these teachers appealed to him, and he went his own way. (ii.) The positive side is this: there is no other Epistle which is so completely saturated in the religious and moral teaching of Christ. Is it wrong to suppose that it was this which drew him to the Master, as much as did the revelation of His glory? (ii. 1). During the thirty years or so that passed



between the death of Jesus and that of James, there was going on oral instruction in the life of Christ, and the transcription of it into writing, and may not St. James have added to this knowledge, and his memory have helped St. Matthew in his Logia? We know that our Lord's ethical teaching was directed against the leaven of the Pharisees: point by point He traversed their life and religion: root and branch, principle and daily rules, nothing escaped condemnation. May not James have had the special gift of the Spirit to see that, if in temper or in theory Pharisaiism entered the Christian Church, the work of Christ would have been of no avail? It is but the same situation that the Apostle Paul faced, and the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews, each in his own manner. James, in his clear, vigorous way, finding too many teachers, too much disputing, too great a worldliness amongst his brethren, used all the wisdom of life that he had heard from Christ,<sup>1</sup> and from the Jewish fathers of wisdom, to bring into the newer Church a more heavenly temper, and a higher type of character than he had known when he was in communion with the ancient

<sup>1</sup> Compare: Jas. i. 25, ii. 8, 12, 13, with Matt. v. 3-12.  
 Jas. i. 2, 3, 12, ii. 5, v. 7-11, with Matt. v. 3-12.  
 Jas. i. 10, 11, ii. 6, 7, iv. 4, 6, 13-16, v. 1-6, with Matt. vi. 19-21, 24-34.  
 Jas. i. 26, 27, with Matt. vi. 1-7.  
 Jas. i. 22, ii. 14-26, iii. 13, 18, with Matt. vi. 6-13.  
 Jas. i. 5-8, iv. 3, v. 13-18, with Matt. vi. 6-13.  
 Jas. ii. 12, 13, with Matt. vi. 14, 15.  
 Jas. iii. 11, 12, with Matt. vii. 16-20.

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Church of his people. If, then, the religious and moral teaching of our Lord belongs to His life-time, that of this Epistle belongs to a period not much later, and to a social atmosphere not very different.

If this be admitted, then the date of the letter must fall before the year of the martyrdom of James—66 A.D. Further, it is held that the writer must have seen the Epistle to the Romans, and that, on the other hand, the author of 1 Peter had seen this Epistle. The date of the Romans is *c.* 54–58 A.D., that of 1 Peter (see notes), *c.* 62–64 A.D. It will be safe therefore to date this Epistle about the year 60 A.D.

The personality revealed by this Epistle should be placed beside the type of sacred writer meeting us in St. Peter. Teachers will find this a most suggestive comparison. In Bible teaching it is wise to be as biographical as is possible with the materials to hand. If students have grasped the main lines of these two Epistles, they should be able to state the type of Christian character revealed. The marks of the writer of 1 Peter are set forth in the Introduction. James appears to have had a far less many-sided nature. He has a large share of the sincerity and directness of our Lord, in speech and thought: a clear perception of human nature: a sternness in the face of the obligation of accepting the Christian law: a boldness in rebuking vice. It is when the touchstone of early Christian thought and revelation is applied that he passes into a different school of thought. The paramount enthusiasm of the age was apocalyptic,—in Christian circles, the hope of the coming of a new revelation of Jesus Christ, its

glory, and other-worldliness,—but, so far as our knowledge goes, this had left James relatively unmoved. A discovery of this kind makes a great difference in our own feeling toward the two leaders, and in our interpretation of their thought. No less does this touchstone of the primitive Christian temperament separate James from St. Paul. He seems to stand somewhat alone, with the strength of a preacher of righteousness whose ardour turns to practice, to whom faith, however imaginative and true in its outlook on eternity, is but a body devoid of spirit, apart from deeds of human love.

### III. THE FIRST EPISTLE OF PETER.

People wrote letters on important subjects in ancient times for much the same reasons as they do now. They wish (*a*) to answer questions put to them in other letters; (*b*) to give news either of persons or of new events or new ideas; (*c*) to remind correspondents of their obligations. The Epistles of the New Testament may be conveniently classified under these groups. In this book we have no Epistle which is an answer to other letters, nor one that gives any fresh information as to persons or events. But the Epistle to the Hebrews certainly imparts a new line of thought, whilst the Epistles of James, 1 and 2 Peter, Jude, reveal to their readers what Christianity as accepted by them involves. Accordingly, this Epistle is described most accurately in v. 12 as the letter of one who “testifies and exhorts.”

## (1) THE MESSAGE.

(a) *Concerning God.*—This is of a most weighty character. His name is used nearly forty times in this short letter; the most illuminating and deepest conception of His character is that of iv. 19, where He is called a “faithful Creator.” This faithfulness is traced from the distant past, through the present, into the future. He works consistently towards the Christian revelation with foreknowledge (i. 2), and then calls Christianity into being (i. 3). He guards His people and regulates their life by His will (ii. 15, iii. 17, iv. 2, iv. 19). His fatherhood is of serious import—He is holy and as Father judges every man righteously (i. 17, ii. 23); resisteth the proud (v. 5); has a mighty hand (v. 6); is to be feared (ii. 17). He is the background of all human life and its resting-place. To be His people (ii. 10), His flock (v. 2), is good. The things that are worth doing are precious with God (ii. 4); of great price in His sight (iii. 4). It is well to have a good conscience toward Him (ii. 19, iii. 21); to exercise oversight according to Him (v. 2). The perfect life is life according to His will (iv. 2); or life according to God in the Spirit (iv. 6). His Spirit sanctifies (i. 2). To be brought to Him is the highest good (iii. 18). He is Shepherd and Bishop of souls (ii. 25, see note); He is One to whom souls may be committed as unto a faithful Creator (iv. 19). He ministers grace to those who are thus brought to Him, supplying His own strength to them (iv. 10); He Himself perfects, strengthens, stablishes souls (v. 10). The doctrine and life taught in this Epistle is said to be “the true grace of God” (v. 12).

(b) *Concerning Christ.*—Of the twenty-two times that He is mentioned by name He is called “Jesus Christ” eight times, simply “Christ,” eleven times, “our Lord Jesus Christ” once, “the Lord” once, the “Chief Shepherd” once (unless ii. 25 also refers to Him). His exalted personality is kept distinct from that of God: God is His God and Father (i. 2); He is on the right hand of God, angels and powers being subject unto Him (iii. 22); and is glorified with Divine glory (i. 21). He is to be again revealed (i. 7, 13, v. 4); He rose from the dead (i. 3, 21, iii. 21); He suffered and died for a great purpose (i. 2, 11, 19, ii. 21–24, iii. 18, iv. 13, v. 1). In regard to His relationship with believers,—He has Apostles (i. 1); eye-witnesses of His sufferings (v. 1); is loved by those who see Him not (i. 8); is a living Cornerstone of a spiritual house (ii. 4); a Chief Shepherd (v. 4). It is through Him that acceptable spiritual sacrifices are made to God (ii. 5); He brings His people to God (iii. 18, 19); He carried up our sins (ii. 21–24); did no sin (i. 19, ii. 22); has left an example of a purposeful endurance of suffering (ii. 21); glorifies His people (iv. 11); evangelised the spirits in prison (iii. 19). He is to be sanctified in the heart as Lord (iii. 15): His people are “called in Him” (v. 10); and are “in Him” (v. 14). Their proper human life is a good manner of life in Him (iii. 16).

(c) *Concerning the Christian Life.*—Having the revelation of God in man as its soil the Christian life comes into being. Its characteristics are outlined in this short Epistle, and may be conveniently placed under three headings—(i.) the destiny of Christians; (ii.) their inner life; (iii.) their conduct in the world.

(i.) *The Destiny of Christians.*—They are reborn to an inheritance (i. 3); guarded for “a salvation ready to be revealed at the last time” (i. 5); to be recipients of a “grace at the revelation of Jesus Christ” (i. 13); called to “inherit a blessing” (iii. 9); “to rejoice at the revelation of His glory” (iv. 13); to receive an amaranthine crown of glory (v. 4); and the end of their faith the salvation of their souls (i. 9).

There is no question that the writer’s vision was full of hope and enthusiastic expectation of a perfect good for them.

(ii.) *Their Inner Life.*—The two most noticeable descriptions of this are i. 8 and iii. 15—“Whom not having seen ye love; on whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice,” and “Sanctify Christ as Lord in your hearts.” They are to long for “spiritual milk”; to put away all wickedness, guile, unreality and evil speaking; they had already “purified themselves unto unfeigned brotherliness” towards other Christians (i. 22); in relation to suffering they are to “arm themselves with the same mind as Christ” (iv. 1); to be of sound mind, sober (i. 13, iv. 7), humble (v. 5), tender-hearted; to look forward to becoming perfect, stablished, strengthened (v. 10).

(iii.) *Their Conduct.*—The most comprehensive idea is given in the words—“Be ye holy in all manner of living” (i. 15). They were also to be “free, yet not using liberty as a cloke for malice, but as bondservants of God” (ii. 16); as children of obedience (i. 14); not living the rest of their time according to the pleasures of men (iv. 2). They are to have “a good conscience,” and this is defined in the second and third chapters by

injunctions regarding their behaviour in the State, the Home, and the Brotherhood. Special care is to be taken to behave as Christians in a time of persecution: the strongest possible appeal is made to their loyalty in ii. 21, iii. 18, iv. 1, when the example of Christ is emphatically brought home to them. Their attitude to the world lies in the sentence—"Honour all men" (ii. 17). If they are spoken against, they are simply to muzzle their revilers by their well-doing. The impending end of the world and Divine judgment is neither to unhinge their minds nor make them fanatical; it is simply to give a motive to soberness of life and prayer. When we read the ethical part of this letter and its exhortations to husbands and wives, it is a little difficult to remember that the writer believed, and wished them to believe, that they lived in the last days. Yet so it is. The future glowed with light, and they were to be the more anxious to live acceptably with God and their neighbour in the present. The Christian character is conceived as peculiarly loving and gracious, but does not lack manliness and vigour. Human institutions (ii. 13), and all the practical life of Home and State are regarded as the field for its exercise. A study of these institutions as they were then will show that there was ground for the writer's desiring the Christian communities to use them rather than to overthrow them in a revolutionary spirit. "The State (Roman) was no mean school of virtue: nor were religion and virtue without their preachers. The lawyer stood for right and justice: the philosopher for moral teaching and spiritual counsels, and even the wandering priests of Isis and Cybele could preach purity and

devotion however little they practised it themselves" (Gwatkin, i. 223).

## (2) THE STYLE.

The Epistle has little style in the sense that we apply the word to more finished compositions like the Epistles to the Hebrews and to the Romans. There are at least three endings to this letter before the final one (iii. 8, iv. 11, v. 11), and necessarily this spoils the orderly development of the letter. It appears that the writer let it remain by his side for some time and added to it as he was moved by the Holy Spirit, *e.g.* the sufferings which he speaks of at first in vague terms have become in iv. 12—"the fiery trial among you." The appeal to right conduct is made in short, plain sentences, and has great force. The Old Testament supplies several quotations, that in ii. 6-8 being a composite one; no mention is made of the books from which it and the other citations are taken. Dr. Bigg observes that the Epistle is remarkable for the fact that it contains sixty-two Greek words which are not used by any of the other New Testament writers. "The language and the thoughts of the author are deeply tinged by the Greek of the Old Testament. He was quite aware of the difference between good Greek and bad, and used the language with freedom and a not inconsiderable degree of correctness." There are a few phrases which remain in the reader's mind as amongst the more beautiful and striking sayings of the New Testament (see i. 4, iii. 15, iv. 19, v. 7). There is no sign of that power of tempestuous eloquence which is to be found in 2 Peter.



(3) CHARACTERISTICS.

The writer wants his readers to realise the grandeur of their calling, its holiness, and specially to take persecution as a stage upon the road to their perfect life in God.

The letter reveals a mind that is at once—(a) reflective; (b) practical; (c) enthusiastic.

(a) *Reflective.* — However different the two Epistles of St. Peter are in other respects, the opening sections are the work of minds that have reflected deeply on the nature of the Christian calling. In this letter each point in i. 2, where the vocation of these sojourners is described, deserves close attention, not only on the ground that after-ages have woven controversies out of the verse, or raised questions from it, which have really nothing to do with its meaning, but because there is so much real thought packed in so small a space. The idea, for instance, of the foreknowledge of God could not have lodged in a mind that was not trained with some degree of theological reflectiveness. If it is objected that the writer may be repeating the ideas of greater minds—St. Paul or Apollos—an answer is provided by the whole of the section following, where he expands and enforces the ideas of vocation and foreknowledge in a way which shows that he has a mastery of them proper to himself. The range of his reflection is also noticeable. There are direct citations from the Old Testament Scriptures, and many allusions to Isaiah and the Psalms. These are made in the manner of one who had thought out the previous revelation and its bearing upon Christianity. The fact that the same passages in the older literature

have been used by most of the early Christian teachers should not make us forget that some one had to make choice of them out of a wide range of books, including not only the canonical Prophets and Psalmists, but other authoritative books of the time, *e.g.* The Books of Esdras, Enoch, the Apocalypse of Noah. The choice implies a selective power of great penetration; the writer is an example of that "well-girt-up mind" which he desiderates in his fellow-Christians (i. 13). He is aware that the truth of Christianity will be best served by showing how its roots lie deep in the previous revelation of God and His Spirit.

(b) *Practical*.—The Epistle reveals a mind that had considered the practical life of Christians in the world; it is usually said that he is mainly a disciplinarian, but he was more than that, he was an extremely loving man. And if he exalts the virtue of obedience, it is because he sees a certain perfection and graciousness in social institutions which is entirely destroyed by disorderly conduct. Marriage is honourable; government is to be respected; all men are to be honoured; the elders—the only Church officials mentioned—are brought under the obligations of the Christian conscience in the same degree as the rest of the people of God who are "that royal priesthood, that holy nation" (ii. 9, 10). There is, as elsewhere in the New Testament, a balance kept by this practically-minded teacher between the rights and duties of the individual and that of the social unit—Home, State, Church—which is to this day a message from the Holy Spirit of God.

(c) *Enthusiastic*.—In passing from the Epistle of St. James to this, the reader cannot fail to observe

that he is now dealing with a teacher who possesses a quality which the other either lacks or does not show—the quality of enthusiasm. His imagination is stirred by all that he apprehends of Christ in His present influence and coming manifestation. Though it may be difficult for modern readers to do it, the Epistle cannot be understood without an effort to clear away the dust that has settled upon much of its language through its constant repetition in the Apostles' Creed. There is one idea that comes up from the depths of every religious soul—the desire for, and apprehension of, a perfected life, a life as that of God Himself. This idea the writer held and expressed under the name of “glory.” His readers' faith is to be “found unto glory” (i. 7); the sufferings of Christ were followed by glory (i. 11); believers are “called to God the eternal Glory” (v. 10, and iv. 16, ii. 12, i. 21). His view of the “end” is given in terms of a settled enthusiasm; the apocalyptic literature, which was the expression in that age of the eternal hope, had been assimilated by him. There was to be, he repeatedly says, an apocalypse or revelation of Jesus Christ. This apocalypse meant indeed judgment, but only once does he refer to the position of those who do not obey the Gospel of God (iv. 17). The rest of the Epistle dwells on the “glory” or grace (i. 13) which holds the future for Christians. He does not materialise or localise this hope in any way; such conceptions of the judgment as we find in the Book of the Revelation would, we feel, be foreign to his mind. He does not, on the other hand, deal with the return of Christ in the manner of that spiritual genius who composed the Fourth Gospel, although

there are traces of the change which was to come over Christian thought in v. 1, where he speaks of being a partaker *already* of the glory which was to be revealed, and in iv. 17 of a process of judgment *already* begun in the coming of the "fiery trial." But, on the whole, his attitude towards the dawn of that wonderful day of God was with all its enthusiasm in keeping with the other traits of his mind—its reflectiveness and practical judgment.

#### (4) THE READERS.

They are called "the elect who are sojourners of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia" (i. 1). The view taken in this commentary is that they were principally Christian Jews, not Christian Gentiles, on the following grounds:—(a) they are called "sojourners," and this word, although it has a religious meaning, being used in the Greek Bible Version of Gen. xxiii. 4; Ps. xxxix. 13, has been found by Deissmann on papyri, used for people who were not natives of a town but strangers staying there for a time. In ii. 11 (taken with i. 17) they are called "pilgrims" (A.V.), and the word means strictly "a resident stranger who lives in a certain city by the tolerance and protection of the State." Both these terms would be more applicable to Jews and Jewish Christians than to Gentiles. (b) They are said to belong to the "Dispersion." Dr. Bigg's note on this is—"In St. James the Dispersion seems to include Christian Jews only. Here it embraces alike Gentiles and Jews." If so, why should the writer use the word at all? It would have been sufficient to have called them—

“the elect in Pontus, etc.” (c) There were amongst the hearers of St. Peter’s sermon on the Day of Pentecost people from Cappadocia, Asia, Pontus, Phrygia and Pamphylia, some of the very provinces mentioned in this Epistle. It is probable that their visit to Jerusalem and reception of the Holy Spirit developed into missionary work in these provinces, independently of St. Paul. “The Dispersion was like a network of tracks along which the gospel could travel and find soil ready prepared for it in the worship of the true God and the knowledge and veneration of the ancient Scripture” (Hort). (d) St. Paul, who was the main centre of Gentile evangelisation, was, so far as we know, never in Pontus, Cappadocia, Bithynia, three of the provinces named. These therefore were evangelised from the Jerusalem Church. As regards Asia and Bithynia, the Apostle was forbidden by the Holy Ghost (Acts xvi. 7) to enter them on his journey towards Europe, and the explanation of this veto may in part be that churches were established there by other missionaries already. (e) At Amisos, a port on the extreme west of the seaboard of the province of Pontus, there were many Christians as early as Pliny’s despatch to Trajan (c. 87 A.D.). There is a strong tradition that St. Peter founded churches in Antioch and the parts of Syria adjacent, in Pontus, and other provinces of Asia Minor before he went to Rome (Zahn, ii. 164), and his gifts specially appealed to the Jews. (f) The readers of this Epistle are distinguished from the Gentiles in ii. 12. (g) They are throughout the Epistle assumed to be able to understand what “Scripture” meant and to appraise it at its proper value, as one would expect

of men educated in the synagogue. The only difficulty in this view arises from the language used of the former life of these readers in i. 14, and in iv. 3 (see notes). This may be satisfactorily met by supposing, on the evidence of St. James and Romans i., that they had, notwithstanding their Judaism, lapsed very far from Jewish standards before entering the Christian Church.

The settlement of this question as to the nationality of the readers is not of great importance in interpreting the real message of this Epistle. It becomes of much greater moment when we want to place this Epistle in its proper order amongst the other New Testament writings, or when we use it as a source of information for the general history of the Early Church. If it be regarded as written for Gentile readers (Zahn), or for the corporate Church of both Jews and Gentiles (Bigg), it takes its place, so far as historical information goes, beside the Pauline Epistles, and tells us very little that we should not know from them. If, however, it is established that the readers were in the main Christian Jews, and that it was sent from Rome by Peter, we have an Epistle which gives us original information about a section of the Church whose history is obscure, especially on two points—(1) the way in which Christianity was adapted to converts from Judaism by a less uncompromising teacher than St. Paul; (2) the way in which the best part of Judaism—its high standard of life and its veneration for the higher spiritual and moral teaching of the Old Testament—came into the Christian Church. The problem of how Jews became Christians, by what form of teaching, has

to be faced, seeing that St. Paul's presentation of Christianity, about which we have so much more information in the New Testament, notoriously failed with his own fellow-countrymen. The life which forms the background of this Epistle is somewhat colourless; we learn nothing about the business of these people, their riches or poverty; mixed marriages seemed to be allowed; many of them were slaves. As a Church they were organised under officials who took their name from those of the synagogue—the elders. One aspect of their life, however, is quite clear—they were under persecution. They were spoken against as evil-doers; they were not actually imprisoned as were those to whom the Epistle to the Hebrews was sent; and the most natural parallel to the description of their troubles here given is in the Epistles to the Thessalonians and Corinthians (1 Thess. i. 6, ii. 2, 14; 2 Thess. i. 4; 1 Cor. iv. 9), and in the accounts in the Acts of St. Paul's sufferings at the hands of the Jews.

Their Jewish opponents could not take the law into their own hands as they were able to do in Palestine, but, according to this letter, by reviling and accusing them they rendered them objects of suspicion to the Roman officials. Roman magistrates were guardians of the order of family and civic life, and gradually their minds were poisoned against the Church. It is not, however, until we reach the last addition to this letter—a portion added after the writer had, as he thought, finished it (iv. 12), that he speaks about suffering as “a Christian,” and of the “fiery trial” which was upon them. The identification of this trial with the Neronian persecution seems to be

quite sound. We have the words of Tacitus, written late in the summer or during the autumn of the year 64 A.D., in which he says distinctly that the people whom Nero attacked were called by the populace—Christians, and there is no doubt that a persecution which shocked even Roman gentlemen on the one side, and caused the Book of the Revelation on the other, might be described even at its beginning as a “fiery trial.”

#### (5) THE AUTHOR AND THE DATE.

It cannot be said that this Epistle reveals the personality of its writer with quite the same vivid force which we find in the delightful Epistles of St. Paul. He remains much in the background, and does not rest his case upon his own personal experience. It is a disputed point, but probably we must not place great stress upon his references to the life of Christ (see note on v. 1). He makes no appeal to his readers on the ground of close personal acquaintance with them; they are simply dear to him as sharing one religion and one hope; he is a fellow-elder with them. But he is identified in the salutation with the Apostle Peter. This identification may be considered (1) in relation to possible dates; and (2) in regard to the qualifications of St. Peter, as they are known from other sources. If he suits the date and place of this letter, as these can be gathered from the letter itself, and if there is nothing in his culture which would prevent his composing such a letter, we may ascribe it to him. Time and date: (*a*) The first verse gives the backward limit. Sufficient time must be allowed from the Day of Pentecost



for communities of Christians to grow up into a certain amount of cohesion in five provinces of Asia Minor. Ten years may be allowed for this. If St. Paul was forbidden to evangelise Asia and Bithynia (see *Introd.* par. 4) because there were churches of Jewish Christians in those provinces, in c. 49 A.D. we get a more precise date backwards. The limit forwards is<sup>1</sup> the death of St. Peter, which nearly all authorities, except Sir William Ramsay, agree in placing in the year 64 A.D., the date of the Neronian persecution; (*b*) in the postscript (v. 13 and note), we read, "She that is in Babylon greets you." By Babylon, Rome is meant. Babylon in Mesopotamia was at that time in ruins, whilst no one until the Middle Ages thought that it could be Babylon in Egypt (the site of modern Cairo) (*Zahn*, ii. 159). If, then, Babylon is Rome, when was St. Peter there? The New Testament does not elsewhere mention the fact. The latest notice of him is in Gal. ii., where he is at Antioch with St. Paul (c. winter 48-49 A.D.). Outside the New Testament there is a strong tradition, exhaustively examined in art. "Peter" (*Hastings' Dict.*), and accepted

<sup>1</sup> "The story that Peter's Roman episcopate lasted from twenty to twenty-five years did not appear till after the beginning of the fourth century, and all the more ancient traditions affirm that Peter did not come to Rome until the time of Paul's activity there; while the few definite accounts which we have from the second century place the whole of Peter's residence and his martyrdom in the interval between Paul's first imprisonment in Rome and the second, which ended with his execution. To this are to be added all the indications that Peter was crucified late in the summer or in the autumn of the year 64 A.D., in the Vatican gardens, to satisfy the fury of Nero (n. 4)" (*Zahn*, ii. 160).

as historical, that he was in Rome just before the persecution of Nero. Consequently, the date of this Epistle will be somewhere between 58 and 64 A.D. Zahn fixes it more precisely at the beginning of the "fiery trial," 64 A.D. The letter bears the marks (see p. 44) of having been for some time delayed and then (the writer speaks of it (v. 12) as a brief letter in the sense that he had a great deal more to say) hurriedly concluded and despatched before the persecution might render it impossible for Silvanus to leave Rome with it. (c) Does the mention of Silvanus and Mark help in fixing the date? Apparently not. The later movements of these men are difficult to trace with precision; there is nothing, however, known which could render it impossible for them both to have been at Rome at the time suggested. (d) The New Testament is quite clear that St. Peter occupied an important place in the Church; we note specially his prominence at the Council at Jerusalem (Acts xv. 7); at Antioch, Gal. ii. 11), and the Apostle Paul's estimate of him as a "pillar of the Church." It might be expected then that he would send a circular letter or letters at some time or other to the churches in which he was specially interested. The question is—given the letter, have we any means of deciding whether St. Peter had the qualifications necessary for writing it?

In regard to his general character and gifts it seems natural to turn to the only other source of information which we have of his apostolic activity—namely, the Acts of the Apostles. The tendency of modern scholarship (Ramsay, Harnack)

to rely upon Luke as an historian must hold good for the Petrine as well as the Pauline parts of his history of the rise of the Church. It is true that he does not speak of Peter with the realism with which he deals with everything that concerns his great hero St. Paul. But he evidently intends to give a very prominent place, not only to the boldness of St. Peter in action, but also to his influence in deciding upon the form of the first preaching of Christianity. "Several very important, indeed fundamentally important, discourses are put into the mouth of St. Peter" (Harnack). There are ten given (Acts i. 15-22, 38-40, ii. 14-36, 38-40, iii. 12-26, iv. 8-12, 24-31, v. 29-32, x. 34-43, xv. 6-11). Now these sermons and speeches can only be based upon recollections and reports which reached St. Luke, but any one who reads them carefully will find that they not only bear a definite character in themselves, distinct from the speeches of Stephen and Paul in the Acts, but show striking resemblance in phrase and tone to the standpoint of this Epistle; it certainly looks as if we have the same mind working in both, and therefore if St. Peter had the gift to formulate the primitive ideas of the Christian Gospel with which St. Luke credits him, he would also have the gift necessary for the composition of this Epistle many years after.

The last point is this: Had St. Peter the *literary* qualifications for writing the Epistle? The Epistle is in Greek and bears no mark of being a translation from another language. It is not written by one who had any difficulty in expressing himself in Greek. He "uses Greek with freedom":

sixty-two of his words are not found elsewhere in the New Testament: he shows "refined accuracy" in certain points of grammar: "his vocabulary is marked by a certain dignity and elevation" (Bigg). Now Peter the Apostle was not educated, as St. Paul was, to speak Greek from his youth: he spoke Aramaic, the common tongue of Palestine, as our Lord did. He spoke it with a Galilean accent (Matt. xxvi. 73; Mark xiv. 70), and continued to use it in his speeches and sermons. When he appeared before the Sanhedrin (Acts iv. 6) they thought him "an unlearned and ignorant man"—not in the sense that he was uneducated or boorish, but because he used Aramaic, the popular language—whereas Hebrew was the tongue proper to the learned men of the Church (Zahn, i. 6). Further, since Aramaic was not confined to Palestine but was a living language spoken for centuries in other parts of the East, a missionary without knowledge of Greek could make himself understood far beyond the limits of Palestine. It was used to a certain extent for literary purposes (*e.g.* the Assumption of Moses from which Jude quotes was probably an Aramaic work). The first sayings of Jesus collected by St. Matthew were in this language, and long afterwards in the fourth century the only Gospel which the Ebionites, who lived east of the Jordan, possessed was an Aramaic version. It does not therefore appear to have been absolutely necessary that the first Galilean evangelists should have used any other than their native tongue, even when preaching or writing to Christians of other races (see p. 34). On the other hand, Aramaic had been fighting a losing battle with Greek for some time. Greek was the

language of commerce, government, and Gentile education. The Jews of the Dispersion spoke Greek everywhere, their Bible was the Greek Bible, and their services even were held in Greek in Egypt where a million Jews were congregated. Further, the Greek language established itself from the beginning in the Christian Church. One of the first incidents recorded in the Acts was the murmuring between Greek-speaking and Aramaic-speaking Christians which led to the appointment of Stephen the Hellenist. The fact that he was required, shows that the apostles were perhaps unable to deal with the business of the Church in the Greek language.

A bi-lingual Church, however, would require sooner or later teachers and officers who could speak both languages. The question is: Which of the apostles and leading disciples made themselves proficient in Greek? It is reasonable to suppose that James, the brother of the Lord, who presided over the Church so long, for his office's sake did so and became a writer in that language (see p. 35). Many other Christians belonging to the Mother Church must have known the two languages, for all the sayings of our Lord were spoken in Aramaic, and remembered in Aramaic. Translations of these had to be made for Greek-speaking Christians all through the period before the Gospels appeared. But it is more than probable that St. Peter was not one of those who acquired any great mastery of the Greek language, and that he required an interpreter when he preached to Greek-speaking people, and a scribe when he wrote to them. Papias (70-149 A.D.) tells us that Mark acted as Peter's interpreter, and if there had been any

special similarity between the language of his Gospel and this Epistle, which there is not, we might suppose that he helped St. Peter in Rome. Silvanus, however, was also with the apostle, and the letter is pointedly connected with him in v. 12, "By Silvanus I have written to you." This may mean that he had composed it under the direction and inspiration of the apostle. This hypothesis suits the condition of the problems as stated, making it possible for an Aramaic-speaking apostle to reach by letter the Greek-speaking Christians of the Dispersion. On these grounds we may identify the author with the Apostle Peter.

#### IV. THE SECOND EPISTLE OF PETER.

##### (1) THE MESSAGE.

(a) *Concerning God.* — Faith comes in the "righteousness of God" (i. 1) in the Old Testament sense of the action of a just being (see note 1). The knowledge of God is distinct from the knowledge of Jesus Christ (i. 2), and is together with that the source of the growth of grace and peace. His Divine power grants "all things that pertain unto life" as well as to "godliness" (i. 3). He has promises which are "precious and exceeding great" (i. 4). The future is with Him (i. 11). He was working in the past, for the Christian life is a "vocation and an election" (i. 10). He is God the Father, and acknowledged our Lord Jesus Christ as His beloved Son, giving Him "honour and glory" (i. 17), the marks of deity and of the mysterious forces of the other world. He moves

men inwardly, so that they reveal Him (i. 21). He rules all beings,—angels, and the ancient world (iii. 4, 5), and creates by His word (iii. 5). He knows how to deliver the godly out of temptations (ii. 9); and to keep the unrighteous unto the Day of Judgment. Time to Him is not reckoned by days (iii. 8), but by spiritual epochs and movements within the realm of Spirit. He saves by long suffering, yet has a “Day” coming, like a thief in the night (iii. 10). This is the background of the writer’s mind looking Godwards. Its tone is stern, almost pitiless, unenthusiastic, rising to no great originality in expression.

(b) *Concerning Christ.*—He is called almost uniformly by the full title—Our Lord Jesus Christ (three times), or Our Lord and Saviour (four times); Jesus Christ, once; Jesus our Lord, once (i. 2); the Master, once (ii. 1); our Saviour Jesus Christ, once (i. 1). This nomenclature is distinct from that of 1 Peter. The most characteristic phrase in the Christology of the Epistle is—“The knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.” It is used four times (i. 2, 8, ii. 20, iii. 18), and expresses the fact that He had said and done things which might be known. He also had given “a commandment” (iii. 2); had signified to the writer the “putting off of this tabernacle” (i. 14); He “called” people by His own glory and virtue (i. 3); came in power and majesty, when there came a voice from “the excellent majesty, ‘This is My beloved Son’” (i. 17); has an eternal kingdom (i. 11). There is not here the warmth of feeling or richness of conception which characterises 1 Peter.

(c) *Concerning the Spirit.*—The Holy Ghost is

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named here once (i. 21) as in 1 Peter (i. 12), in each case with reference to the religious utterance of preachers and prophets.

### (2) THE SPIRITUAL AND ETHICAL STANDPOINT.

The position of Christianity is—that “Divine power hath given us all things that pertain to life and godliness” (i. 3), and that “ye may become partakers of the Divine nature” (i. 4). This is a deeper claim than that which is commonly expressed in the New Testament as “salvation”; it is expressed, too, in almost philosophical language. By the side of this must be placed the remarkable ideal of life in i. 5-7. “The moral and spiritual life is regarded as a germ which is expanded by effort, one step leads to another, and each step is made by the co-operation of the human will with the Divine.” One sees that the writer is thinking out very carefully what the knowledge of Christ entails upon those who believe in it, and from that well-considered standpoint of spiritual knowledge and moral excellence, carries war into the enemy’s country. He wishes them to “remember” what they had been taught both by the O.T. prophets and by the apostles (iii. 2); they were not to be carried away by the “error of the wicked” (iii. 17), and were to be in earnest to be “found without spot and blameless in God’s sight” (iii. 14). There is far less concreteness and definite aim in this exhortation than in 1 Peter; the force of the Epistle lies in the second chapter, where the false teachers are described and condemned in passages of Hebraic anger. They are guilty of



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that which if it had been unchecked would have destroyed Christianity and the cleanness of its ideal life, in the midst of a sensual and disorderly society. The intolerance of this passage is like the intolerance of much of the Holy Scripture—not the scorn of the orthodox for heresy, nor the contempt of one religion for another, but the intolerance of an absolute moral ideal for everything that contradicts its supremacy. The motive for steadfastness in faith and conduct is the certainty of the dissolution of the heavens and the earth with the works that are therein (iii. 11), but this cataclysm is only the prelude of a new heaven and a new earth “wherein righteousness makes its home” (iii. 13).

### (3) STYLE AND LANGUAGE.

It is easy for an English reader to notice that the Epistle is written in two quite distinct styles of literary art. The first chapter is a calm, reasoned statement of the Christian revelation, resumed at the beginning of the third chapter. The whole of the second chapter is entirely different. Sentences are unfinished: the same words repeated: phrases tumble out one upon another in the rush of indignant emotion. The letter indeed appears more as an extempore sermon. There is the well-thought-out statement of Christian doctrine at the beginning: then the emotional appeal and attack upon the enemies of the Church, ending with a quieter word to those who are of the same mind with the speaker. The character of the central part is such that it is suggested that Jude revised it and made it more lucid (see p. 68). At

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any rate, we cannot but think that the letter was sent out without revision. Thus it may have all the advantages of an unchecked outpouring of the soul. The writer may have brought himself before his readers as they knew him, in his stern, uncompromising personality. It is not a personality that wins and charms us, as St. Paul does on a similar occasion when he was indignant with the Galatians and wrote to them his most controversial epistle. He could blend tenderness and brotherly feeling with denunciation of error.

To readers of Greek there is much in this Epistle of interest. Fifty-five words are used which are not found elsewhere in the New Testament, and two hundred and thirty-one not found in 1 Peter. Some sentences can be turned into tragic verse with very little alteration (ii. 1-4). The proverb in ii. 22 falls into rhythm. Dr. Bigg gives an interesting quotation from Charles Dickens of unintentional blank verse when the theme is awful and tragic; he suggests that the writer here in the same way falls unconsciously into the manner of the Greek tragedians.

### (4) THE READERS AND THE OCCASION.

The readers are those who have obtained a like precious faith with "us" (i. 1). There is no clue to their race or home; no reference to their daily life. The writer or writers (*we* and *us* are used uniformly) seem to have been known to them before, and they are said to have been instructed—not by men who used cunningly devised fables, but "by us who were eye-witnesses of the majesty of Christ" (i. 15, 16). They are students of Old Testament prophecy and

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its bearing upon the signs of the times. Their danger is that they have amongst them false teachers who are corrupting the faith (ii. 18) and morals of catechumens. Scepticism regarding the coming of the Day of God is growing. They know the writing of "our beloved brother Paul"—who has "wisdom," but has also written in his Epistles things hard to be understood (iii. 15). This reference gives the nearest clue that can be found to the destination and date of the letter. We may conclude that the error of these teachers lay in misinterpreting St. Paul's doctrine of Christian liberty (ii. 19, iii. 16). There is plenty of evidence to show that this terrible misinterpretation and consequent anarchy began in St. Paul's lifetime at Corinth and Ephesus (1 Cor. v. 9, vi. 12-20, xi. 21; Acts xx. 30). "Every feature in the description of the false teachers and mockers is to be found in the apostolic age" (Bigg). Further, those scholars who place the date of 2 Peter in the second century, and rely on certain words here used as belonging to the later period, have now to meet this remarkable discovery. Deissmann has found an inscription dated about 22 A.D. in which two phrases, "Add all diligence" (i. 5), and "Divine power" (i. 3), occur, showing that two of the phrases supposed to belong to the second century were in popular use early in the first.

There is therefore no reason on this ground to go beyond the first century to find a date for the Epistle. It was most probably written within the lifetime of St. Peter, whether we decide against his authorship or not.

## (5) THE AUTHOR.

The identification of the author with the Apostle Peter is made in the first verse, though curiously the inscription differs from that of 1 Peter, which is the first of the many differences between the two Epistles. (The reader may be warned that the differences are so great that he must regard the authorship of this letter as one of the most difficult problems of N.T. literature.) The differences may be grouped as—(a) Differences in language; (b) differences in tone, style, and expression.

(a) It has already been pointed out that fifty-five words in 2 Peter alone are not used elsewhere in the New Testament, but how much more remarkable are the facts that about three hundred and sixty-one words are used in 1 Peter which are not in 2 Peter, and two hundred and thirty-one words in 2 Peter not found in 1 Peter. It is clear that the same person could not have composed the Greek of both letters. One is master of quite a distinct vocabulary from that of the other. (Readers of Greek should pursue this matter further in Bigg, 225.)

(b) *Differences in Tone, Style, and Expression.*—Any one can verify the difference in style and tone between the two letters by reading them through at a sitting. Notwithstanding the tragic circumstances surrounding the readers of 1 Peter, and the emphatic references to the passion of Christ, that letter is buoyant and enthusiastic, sharing the vigorous hope of the Pauline Epistles. This, on the contrary, is cold, stern, and fretted with the doings of the ungodly. If we could find sufficient ground for thinking it is St. Peter's work, we might account for the feeling of hardness and

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sadness by his old age, and approaching death (i. 14). But unless we are prepared to abandon his authorship of 1 Peter, we cannot claim it for the Second Epistle. Not only is the tone different, but the expression. What is more unlikely than that the same writer of two letters, near in time, would use a phrase to describe Christianity repeatedly in one and never in the other? That is the case here: in 2 Peter "the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" is almost invariably used; in 1 Peter never. Then as regards the doctrine of the two Epistles, whereas in 1 Peter the Crucifixion and Resurrection of our Lord are repeatedly named, and form the centre of the gospel, in 2 Peter neither is mentioned or alluded to, and instead, the Transfiguration is named. Lastly, it would be difficult to trace any substantial resemblance between the teaching of 2 Peter and the Petrine sermons in the Acts (see p. 155).

In order to reconcile these differences, and retain 2 Peter as apostolic, it is suggested—(i.) that St. Peter employed another interpreter, who had a wider knowledge of Greek words, though a less mastery of grammar and style than Silvanus; (ii.) that he insisted here upon a more literal transcription of his ideas than in 1 Peter, and hence the style is broken and less polished; and (iii.) that the letter is in St. Peter's own Greek, and written earlier than 1 Peter under different circumstances. Despite these suggestions, it remains difficult to ascribe the letter to the apostle, if we wish to retain his authorship for 1 Peter. That is the real dilemma.

The exact authorship is not, however, of such historic importance, if we may date the letters

of 2 Peter and Jude within the first century. This, on the grounds given above, we may do. Corinthian false teachers, not Gnostics of the second century, are the source of the sin of the Church. We have, therefore, in the Second Epistle a grave warning from an early Christian writer against anarchy, which assumes so many shapes, in ancient and modern times, and under such specious pretence is a cloak for immorality. Moreover, the anonymous character of the Epistle—for that is what it may amount to—does not take away its force any more than the Epistle to the Hebrews is less true because we do not know its author. Moreover, it is in accord with the recognised literary habits of the age to use one of the great names of the Church to secure attention for the warnings which the writer believed in all good faith that the Church urgently needed, and that he was divinely inspired to offer.

## V. THE EPISTLE OF JUDE.

How many Epistles of this kind must have been lost to the Church! It is indeed set in the form of the Epistles of St. Peter and St. Paul, but it is essentially a letter sent off on the spur of the moment to deal with a sudden crisis. The writer states in ver. 3 that he was taking pains to write about "our common salvation" at some length, when he was forced (evidently by news brought him) to write a short, deeply earnest appeal to them to remember and to contend for the faith once for all delivered to the "saints." This reference to other Epistles, written or contemplated,

like the allusion to a first letter in 2 Pet. iii. 1, which is not extant, and to another letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians (2 Cor. ii. 3) reveals to us the constant interchange of correspondence which passed between the first communities under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, out of which the Church has only comparatively few specimens in her New Testament.

### (1) CHARACTERISTICS.

Although this Epistle cannot have added much to the structure of the first Christian revelation, it is not without originality. It places in a more winning, tender way the stern warning which is the burden of 2 Peter. The phrases which strike the reader as most noticeable are those which the writer has not borrowed from 2 Peter,—“Beloved in God the Father, and kept for Jesus Christ.” “Mercy and peace and love” takes the place of “grace to you and peace” in the salutation (2 Pet.). He does not use the special term of 2 Peter for the Christian religion—the knowledge of Jesus Christ—but speaks of it as “the faith” and “your most holy faith,” in an exhortation which has planted itself firmly in the mind of the Church (vers. 3, 20). “Keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ,” is an appeal which, together with the most noble ascription at the close of the letter, indicate a mind that has much of the Holy Spirit. The wish that they should treat some of the weaker brethren with mercy (vers. 22, 23) is just the touch which we miss in 2 Peter, and which we find in St. Paul.

## (2) THE RELATION TO 2 PETER.

The interest of the letter centres largely in the relation of the central part to the second chapter of 2 Peter. Which was written first? Did 2 Peter use Jude, or *vice versa*? The following are reasons (which can be followed by English readers) for holding that Jude is the later, and that his Epistle was a revision of 2 Peter, sent to other churches which were in danger through the outburst of similar anarchy and libertinism:—

(i.) Whilst adopting generally the order of 2 Peter's indictment, Jude condenses it, and makes it much clearer, *e.g.* vers. 12, 13 of Jude are the substance of 2 Pet. ii. 13, 14, 17: the precedent of Balaam is put before the application in Jude, whilst in 2 Peter it is introduced awkwardly in the middle of it. It is difficult to think that any author with Jude's power of clear writing would have written 2 Pet. ii.

(ii.) In ver. 18 the words "there shall be mockers" are a quotation: in 2 Pet. iii. 3 they are the writer's own. It is clear that the author who quotes is the later.

(iii.) In Jude the state of things described by that previous prophecy already exists, and the judgment has begun (ver. 19). In 2 Pet. iii. 3 they are in the future (*cf.* ii. 1). In this connection, also, one notices that whereas in 2 Peter the danger arises from false teachers, in Jude the teachers are not mentioned, but their followers appear to be in much evidence. False teaching has had time to make false brethren.

(iv.) The vagueness of the expression used in 2 Peter, "speaking evil of dignities" (the



“Glorious Ones”) is defined in Jude by the use of the rebellion of Korah as an illustration of the kind of blasphemy intended, *i.e.* it was directed against the rules of the Church.

### (3) THE AUTHOR AND DATE.

The author is Jude or Judas, who describes himself as “servant of Jesus Christ, and a brother of James.” This way of speaking of James, without further explanation, shows that he was a well-known person in the Church; and since it was the custom of the Church to designate James of Jerusalem in that way (Acts xii. 17, xv. 13; Gal. ii. 9, 12), it is that James—brother of the Lord—author of the Epistle who is meant here. Jude then was one of the brothers of the Lord, who, like Peter and other apostles, laboured in the year 57 A.D. as preachers in various places (1 Cor. ix. 5; Matt. ix. 55; Acts i. 14). We know nothing of the history of his life, except that he was married and took his wife with him on missionary tours (1 Cor. ix. 5), as did the Apostle Peter. He makes no claim to authority beyond his calling as “servant of Jesus Christ,” which is almost the same title which his brother uses about himself at the beginning of his Epistle (Jas. i. 1). Hegesippus says that towards the reign of Domitian, about the year 95 A.D., two grandsons of Jude who made their living by farming were brought before the Emperor charged with being the descendants of David, and Christians, but when they described the little farm which they held in common, and explained that the kingdom for which they looked was not of this world, they were dismissed. From this we may

reach a date for the birth of Jude. Supposing that his grandsons were middle-aged men in the year 95 A.D., their grandfather Jude must have been born not later than about 9 B.C. It would then follow that he was a son of Joseph by a former marriage. He may have survived the destruction of Jerusalem 70 A.D., and if, as is here suggested, 2 Peter was an earlier writing, we may date this Epistle roughly between 65 and 72 A.D.

“The conjecture of Dr. Chase (art. “Jude,” *Holy Bible Dict.*) that the letter was designed for Syria, Antioch, and other churches in that neighbourhood, is the best proposed” (Dr. Bigg). Teachers and readers should, however, emphasise the main point which emerges from modern criticism of this letter and its forerunner. They give evidence of the thoughts and efforts of the group of missionaries who were acquainted with St. Paul and his writings, but who dealt independently with the churches. The inward tendencies combated were not the work of the Gnostic teachers, but of erroneous Christian teachers in the first age.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

*The Title.*—The title in the A.V. “the Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews” embodies a late conjecture regarding the authorship, and may be disregarded (see pp. 4, 20).

Heb. i. 1-4.

### OPENING STATEMENT—GOD’S FINAL REVELATION OF HIMSELF IN A SON.

- 1 God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in
- 2 time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the
- 3 worlds; who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;
- 4 being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

1. **at sundry times and in divers manners.** R.V., “divers portions.” In various parts and in many forms. These words begin the Epistle in Greek, and in them the writer describes the nature of O. T. revelation as many sided but not complete. He follows this by an enthusiastic statement of the fully developed revelation given in Jesus Christ. **to the fathers.** The saints of Israel’s past. It was wise in the writer to speak

so sympathetically of the saints and prophets, in view of the coming argument.

2. **hath . . . spoken unto us.** The writer and his generation are also recipients of a revelation. He regards the days of the Son's revelation as nearly ended (see ix. 28). **spoken to us.** The medium of approach between God and man is, as always in the Scriptures, an intelligible idea. **by his Son.** Read "in a son" (Gk.). This change of word helps the reader to realise the contrast between the new and the old relationship with God. Not in a prophet but in a Son God has now communicated Himself. Having thus concisely stated the principle of the Christian religion, the writer describes in six illuminating phrases the character of the Sonship. (a) **heir of all things.** A son is heir if he is trusted by his father (Luke xv. 31, "all that is mine is thine"). (b) **by whom he made.** An agent in creation (John i. 3; Col. i. 16).

(c) **being the brightness of his glory.** For "brightness" read "reflection." The word seems to mean the reflection of the light coming from the original body, and forming a similar light-body itself. In the Wisdom of Solomon, which contains contemporary religious thought, Wisdom is called "the unspotted mirror of the power of God and the Image of His goodness (vii. 26). (d) **express image of his person.** R.V. margin, "the impress of His substance." The "very image" (the Greek word *charakter*) means that which is engraven on an object as a seal; hence it signifies a close correspondence in likeness between the impression and the stamp. Here the idea is that the Father has stamped Himself or impressed Himself upon the Son so as to produce an exact

likeness. "Substance," that which makes a thing (or person) what it is: used here in a philosophical sense; in iii. 14, in its ordinary sense; of that which gives standing ground or confidence, cf. 2 Cor. ix. 4, xi 17. (e) **upholding . . . power.** God not only acted through a Son in creating the worlds, but acts still through Him in upholding them. "My Father works up to the present and I work" (John v. 17). (Modern readers should notice that this statement regarding the present activity of God in the universe is in agreement with ideas of Divine immanence. "Since our effective movements are all inspired by thought, we conceive that there must be some Intelligence immanent in all the processes of nature, for they are not random or purposeless but organised and beautiful" (Oliver Lodge).

(f) **when he had made . . . sat down.** This describes the moral dignity of the Son and His priesthood. We hear more of this purification later. The session on the right hand of the majesty on high completes the description of the Son. He occupies the seat of honour at the right hand of the King (1 Kings ii. 19; Ps. xlv. 9).

The reader should observe that this does not give to Christ a position of inactive rest, but one which enables Him to rule with more effectiveness within the souls of men.

This glowing description of the Divine Sonship is followed by specific examples of the superiority of the Son to all other mediators between man and God.

4. **being made.** R.V., "having become." **so much better.** R.V., "by so much better," *i.e.* by

the Sonship just described. **than the angels.** To modern readers this turn in the Epistle is startling. It does not appear necessary to us to demonstrate the superiority of Jesus Christ to the Angels. The explanation is that in Jewish circles angels occupied the religious imagination. Our Lord Himself speaks of "the angels" (Matt. xviii. 10; Mark xii. 25; Luke xv. 10). This belief has been traced to two sources: "the Hebrew in turning his thoughts to the majesty of God, thought of an earthly king first at Jerusalem, then of the Persian monarchy: the angels are as the retinue of a king. The other source was the instinct of reverence which began to interpose links between God and man as a ladder on which angels ascend and descend" (Sanday). They were messengers through whom God spoke (Gal. iii. 19; Acts vii. 53). In Col. ii. 18 we read of the abuse of this belief. It was therefore necessary for our writer to show that Jesus, although made a little lower than the angels, as man had really obtained a more excellent name than they. Unless this could be clearly stated and believed, the Divine Sonship of Jesus would not be grasped by his Jewish readers.

#### Heb. i. 5-14.

#### THE SUPERIORITY OF THE OFFICE OF THE SON TO THAT OF THE ANGELS.

- 5 For unto which of the angels said he at any time, *Thou art my son, this day have I begotten thee?* And again, *I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?*
- 6 And again, when he bringeth in the first begotten into the world, he saith, *And let all the angels of God worship*

- 7 *him.* And of the angels he saith, *Who maketh his angels*  
 8 *spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.* But unto the Son  
 he saith, *Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a*  
*sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*  
 9 *Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; there-*  
*fore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil*  
 10 *of gladness above thy fellows.* And Thou, Lord, in the  
 beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the  
 11 heavens are the works of thine hands: They shall perish:  
 but thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a  
 12 garment: And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and  
 they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy  
 13 years shall not fail. But to which of the angels said he at  
 any time, *Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies*  
 14 *thy footstool?* Are they not all ministering spirits, sent  
 forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

The whole of the section i. 5-ii. 16 should be taken together. The prophetic warning in ii. 1-4 hardly breaks its continuity. The eight quotations are given in the style of the sermons of the primitive age, as in the Acts, without reference to book or author or attention to verbal accuracy. A general acquaintance with them is presupposed, such as a frequenter of the synagogue would possess. They are principally taken from the poetry of the O. T. (see *Introd.*, p. 9).

5. **to which of the angels.** This is unanswerable; no angel received the name of Son. The quotation is from Ps. ii. 7, and from 2 Sam. vii. 14; see also Ps. lxxxix. 26 and 27.

6. **again, when he bringeth in,**—*i.e.* when he introduces into the mind of the Psalmist the Messianic idea. **he says.** The words are not in our version, but are found in the Greek translation which the writer and his readers used.

7. **his angels spirits.** Read "winds" (Ps. civ. 4). So far from being creatures worthy of Divine worship, angels may become winds or flames of fire, assuming this shape in their service to men. One Jewish writer says, "The angel said unto Manoah, I know not after what image I am made, for God changes us every hour; why, therefore, dost thou ask my name? Sometimes He makes us fire, at other times wind; sometimes men, at other times again angels."

8-12. Further quotations from Ps. xlv. 6, 7, xi. 7, xxxiii. 5, xxxvi. 5 and 6, lxxxix. 14, and cii. 25-27; Isa. xxxiv. 4, li. 6. Notice the mastery which the writer has of passages appropriate to his argument. Their cumulative force is to show that the Psalmist looked forward to a manifestation of deity more substantial than the ministry of angels could be. The writer is building up from these materials the conception of Sonship by which he wishes his readers to rise above the idea of angelic ministry.

13. **of which of the angels.** Another incisive question and citation from Ps. cx. 1 makes the contrast between the vocation of the Son and that of the angels still clearer.

14. **ministering spirits.** This is the vocation of angels. They are guardians: servants of the servants of God. The writer then pauses to give a serious admonition to his readers, just as a preacher pauses in an argument to apply to his hearers the truth that he is demonstrating.



## Heb. ii. 1-4.

## THE ADMONITION.

- 1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let  
 2 them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just  
 3 recompence of reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be  
 4 that heard him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with divers miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

1. **Therefore.** The reason for earnest heed is given in i. 4, namely, the fact that the Son is a nobler creation than the angels, higher in the scale of being. **we have heard.** R.V., "which were heard." The writer does not include himself amongst the disciples who actually heard the gospel from Jesus. **let them slip.** R.V., "lest haply we drift away from them." Here he includes himself. The danger is that of drifting away from the primary revelation given through and by the first disciples.

2. **the word,**—*i.e.* the law. This was regarded as having been revealed by angels both in Christian and Jewish thought (see Acts vii. 53 and Gal. iii. 19). The Song of Moses (Deut. xxxiii. 2) speaks of the Lord coming from ten thousand of His holy ones, to give His law. **was stedfast.** Read "proved steadfast." Events showed that retribution followed when this law, even though given only by angels, was rejected.

3. **how shall we escape, if.** Greater light,

greater responsibility. **salvation.** Omit semicolon. For the writer's conception of what salvation is, see Introd. **the Lord,**—*i.e.* Christ. **unto us by those.** Again the writer disclaims being a hearer of the gospel preached by the Lord. The revelation had been handed down by others. **confirmed.** This may refer to the fact that the tradition was being written down in the author's lifetime.

4. **God also.** Not only was there the record of the revelation of Jesus in the written Gospels, but the Church also had grown up under the influence of the Holy Spirit. There was, therefore, less reason than ever for not drifting away from the primary revelation. **by divers miracles.** Read "by manifold powers." This verse reads like a summary of the history of the growth of the Church, which is given in detail in Luke i. 2; Acts ii. 22, etc. **according to his will.** Christianity in its seed-time and early growth is regarded as a working-out of the Divine will. It is not possible for modern Christians to understand what happened in the first age unless they make allowance for this mode of thought. It is our Lord's point of view: "If I by the finger of God cast out devils"; "Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done." The kingdom of the Son is a working out of the will of the Father and that is the clue to its manifold energies.

## Heb. ii. 5-16.

THE ARGUMENT REGARDING THE SON'S  
SUPERIORITY TO ANGELS IN BRINGING  
SALVATION RESUMED.

5 For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world  
6 to come, whereof we speak. But one in a certain place  
testified, saying, *What is man, that thou art mindful of*  
7 *him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him? Thou*  
*madest him a little lower than the angels; thou crownedst*  
*him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the*  
8 *works of thy hands: Thou hast put all things in sub-*  
*jection under his feet.* For in that he put all in subjection  
under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But  
9 now we see not yet all things put under him. But we see  
Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the  
suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that he  
by the grace of God should taste death for every man.  
10 For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom  
are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make  
the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.  
11 For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are  
all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them  
12 brethren, Saying, *I will declare thy name unto my*  
*brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto*  
13 *thee.* And again, *I will put my trust in him.* And  
again, *Behold I and the children which God hath given*  
14 *me.* Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh  
and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same;  
that through death he might destroy him that had the  
15 power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who  
through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to  
16 bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of  
angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham.

5. For unto. Read "For not unto angels."

The negative is emphatic. Angels have not the necessary power over the world to come: man could not reach it and be saved by their agency.

6. **But one in a certain place.** R.V., "But one hath somewhere testified." The quotation that follows is given in the manner of a preacher or speaker—without name of author or place: it is cited from Ps. viii. 4-6. Its force in the argument is a little difficult to see. The writer wants to show that the rule of angels is only temporary and belonging to this world. The psalm implies exactly this by saying that man is the limit of their rule. Further, though man has much power under the rule of angels he has not complete power (ver. 8). Therefore, the psalm looks forward to another world of emancipated humanity under a more powerful ruler than the angels.

8. **But now.** Still the time of emancipation has not yet come, and (ver. 9) what we now see is a vision of man fully emancipated in the person of Jesus as He passes from humiliation to glory.

9. **Who hath been made . . . Jesus.** Like all mankind, Jesus was made a little lower than the angels in His humiliation. Readers should here take care to keep the two strands of the writer's revelation clear—(a) The superior saving power of Christ to that of angels; (b) His real share in human life. All Christian thought on the Incarnation is complex, and the same effort to understand it has to be made as in the case of any large idea, *e.g.* evolution. **tasted death.** An especial mark of His kinship with man is found in His experience of death. This was **for man** in

the sense that it was good for man to have a being like the Son of Man, identified with his lot in its hardest form. No angel had tasted death in flesh and blood.

10. **it became.** Read "it befitted." **him.** God. **through whom . . . all things.** Including suffering. **in bringing sons to glory.** The educative and disciplinary process which is the main object of the Son's coming into the life of man. **captain.** R.V., "author." Not an isolated individual, but a leader of salvation whose characteristic feature of filial obedience is transferable to other "sons." **perfect through suffering.** He became by suffering fully adequate to this saving work. The perfection here indicated is one of vocation, not of character (see note in A. B. Davidson, p. 65).

11. **For . . . sanctifieth.** To sanctify is to consecrate to God a people for His service (ix. 14 and x. 29). But the special point in the sentence is in the last words, **are all of one. brethren.** He stands among men as brother with brother. Brotherhood is the relationship which best describes the unity between the leader of salvation, and those whom He leads. To illustrate this, the writer introduces three quotations. The people of God are—(1) the Christ's brethren (Ps. xxii. 22); (2) trusted by Him (Isa. viii. 17); (3) grouped together as one family (Isa. viii. 18). **church.** R.V., "congregation."

14. **sharers in flesh and blood,**—*i.e.* mortal. This being an outstanding feature of humanity, was shared by the Son, who through death destroyed the power of the great enemy of human nature.

15. **through fear of death.** Satan magnifies the evil of death and man suffers more from the

fear of it, than from the fact. The bondage to the fear of death has been the root of devil-worship and superstition in all religions. On the other hand, the tasting of death by God's Son shows that man need not fear to die. In death the fellowship of Jesus with God remained unbroken (v. 7). From henceforth those who followed Him as leader might throw off the incubus of dark imaginings in the face of death.

16. **For verily . . . not of angels.** He was not identified with angels or their salvation, but with men, and with the seed of Abraham. He was a Jew—another link with angels is broken. No angel became a Jew. This ends the angel section, and the writer passes in almost breathless haste to a new point of view by which he hopes to establish on a still wider basis the supremacy of Jesus Christ. The swift movement of thought and its eagerness to reveal new light reminds us of the great Hebrew prophets.

Heb. ii. 17-iv. 13.

### THE REVELATION OF JESUS SUPERIOR TO THAT OF MOSES.

- 17 Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.
- 18
- iii. 1 Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus; who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

- 3 For this man was counted worthy of more glory than  
Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath  
4 more honour than the house. For every house is builded  
5 by some man; but he that built all things is God. And  
Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for  
a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after;  
6 but Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are  
we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the  
7 hope firm unto the end. Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost  
8 saith, *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your  
hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in*  
9 *the wilderness: when your fathers tempted me, proved*  
10 *me, and saw my works forty years. Wherefore I was*  
11 *grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err*  
12 *in their heart; and they have not known my ways. So I*  
13 *sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.*  
14 Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil  
15 heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God. But  
exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day; lest  
any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.  
16 For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the  
17 beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end; while  
it is said, *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not your*  
18 *hearts, as in the provocation.* For some, when they had  
heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of  
19 Egypt by Moses. But with whom was he grieved forty  
years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose  
20 carcasses fell in the wilderness? And to whom sware he  
that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that  
21 believed not? So we see that they could not enter in  
because of unbelief.
- iv. 1 Let us therefore fear, lest a promise being left us of  
entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come  
2 short of it. For unto us was the gospel preached, as well  
as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them,  
3 not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we

which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, *As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest*: although the works were finished from the foundation of  
 4 the world. For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise. *And God did rest the seventh day from*  
 5 *all his works.* And in this place again, *If they shall enter*  
 6 *into my rest.* Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached  
 7 entered not in because of unbelief: again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, *To-day, after so long a time*; as it is said, *To-day if ye will hear his voice, harden not*  
 8 *your hearts.* For if Jesus had given them rest, then would  
 9 he not afterward have spoken of another day. There  
 10 remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God. For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his  
 11 own works, as God did from his. Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same  
 12 example of unbelief. For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a descerner of the thoughts and  
 13 intents of the heart. Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

17, 18. These verses connect the preceding section with the following. The statement that there is a real identity of experience between Christ and His followers, by which He consecrates them, making their life holy, leads up to the idea that it would be proper to call Him a High Priest. This claim on behalf of Jesus brought the writer into conflict with another Jewish belief—the efficacy and eternal worth of the Levitical priesthood. To establish this claim required more painstaking argument and more illuminating



thought than had been necessary in the putting of angels into a subordinate position. The first step must be to deal with the position of Moses.

iii. 1. **holy brethren.** The writer addresses himself with great warmth to his readers : the title given is Pauline in spirit not in word : for St. Paul's "called to be saints" we have "holy brethren," and for his salutation of "grace and peace" we have **partakers of a** (A.V., "the") **heavenly calling**, a phrase which must not be watered down into a common-place, but kept forceful by our recollection that the writer regards heaven and the other world as the true sphere of man's complete life. **consider.** Introduces a matter of first-rate moment—consider the place of Jesus as Apostle and High Priest of our **confession** (R.V.) in contrast with that Apostle (Moses) and the High Priest (Aaron) of the old religion. **Christ Jesus.** Omit with R.V. and the best MSS., "Christ." "Jesus" is the historic name. **faithful.** This is the first requisite of a messenger and a priest—loyalty to those who appoint them to the duty. Jesus was faithful to God as Son to Father (cf. John xvii. 26). **As also . . . his house.** God's house. The mention of this word from Num. xii. 7 carries the argument still further, to a point in which it is seen that Jesus is not merely equal but superior to Moses in the grandeur of His service to men.

3. **worthy of more glory,** The reason being that whilst Moses was a tenant of the house, Jesus, as the Son of God, was the Builder (see chap. i. 2). If then He is said to have built Moses' house, He is greater than Moses.

5, 6. Here comes the real comparison—"Moses was faithful merely as a servant ; Christ was faith-

ful as the Son over the household that He rules Himself." **for a testimony . . . afterward to be spoken.** The faithfulness of Moses had a prospective purpose. It was not a fully developed revelation, whereas there is a finality about the revelation of Jesus as being a Master in His own house.

6. **whose house are we.** Christians come in here for another admonition (cf. ii. 1). This time an even deeper earnestness is shown. The writer passes away from the inferiority of Moses to Christ, and, fired by an idea which he finds in Ps. xcv. 7-11, he delivers what might be described as a short sermon on perseverance in the Christian life. The idea which stirs his imagination is that of a Divine rest, which he finds mentioned at the end of the quotation. Clearly, if he is to convince the Hebrew Christian, he must show that every good which they looked for under Moses is still open to their enjoyment.

12. **an evil heart of unbelief.** An unbelieving disposition, insensible to the fact of a Self-communicating God speaking in the present (ver. 15, **to-day**). The down-grade against which he warns them is traced stage by stage. (*a*) The deceitfulness of sin leads to (*b*) hardening of heart, and that to (*c*) unbelief, until the end is reached (ver. 19)—(*d*) a failure to enter into the Divine rest. The admonition is coloured by the historic instance of the rejection of light so familiar to the Hebrew mind—the unbelief of the forty years in the wilderness.

iv. 1. **a promise being left.** Israel having failed, the promise of God's rest is open still. **seem to come short.** Read "appear to have

failed to reach it" when the day of decision comes.

2. **gospel preached.** R.V., "good tidings preached." God is constantly communicating Himself—ancient Israel had light sent them, just as his readers now had it in the coming of the Son. **the word preached.** Literally, "the word of hearing," what is heard from God. **not mixed with faith.** Read with A.V., when the meaning will be that the Word was not assimilated by the hearer's mind. The R.V. introduces unnecessary difficulty. Presently the writer will enlarge upon the wonderful power of faith in reaching truth; here he simply teaches that "an evil heart of unbelief" is a state of mind which excludes light, and for which the hearer is responsible.

3-5. **For we which have believed.** The Christian Church had listened with faith to the new revelation. Possibly this is an instance of the sympathetic touch of a teacher who does not wish to break the bending reed by too sweeping a criticism. St. Paul seldom passes the boundary of the injunction "speaking the truth in love" in his dealing with his converts, so here in the midst of a severe warning against backsliding the Hebrew Christians are reminded that they have shown a splendid faith. The rest of the verse is extremely difficult to interpret and the text is probably corrupt (A. B. Davidson). The important point, however, is quite clear. The writer identifies the **rest** which he is making the goal of their ambition with the rest of God after creation. This introduces the second passage which inspired the writer, and on which the reasoning depends (Gen. ii. 2); the first being Ps. xciv. The idea of

rest gathers richness as we go along. At first it was the rest of a people who had reached a Promised Land; now it has become equivalent to the rest which God enjoys.

6. **Seeing therefore.** The argument of ver. 1 is resumed. Israel having failed to reach the rest, it remains open to Christians to gain it.

7. **again, he limiteth a certain day.** For "limiteth" read "defineth." A proof that the rest is still open lies in the mention in **David** (Ps. xc.) of the word **To-day**. This word he would not have used so many years afterwards if Jesus (that is Joshua) had really given them the rest. There would have been no "to-day"; all would have been realised long before David's time.

9. **There remaineth.** This is the point which he is emphasising, so as to give Christians hope. **a rest.** R.V., "a Sabbath rest." The word *Sabbatismos*, or Sabbath-keeping, is used here for the first time. The idea was familiar to Jewish readers of that time. Their teachers said—"The Israelites said, O Lord of the whole world, show us a type of the world to come. God answered them that type is the Sabbath."

10. This defines the idea of the Sabbath rest as being rest from labour.

11. **Let us labour . . . rest.** The rest of heaven is an ideal not in favour among strenuous modern Christians. They might remember that even in Holy Scripture a Sabbath day's rest is regarded as a condition to healthful activity on the other days of the week. **unbelief.** R.V., "disobedience"; referring back to the disobedience of the Israelites. Christians are to be a nobler race than their forefathers.

12. **For the word of God is quick.** R.V., "is living and active." The Christian revelation is here described as a living communication from God. **piercing even.** Metaphor of the sword is applied to God's thought, which, when it is received into a man's mind, lays bare truth and falsehood and the secret springs of the Spirit. The comparison of truth to a sword is frequent (Eph. vi. 17; Rev. i. 16; Isa. xlix. 2).

13. **all things are . . . opened.** God being Self-communicating is also All-seeing. **with whom we have to do.** Read "to whom we have to give an account." Notice the uplift of this passage and of the style of the writer when he breaks away from his quotations. For the general appropriateness of the comparison, observe that in most epochs when religious truth has been reformulated the process described here has been repeated. Men have had the responsibility thrust upon them of choosing or rejecting the cleansing operation of assimilating new aspects of true religion, *e.g.* the Reformation period and the present age. Such times are to the Christian times of great anxiety. Bishop Phillips Brooks, in his sermon on the "Mitigation of Theology," is conscious of it. "He who launches out into a freer life sets sail for higher things, but he ought to know all the dangers of the voyage and be ready for all the patience, watchfulness, and sacrifice it will require. If he has faced all that, then let him sail, but not till then."

Heb. iv. 14-v. 10.

THE REVELATION OF JESUS SUPERIOR TO  
THAT OF THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD.

14 Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is  
passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold  
15 fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which  
cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but  
was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.  
16 Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that  
we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of  
need.

v. 1 For every high priest taken from among men is ordained  
for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both  
2 gifts and sacrifices for sins : who can have compassion on  
the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way ; for that  
3 he himself also is compassed with infirmity. And by  
reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for him-  
4 self, to offer for sins. And no man taketh this honour  
unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.  
5 So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high  
priest ; but he that said unto him, *Thou art my Son, to-  
6 day have I begotten thee.* As he saith also in another  
place, *Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of  
7 Melchisedec.* Who in the days of his flesh, when he had  
offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying  
and tears, unto him that was able to save him from death,  
8 and was heard in that he feared ; though he were a Son,  
yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered ;  
9 and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal  
10 salvation unto all them that obey him ; called of God an  
high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

*Jesus as a sympathising High Priest.* The author has now said what he wanted to say on the superiority of the office of the Son fulfilled in

Jesus to the office and ministry of angels and of Moses, two aspects of the Hebrew religion which He was bound to deal with. He now advances to his greatest task—the proof that all that the Levitical priesthood could do for man's salvation is done by Jesus Christ. The personality of the Saviour is now presented with increasing clearness and elaboration of argument.

14. **Seeing then.** R.V., “having then.” This is a new beginning in the argument, although the theme has been indicated so far back as ii. 17, where Jesus is called a merciful and faithful High Priest, and again in iii. 2. **passed into the heavens.** R.V., “through.” As a high priest passed through the courts of the Temple to the Holiest, so Jesus is conceived as passing through the courts of heaven until He reaches the right hand of the majesty on high. This is the place where the author has already seen Him (i. 4). **Jesus.** The historic name. **Son of God.** The ideal or Divine name, one which readers will now feel to be a name full of sympathy and power. **Profession.** As in iii. 1, “confession.”

15. **For** introduces the reason why they should hold fast, namely, the sympathising character of their High Priest. This is the leading idea to v. 3. The earthly life of Jesus is referred to and is summarised in one remarkable phrase as the life of **one tried as we are, yet without sin.** The author is thinking not of lost men and women, but of those who are in danger of falling, and suggests to them that a High Priest who had known temptation, but had been victorious, was better able to succour them than one who like Aaron had been both tempted and had fallen.

16. **Let us come boldly.** Evidently the force of this description of the High Priesthood of Jesus stirs the writer to a strong movement of soul: nothing now stands in the way of an immediate approach to God. **throne of grace.** The throne of majesty has now become the throne of grace. **that we may receive mercy and may find grace to help.** (1) The welcome is full of goodwill and compassion; (2) it kindles in the tempted man similar gifts of goodwill and compassion which he can use towards others. In this sense the Christian becomes a sharer in the Priesthood of Christ. Acquaintance with forms of Christianity which have no earthly priesthood, and the consequent familiarity with the idea of an open approach to God, should not blind the reader to the revolution in religious theory which this writer is here making.

v. 1-3. As is his manner, the writer having given a hint of his thought expands it. He has more to say about the High Priesthood of Christ. **taken.** R.V., "being taken." The priest's call and office (appointed for men in things pertaining to God) are thoroughly human and morally conditioned.

2. **who can have compassion.** R.V., "who can bear gently with." The Greek word (*metriopathein*) expresses the feeling that lies between apathy and undue excitement. The priest feels like this because (a) he is conscious of his own infirmity, and (b) when he offers sacrifice, he offers it for himself as well as for others. This is a remarkable account of high priesthood: doubtless the writer is speaking ideally: notice **ought to.** There is no mention here of a priesthood conceived as an office merely or a caste. The high priest himself is a man and remains a man



when he is sacrificing. From this all else follows.

4. **no man taketh the honour.** The character of the high priest counts for so much that he has to be a man chosen by God, who would know whether he had the qualities of gentleness and common humanity. If he arrogated the office to himself, the character which such an action would betray would ruin his attempt to help his fellow-man to draw near unto God.

5, 6. **Christ also.** Christ was not Self-appointed. To prove this Ps. ii. 7 is cited together with Ps. cx. 4. The order of His Priesthood—that of Melchisedec—is also given in the last of the two psalms. This will presently give the writer the means of his brilliant escape from Old Testament ritualism.

7-10. The fitness of Jesus to be the ideal High Priest, *i.e.* a Priest after the order of Melchisedec found in His human experience. Four marks of this fitness are given—(a) His prayers; (b) their success; (c) His learning of obedience; (d) His effective influence upon those who obey Him. If the writer can make these points valid, he will prove that Jesus is a High Priest after the heavenly order of Melchisedec, and remove from the Hebrew mind their ancestral conviction that the priesthood of Aaron is the priesthood of God.

7. **offered up prayers.** Notably in the Garden of Gethsemane. The account of that event, which was known to the writer, may have spoken of the Saviour's tears, since he mentions it here. It is certainly a touch of human feeling which adds power to the portrayal of Jesus as the sympathetic High Priest of humanity. The prayer in the Garden, however, was only one instance amongst

many of the habit of Jesus to pray without ceasing. **from death**,—*i.e.* “from dying.” This is the straightforward implication of the prayer, “Let this cup pass from Me,” and affords another touch of simple humanity necessary to our author’s picture. **was heard.** The answer was indirect: He was raised from death. **in that he feared.** R.V., “Having been heard for His godly fear”; Gk., “for His devoutness.” There is no reference to terror in the words used.

8. **though he were a Son.** This is introduced to add intensity to the picture of the Son in His obedience. Although He was in the intimate relationship of a Son, yet He had to realise a deeper and deeper obedience to the will of His Father (Matt. xxvi. 39 and 42).

9. **being made perfect.** R.V., “having been made perfect.” The past participle is used in the whole of this passage, because the steps of His spiritual ascent are being described. “Perfection”—a favourite conception of this writer. It means ideal fitness for the work whatever it may be. Following Professor Davidson, it is best to regard perfection here as the fitness required in One who was to be the Author of salvation. This was a fitness of inward mind to which “the Son attained when it had taken in the mark of His human experience, and carried in it the enduring lesson of the life with God in the flesh” (A. B. Davidson). **eternal salvation.** A pregnant summary of the purpose of Christianity and the final gift of Christ to those who accept Him. In ix. 12 the phrase is “eternal redemption.” In this Epistle “salvation” is assumed to be understood, but it is used in a most comprehensive sense. The whole standpoint

of the Epistle towards the world to come leads us to interpret the word "eternal" as being something deeper than mere length of time, and is nearly equivalent to our idea of essential and final.

10. **called of God.** R.V., "named," and better, "saluted in the courts of heaven as." This is the height of the vocation. Its rank in the Divine arrangements is the rank of a Melchisedec. This order of priesthood will be explained presently. The Greek word for order, "taxis," is a word taken from military into ecclesiastical use.

#### Heb. v. 11-vi. 3.

#### DIGRESSION AND WARNING TO THE READER,—THIRD AND LONGEST AD-MONITION.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be  
 12 uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing. For when for the  
 time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach  
 you again which be the first principles of the oracles of  
 God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not  
 13 of strong meat. For every one that useth milk is unskilful  
 14 in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong  
 meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those  
 who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern  
 both good and evil.

vi. 1 Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,  
 let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the founda-  
 tion of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward  
 2 God, of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on  
 of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of  
 3 eternal judgment. And this will we do, if God permit.

v. 11-vi. 3. The difficulty of interpreting the subject to undeveloped minds is here urged.

11. **Of whom.** Read "of which," meaning the subject of the order of Christ's Priesthood. The writer is conscious that he is asking them to follow an argument that is both subtle and far-reaching. Like a skilled advocate he pauses to dwell upon the motive which should lead them to be as keen to follow as he is to teach. **hard to be uttered.** Read "difficult to interpret." **dull of hearing.** This must refer to some circumstances in their Christian life of which we have no knowledge: they were not as receptive as they had been.

12. **for the time.** R.V., "by reason of the time." A long time had elapsed since their conversion (see x. 32, 37), consequently, they ought to be teachers now of others: whereas, on the principle that a dull learner makes a dull teacher, they are disqualified both from understanding him and from teaching others.

13. **unskilful in the word of righteousness.** The difference between a developed and an undeveloped Christian teacher or learner lies in the region of experience. **word of righteousness.** Either general Christian truth or the right doctrine.

14. **are of full age.** R.V., "full-grown men," *i.e.* fully qualified men. **by reason of use.** They have gained the power of assimilating solid religious truth, rejecting at the same time whatever is unwholesome or injurious.

vi. 1. **Therefore.** One would have expected— notwithstanding, for the author is going to treat them, not as babes but as experienced learners and teachers. **the first principles of Christ.** The substance of the teaching given to the catechumens when first they were joining the

Christian Church. **Repentance from dead works.** Separation from their former life was the first step of entrance: life outside of the Christian community being devoid of the Spirit was dead. **faith toward God.** This was the governing principle of their conversion experience which had brought them from Judaism into the Christian Church.

2. **the doctrine of baptisms.** Also a subject of the preliminary instruction (Acts ii. 38-41, viii. 35-36). **laying on of hands.** The act of spiritual blessing which normally followed baptism in the Apostolic Church would also require explanation, and the character of the explanation is contained in the next verse, where "enlightenment" and the taste of the gift of the heavenly life corresponds to baptism, and becoming sharers in the Holy Spirit corresponds to the laying on of hands. That this was the normal course for full initiation follows from what is recorded in the Acts (see ii. 38, viii. 17, xix. 6; 2 Tim. i. 6).

**resurrection of the dead.** This, together with eternal judgment, formed also a necessary part in the instruction given to those who were preparing for admission to the Church (Acts i. 22, iv. 2, 10, xxiii. 6).

3. **And this.** He will omit further reference to the rudiments and pass on to the higher subject of the order of the High Priesthood of Christ, pausing, however, first to point out to the undeveloped minds of his readers the danger of falling away from the deeper teaching.

Heb. vi. 9-20.

**AFFECTIONATE APPEAL TO THE  
FAITHFUL.**

- 9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.
- 10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.
- 11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end:
- 12 that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through
- 13 faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no
- 14 greater, he sware by himself, saying, *Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.* And
- 15 so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.
- 16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for
- 17 confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by
- 18 an oath: that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the
- 19 hope set before us: which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth
- 20 into that within the veil; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

9. Having contemplated for a moment actual apostates from Christianity, he turns in less severe mood to his immediate readers. They are faithful in many respects. **Beloved.** Not used elsewhere. Alarm at the awful suggestion of his own picture causes a rush of affection to

his heart (A. B. Davidson). **better things**,—*i.e.* a better Christian condition than is represented by the field of thorns and thistles. **things that accompany.** “Things connected with and leading to salvation.” **thus**,—*i.e.* “thus severely.”

10. **not unrighteous.** This needs to be said, for the writer has just been pointing out that God works by law in man's life as well as in Nature, and the statement of this was not pleasant news to those inclined to go back from an enlightened Christianity. The same truth, however, is acceptable to those who remain firm, for God is fair to all in His government and reciprocates the love of the Christian brethren. (The language here is Pauline,—**work** (1 Cor. iii. 13). **labour of love** (1 Thess. i. 3). **saints.** The Apostle's favourite name for his Christian converts. The word then was fresh and alive, suggesting connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit.)

11. **the same diligence.** He wishes them to show the same diligence in their inner life. **to the full assurance of hope.** “So as to attain the fulfilment of your hope.”

12. **that ye be not slothful.** The same word that was used in v. 11 for “*dull of hearing.*” This want of quickness of apprehension, together with their tendency to fall away, are the two great causes of the writer's deeply felt anxiety. In the learning and practice of the Christian life, he teaches, you must either go forward or backward. **imitators** — Pauline. **patience**—“long-suffering”: literally, length of mind opposed to shortness of temper. **inherit the promises.** A variant for attainment of salvation. Here, as elsewhere, steadfastness in the

Heb. vi. 9-20.

**AFFECTIONATE APPEAL TO THE  
FAITHFUL.**

9 But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.  
 10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.  
 11 And we desire that every one of you do show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end :  
 12 that ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through  
 13 faith and patience inherit the promises. For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no  
 14 greater, he swore by himself, saying, *Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.* And  
 15 so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.  
 16 For men verily swear by the greater : and an oath for  
 17 confirmation is to them an end of all strife. Wherein God, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by  
 18 an oath : that by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the  
 19 hope set before us : which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth  
 20 into that within the veil ; whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

9. Having contemplated for a moment actual apostates from Christianity, he turns in less severe mood to his immediate readers. They are faithful in many respects. **Beloved.** Not used elsewhere. Alarm at the awful suggestion of his own picture causes a rush of affection to



his heart (A. B. Davidson). **better things**,—*i.e.* a better Christian condition than is represented by the field of thorns and thistles. **things that accompany**. "Things connected with and leading to salvation." **thus**,—*i.e.* "thus severely."

10. **not unrighteous**. This needs to be said, for the writer has just been pointing out that God works by law in man's life as well as in Nature, and the statement of this was not pleasant news to those inclined to go back from an enlightened Christianity. The same truth, however, is acceptable to those who remain firm, for God is fair to all in His government and reciprocates the love of the Christian brethren. (The language here is Pauline,—**work** (1 Cor. iii. 13). **labour of love** (1 Thess. i. 3). **saints**. The Apostle's favourite name for his Christian converts. The word then was fresh and alive, suggesting connection with the gift of the Holy Spirit.)

11. **the same diligence**. He wishes them to show the same diligence in their inner life. **to the full assurance of hope**. "So as to attain the fulfilment of your hope."

12. **that ye be not slothful**. The same word that was used in v. 11 for "*dull of hearing*." This want of quickness of apprehension, together with their tendency to fall away, are the two great causes of the writer's deeply felt anxiety. In the learning and practice of the Christian life, he teaches, you must either go forward or backward. **imitators** — Pauline. **patience**—"long-suffering": literally, length of mind opposed to shortness of temper. **inherit the promises**. A variant for attainment of salvation. Here, as elsewhere, steadfastness in the

Christian life has its reward in a tremendous future good.

13-20. This passage explains something of what is meant by the promises. They are the good things arising from the covenant relationship with God, which was as old as Abraham, as new as Jesus Christ. **For.** Read "be hopeful for." **made promise.** One well-known promise is singled out as typical: the starting-point of the great vocation of Israel (Gen. xii. 2, xv. 5, xxii. 16). In calling Abraham God did two things—(1) He promised and (2) turned the promise into a solemn covenant by an oath.

15. **he.** Abraham obtained the promise, namely, to be the founder of a great nation in an unknown land.

16. After his manner the writer goes back to a previous statement in order to expand it. Here he takes the words **by none greater** (ver. 14), which require expansion. He now points out that the common procedure when men make a covenant is to swear by a greater authority than themselves, then there can be no mistake of the validity of the arrangement. **and an oath . . . end of all strife.** R.V., "and in every dispute an oath is final for confirmation."

17. **Wherein.** Read "so in this matter," *i.e.* the matter of the promises. The heirs of promise—the ancient Hebrews.

18. **by two immutable things.** (1) God's promise; (2) God's covenant oath. **we might have.** The promise to Abraham is transferred boldly to Christians. **who have fled for refuge.** Judaism as the Apostle Paul also taught was no refuge for the soul: consequently, not a

final religion. **lay hold on the hope.** The writer regards hope as the chief Christian virtue, and holds that his friends lack hope because they do not conceive properly the High Priesthood of Jesus Christ.

19. **which.** Read "which hope." **anchor.** Like the author's symbol for the Word, a two-edged sword—so this symbol of the anchor has become a familiar picture in Christian art. Observe, however, that he does not regard the feeling of hope in itself as the anchor, but only when it is embedded in a rock. In pictures often the anchor is represented without the rock, hanging by the side of a ship, and so on, but here the whole of the passage (vers. 16-20) is governed by the conception of the unchangeable goodness of God. He is the Rock upon which the anchor is fixed and the ship moored as to an immovable object. **within the veil.** A metaphor taken from the Tabernacle and the Temple, and used here of that which separates us from the world to come.

20. **the forerunner.** R.V., "as a forerunner." Jesus is already in that world because of His High Priesthood and its peculiar Melchisedec character. This last feature is considered by many modern interpreters to be the cardinal Christian doctrine.

Heb. vii. 1-X. 18.

### THE VALIDITY OF THE ORDERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

The superior efficacy of the ministry of Jesus in bringing men to God has been now proved in two connections, both of intense interest to the Hebrew

Christians, and of vital moment to the future growth of the Christian religion. It is superior to (1) the ministry of angels, (2) the ministry of Moses. The writer has begun to give the much more difficult proof that it is a ministry superior to that of Aaron and the Levitical priesthood who at the time of his writing had living representatives. He broke off his argument to deal faithfully with his readers, and to exhort them as they valued their salvation to follow him with great alertness of mind. He now returns to what we may term the Melchisedec argument in a passage extremely subtle and ingenious which, seen in its true bearing, has a lasting force in shaping the character of the Christian approach to God.

Heb. vii. 1-28.

### JESUS A HIGH PRIEST FOR EVER AFTER THE MELCHISEDEC ORDER.

1 For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most  
high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter  
2 of the kings, and blessed him ; to whom also Abraham  
gave a tenth part of all ; first being by interpretation King  
of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which  
3 is, King of peace ; without father, without mother,  
without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor  
end of life ; but made like unto the Son of God ; abideth  
4 a priest continually. Now consider how great this man  
was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the  
5 tenth of the spoils. And verily they that are of the sons  
of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a  
commandment to take tithes of the people according to  
the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out  
6 of the loins of Abraham : but he whose descent is not

counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and  
7 blessed him that had the promises. And without all  
8 contradiction the less is blessed of the better. And here  
men that die receive tithes ; but there he receiveth them,  
9 of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so  
say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in  
10 Abraham. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when  
11 Melchisedec met him. If therefore perfection were by the  
Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the  
law), what further need was there that another priest  
should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be  
12 called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being  
changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the  
13 law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth  
to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the  
14 altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda ;  
of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.  
15 And it is yet far more evident : for that after the similitude  
16 of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest, who is made,  
not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the  
17 power of an endless life. For he testifieth, *Thou art a*  
18 *priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.* For there  
is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before  
19 for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof. For the  
law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better  
20 hope did ; by the which we draw nigh unto God. And  
inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest  
21 (for those priests were made without an oath ; but this  
with an oath by him that said unto him, *The Lord sware*  
*and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the*  
22 *order of Melchisedec*) : by so much was Jesus made a  
23 surety of a better testament. And they truly were many  
priests, because they were not suffered to continue by  
24 reason of death : but this man, because he continueth  
25 ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is  
able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto

God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession  
 26 for them. For such an high priest became us, who is  
 holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made  
 27 higher than the heavens ; who needeth not daily, as those  
 high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and  
 then for the people's : for this he did once, when he offered  
 28 up himself. For the law maketh men high priests which  
 have infirmity ; but the word of the oath, which was since  
 the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

1. **For.** In the previous verse the words "for ever" and "order of Melchisedec" require expansion. This is now done in an analysis of the peculiar position of this great and mysterious personage. Each point in the analysis is intended to emphasise the fact that the Melchisedec order holds the religious field for ever. **king of Salem.** Possibly Jerusalem, but it is not the place of importance, but its meaning as denoting Peace. **the most high God.** God the Supreme (Mark v. 7). **who met** (Gen. xiv. 18). **blessed him.** A priestly function.

2. **gave a tenth.** Presently this point becomes of great importance to the argument. **first being.** The very name Melchisedec places its possessor high in rank, since it means the Righteous King—the ever-present Ideal of the Hebrew State, merging later into the Messianic Hope. **after that.** In the next place he is King of Salem or Peace. This is part of the same ancient ideal: social peace was the end of righteous government.

3. **Without father . . . descent.** Read "register of descent." He was a Priest King, who did not depend for the validity of his orders upon his genealogy, but upon his inherent personality. In this respect he is seen to be superior to

the Levite, who must be able to trace his own genealogy (Neh. vii. 64) and whose descent must be pure. **neither beginning of days.** No record kept of birth or death. **made like unto the Son of God.** In the writer's theology the Son of God existed from the first, and lives on for ever and so **abideth a priest continually.** This is what the writer has been leading up to—the Melchisedec order of priesthood is not to be traced in an earthly succession; it is not given by an hereditary right but by virtue of personal worth. The mere enumeration of the places in the Epistle where reference to the Eternal Priesthood of Christ is made, shows how important the idea appears to be (v. 10, vi. 20, vii. 3, 8, 16, 17, 20, 24, 25, 28, viii. 1, and x. 12).

4-10. The greatness of Melchisedec as a priest, and his superiority to the Levitical priesthood is now established with care—(1) he took tithes from Abraham; (2) he gave Abraham his priestly benediction.

4. **consider how great.** He must have been great if Abraham, the founder of the race, acknowledged his priesthood by giving him a tenth of the spoils.

5. **And verily.** R.V., "And they indeed the sons of Levi . . ." Though they and the people taxed are on an equality, being all descendants of Abraham, still they have the privilege to tax.

6. **but he whose descent.** Melchisedec, though he came from no priestly caste, and was not a descendant of Abraham, still by virtue of his personal position and worth actually taxed Abraham and blessed him. This is the more extraordinary because Abraham **had the promises,**

—*i.e.* the tremendous destiny of being the Chosen Race.

7. **And without all contradiction.** R.V., “without any dispute.” Obviously, since of two men engaged in pronouncing a benediction the greater blesses the less. Melchisedec must have been superior to the friend of God and to his descendants the Levites, since he blessed Abraham, not *vice versa*.

8. **And here men that die receive tithes.** Another point of superiority to the Levites who were mortal men. Here, on the contrary, a being receives tithes who is regarded in Scripture as an immortal.

9. **even Levi . . . hath paid tithes.** Another very subtle point is made, and one which would be appreciated by Hebrew Christians educated by the Rabbis. Since Levi was, so to speak, in the loins of his father Abraham, he virtually paid tithes to Melchisedec. Truly the Levitical priesthood is now laid very low: its inferiority is now proved up to the hilt!

11–19. Jesus fulfilled a priesthood of the Melchisedec order, and in so doing transcended the Law and Priesthood of the Fathers.

11. **If therefore.** Better, “Now, indeed if.” There is a movement here of the subject: the meaning of the coming of another Melchisedec priest explained. He was required because “perfection” was not reached by the Levitical priesthood and by the Mosaic Law. (The writer, unlike St. Paul, thinks of the Hebrew dispensation as practically a priesthood and a Church.) **perfection.** The object of a priesthood is to bring men near God, as in ver. 19 and x. 1; and this “bringing



near" is in ix. 9 regarded as perfectly effected when a man's conscience is purified. "Conscience" is much in the writer's mind (ix. 14, x. 2, 22). These phrases, explained later, are a key to the writer's standpoint. **and not.** The Melchisedec Order was not Aaronic.

12. **being changed.** This verse is a parenthesis. "The need of change must have been very great since the Law is involved as well as the Priesthood."

13. **he of whom.** The psalm (cx. 4) refers to the Son, and certainly the tribe of Judah, from which Jesus came, never served at the altar as the tribe of Levi did.

14. **For it is evident,—i.e.** He did come from Judah as every one knows. This shows an acquaintance with the Gospel tradition. **Moses.** The Law says nothing of a priesthood in Judah, so that if the new Priest came, as He did, from Judah, the Law had been changed.

15. **And it.** Meaning the change of Law. **for that.** Better, "if." **similitude.** "Manner."

16. **who is made.** "Who hath become a priest." **not after the law of a carnal commandment.** This is a drastic sweeping aside of the validity of the Levitical priesthood. For it means that the Aaronic priests were made so by an external (fleshly) rule, whereas the "other Priest" was made so by an inherent virtue belonging to His own personality. **after the power of an endless life.** "Endless," "indissoluble." A new expression by this versatile writer of the idea which has so attracted him in Ps. cx.

17. **Thou art a priest for ever.** He regards the High Priesthood of Jesus in the heavens, as exercised by virtue of His deathless life.

18, 19. **a disannulling.** This is the conclusion to which the author has come himself, and has been trying to bring his readers. There is a disannulling of the **commandment** (which instituted the Levitical priesthood), because of its weakness and unprofitableness. The Law failed in its object, whilst Christianity, described here as the bringing in of a better hope, succeeds. **By it** (the better hope—better because the Priesthood of Jesus is better) we gain what the priestly system tried to give—an approach to the Living God. Here the writer using the present tense rests everything on the actual experience of a Christian Church. He does not argue about their religious status—he gives it as a fact: they are sons of God by virtue of Christ the High Priest.

20–22. An additional proof that Jesus is a Surety of a better Covenant.

20. **not without an oath.** R.V., “not without the taking of an oath.” The High Priesthood of Jesus is seen to be superior to that of Aaron, not only in respect of its absolute character (“priest for ever”), but in that it was confirmed by an oath of God. The Levitical priesthood lacked this confirmation, but the psalm, speaking of the Melchisedec order in which Christ lived says, “The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever” (Ps. cx. 4). So the Priesthood of Jesus received the sanction of the Divine Will.

22. **By so much,**—*i.e.* “by the fact just brought forward.” **was Jesus made a surety.** Read for “surety,” “guarantor.” **a better testament.** R.V., “covenant.”

23-25. Another contrast by which the advantage of the Priesthood of Jesus is made clearer.

23. **And they truly were.** R.V., "have been made priests many in number." The condition of the old priesthood was one of passing worth, because death hindered them from perpetually acting.

24. **but this man,**—*i.e.* Jesus. **an unchangeable priesthood.** Reverse order of words and read "has His Priesthood unchangeable." The point is that Jesus, because He always lives, has a Priesthood valid for all time.

25. **Wherefore he is.** The writer, as in ver. 19, speaks in the present tense, since he is setting forth the actual experience of the Christian community who were already making their approach to God by virtue of their sharing the Sonship of Christ. **saved to the uttermost.** "Completely": a variation for the "perfection" of salvation spoken of elsewhere. **them that come.** Literally, "those who are coming." Present experience again. **to God.** Cf. ver. 19, "Drawing nigh to God"; vi. 19, "Entering within the veil"; iii. 18, "Entering into rest,"—the rest of God. These are various pregnant phrases by which the writer describes religion and its end. It is a movement towards a Person not a place, and its end is a "being with" that Person. **seeing He . . . to make intercession.** This is the only high-priestly function which Christ exercises in heaven. His sacrifice is finished, but He still prays for His people. This revelation is one of proved consolation to Christians. "Christ is the divinely appointed Leader of the praying host, in human sympathy with each and all, our Master in prayer as well as in faith, and love, and duty. He also prays with us and for us: an

eternal) Intercessor, ever seeking to come between us and the things whereof our conscience makes us afraid" (J. M. Whitton).

26-28. Summary of his position and another contrast illustrating the advantage of the Melchisedec order.

26. **For such.** Paraphrase "For the kind of High Priest which was fitted for us is." The qualities of the priest follow. **became us**—"was fitted for us." The new covenant is of no less moment than the old: a great salvation fitted for great purposes. **holy.** This is the quality of the mind of the true Son of God embracing His devoutness (v. 7); humility towards the Divine will (v. 5); obedience to His vocation (v. 8, x. 5-7); faith and patient endurance throughout His earthly life (xii. 2); faithfulness (ii. 17). We are here upon historical ground: this is the Holy Christ reflected in the Gospels, and the qualities which compose it are those which best stand the wear and tear of life. They are within the reach of all who are willing to walk in His footsteps. **harmless.** "Without an evil disposition." R.V., "Guileless." **undefiled.** "Stainless"; cf. "without sin" (iv. 15). Fitted for priestly office. **separate.** R.V., "separated." This and the following epithets apply to the heavenly, not to the earthly, existence of Jesus. He is regarded as withdrawn from the influence of the world on its sinful side. **higher than the heavens.** Where nothing intervenes between Him and the face of God: as in iv. 14, "Passed into the heavens," and ix. 25, "Into heaven itself." To appear there in the Presence. Heaven was an exceedingly real place, and most desirable in the mind of the writer and his readers.

27. **who needeth not like those high priests.** Here another contrast with the fleshly or Aaronic order occurs. Whilst their offering was a daily one, His was made once for all when He offered up Himself. This is the first time we meet with what becomes of importance to the unfolding of the argument—the offering of the priest for sin. Unless it could be shown that Jesus had performed this function for men, the rest of His ministerial Priesthood (the validity of His orders, personal fitness, and endless life) would have lacked efficacy. For it is the function of a priest in most religions to offer an atoning sacrifice, and so to open the way for man's approach to the heavenly Father, and the perfect life. **daily.** There was a daily sacrifice in the Temple, and it is here regarded as carried out on the same lines as that on the great Day of Atonement. The high priest offered first a young bullock as sin-offering for himself (Lev. xvi. 3 and 6) (a sign of the weakness of his position which the author immediately seizes), and, secondly, he offered a goat as sin-offering for the people (Lev. xvi. 5, 9.) **for this he,—i.e. Jesus. did once.** R.V., “once for all when He offered up Himself.” The contrast between the things offered in the two priesthods—the goats and bulls of the old order, and the self or personality of the new order, does not escape the keen observation of the writer, but is reserved for future treatment. Here he thinks the fact that the Jewish high priest had to make an offering for his own sins is to be carefully observed, and points out what is clear in any reading of the Law, namely, the priests are ordained who are full of human infirmity. On the other hand, the ordina-

tion of the Son, as has already been shown by citations from the Psalms which were spoken after the Law, was that of a Priest who is ideally perfect for the work.

28. For **consecrated** read "perfected," and notice the return of the writer's mind to this word.

Heb. viii. 1-5.

### THE TRUE TABERNACLE—THE PLACE WHERE JESUS EXERCISES THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD.

1 Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum :  
 we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand  
 2 of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ; a minister of  
 the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord  
 3 pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained  
 to offer gifts and sacrifices : wherefore it is of necessity that  
 4 this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on  
 earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are  
 5 priests that offer gifts according to the law : who serve  
 unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses  
 was admonished of God when he was about to make the  
 tabernacle : for, See, saith he, that thou make all things  
 according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount.

1. **the sum.** Better with Tyndall, "Of the things which we have spoken this is the pith."  
 (a) **we have a high priest.** This is the Christian position. **such.** After the order of Melchisedec. **sat down on the right hand** (Ps. cx.). Though He still ministers, "His offering is final" (A. B. Davidson). The symbol of this finality is His sitting down in the place of authority on the right hand of the Throne. (b) He is **the minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle.**

This is a great step in the writer's idealism: he has swept away the efficacy of the ancient priesthood and now the tabernacle goes with it. **which the Lord pitched.** The true or real Tabernacle no man has made or ever seen, the Lord pitched it.

3. This verse had better be regarded as a parenthesis, and the reader should take ver. 4 in strict connection with ver. 2. The parenthesis merely reminds us of the function of a high priest; he is appointed to make an offering and must have something to offer.

4. **For if he.** If the Lord Jesus Christ were not in the true Tabernacle but on earth, then His functions would clash with those of the legal priest. The collision is avoided if the sphere of the Son's Priesthood is in heaven.

5. **Who serve unto an example.** Read, "as a copy and shadow of the heavenly things." Even the Aaronic priesthood typified a heavenly one. According to Ex. xxv. 9, Moses even was told to make the earthly tabernacle after the ideal pattern. **in the mount.** In the place where he met God face to face.

#### Heb. viii. 6-13.

### A FURTHER CONTRAST BETWEEN THE WORK OF JESUS CHRIST AND THE ANCIENT LAW AND COVENANT.

6 But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

7 For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should

8 no place have been sought for the second. For finding

fault with them, he saith, *Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the*  
 9 *house of Israel and with the house of Judah: not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant,*  
 10 *and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to*  
 11 *them a God, and they shall be to me a people: and they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know*  
 12 *me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities*  
 13 *will I remember no more.* In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

6. **But now.** Read “as things are.” The atoning ministry of Jesus is better than that of the Levitical priesthood, and in consequence the covenant of which He is the Mediator is itself a better approach of man to God. **established.** R.V., “enacted.” The word is used for legal regulations. **upon better promises.** The promises which Christianity holds are the same as those which possessed the soul of Abraham, namely, eternal fellowship with God and the life which this implies. But the promises set before the eyes of the Christian are **better** because they are more effectively mediated. You may depend upon their coming to pass because the Son of God and not an earthly high priest is making them good.

7. **then should be no place.** R.V., “then would be no place.” Evidently if the older



religion had been faultless there would have been no need for another.

8. Here follows perhaps the most apposite and triumphant quotation from a modern standpoint in this Epistle. **He saith** — God saith through Jeremiah. That prophet saw by faith, amid the ruins of his dear city, the fashioning of a new religious bond between God who was faithful and a faithless people.

10. **this is the covenant.** The nature of the covenant is described under three heads—(a) the relationship between God and man will be more intimate; He will be their God in such a way that they will know His Law and love it of their own free will. It will be revealed in their inner life, not in their external institutions: written on the heart, not on formal tables of stone. (b) The knowledge of this new relationship will come to every one. No teachers will be needed in the perfect Church. All ranks will have the gift of religious insight. (c) Such intimate fellowship will be possible because the new covenant brings with it a forgiving God represented by a High Priest touched with the feeling of man's infirmities. The forgiveness, too, is final—**I will remember thine iniquities no more.**

13. **In that he.** God. The mention of the word **new** on the lips of the Divine Revealer shows that He had already, even in Jeremiah's days, thought out a new covenant. **which decayeth and waxeth old.** R.V., "which is becoming old and waxeth aged." The old covenant is regarded as fading away from old age, and will when the new one is revealed finally disappear.

Heb. ix. 1-10.

**THE CLIMAX OF SUPERIORITY REACHED IN  
THE OFFERING WHICH CHRIST OFFERED  
IN THE TRUE TABERNACLE OF GOD.**

1 Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of  
2 divine service, and a worldly sanctuary. For there was a  
tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick,  
and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the  
3 sanctuary. And after the second veil, the tabernacle  
4 which is called the Holiest of all; which had the golden  
censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about  
with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna,  
and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the  
5 covenant; and over it the cherubims of glory shadowing  
the mercyseat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.  
6 Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests  
went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the  
7 service of God. But into the second went the high priest  
alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered  
8 for himself, and for the errors of the people: the Holy  
Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all  
was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle  
9 was yet standing; which was a figure for the time then  
present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices,  
that could not make him that did the service perfect, as  
10 pertaining to the conscience; which stood only in meats  
and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances,  
imposed on them until the time of reformation.

The argument is in two parts. (a) ix. 1-10,—The two blots on the ancient system: (1) its keeping God at a distance; (2) its emphasis on bodily not on moral purification. (b) 11-14,—These defects removed by the more excellent ministry of Christ. It is curious to our minds that the writer did not make much

more of the prophecy of the new covenant which he has cited from Jeremiah. Christianity, as he conceives it, so exactly fits the case. Instead of this, he goes back to his sustained argument against the Levitical priesthood, anxious to make it invulnerable against any objectors. In the following section he sets forth the superiority of the sacrificial blood of Christ to that which the Jewish high priest offered. In leading up to this demonstration he discloses the spiritual inadequacy of the whole Levitical worship.

1. **Then verily.** Better, "Well then." The argument being resumed and taking a new turn. Omit "also" and read "a divinely appointed ritual," and as its sanctuary one belonging to this world. The "this world" character is explained in a careful inventory of the furniture of the Tabernacle, made with reverence and with consideration for those who still regarded the ancient symbolism as necessary to true worship.

2-5. The tent was made (ix. 24) with hands: its furniture was also made by hands. **the first.** Read "the part you entered first." **sanctuary.** read "Holy Place."

3. **second veil.** You entered both parts by moving aside a curtain or veil, so the one giving access to the Holy of Holies is called the second curtain. For details of the furniture of these two parts of the sanctuary, see Ex. xxvi. But they are not regarded as important by the writer ("of which, he says, we cannot now speak severally"), and need not detain modern readers.

4. **golden Pot.** R.V., "golden censer" or altar of incense, and the difficulty is that this was not in the Holy of Holies, or second tent, but in the

first. The rubric is in Ex. xxx. 6, "Thou shalt put it before the veil." Professor Bruce says: "Our writer thinks of the altar of incense as praying for admission into the inner shrine and waiting for the removal of the envious veil which forbade entrance." **wherein was.** This is not stated in the O.T.: the writer follows a Rabbinical tradition.

6. **Now when . . . ordained.** R.V., "These things having been thus prepared."

8. **The Holy Ghost thus signifying.** The fact that there were two parts to the ancient Tabernacle, one more holy than the other, was evidently intended to teach that there was no open access to the presence of God.

9. **Which,—i.e.** "the whole plan and position of the Tabernacle. **figure.** Read "parable." **for the time present.** "For the time being," *i.e.* for the time of the O.T. covenant into which the writer has put himself in imagination. **in which.** Read "according to which parable." **were—"are."** **him that did the service—the worshipper. perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.** This is one of the most revolutionary statements in the Epistle. The most venerable ritual of the older Church is regarded as radically unsound: for the conscience or inner life remained untouched, unreached, and therefore the worshipper was not brought to his better self: his soul was unrelieved of its evil.

10. **which stood only.** R.V., "being only," followed by a parenthesis (**with meats, and drinks, and divers washings**). **carnal ordinances.** The words in brackets, having all to do with the purification of the body, explain the meaning in which the writer uses the word "carnal" here.

It is astonishing how great a place the body takes in the Levitical and other ancient religions, and how slowly the purification of the soul, its moral sense, and its consciousness of God comes to the front. **the time of reformation.** Better perhaps "rectification." The principle of this rectification the writer states in the next section.

Heb. ix. 11-14.

**THE DEFECTS OF THE ANCIENT SYSTEM  
OBIATED BY THE MORE EXCELLENT  
MINISTRY OF CHRIST.**

11 But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come,  
by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with  
12 hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the  
blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood he  
entered in once into the holy place, having obtained  
13 eternal redemption for us. For if the blood of bulls and  
of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean,  
14 sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh: how much more  
shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit  
offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience  
from dead works to serve the living God?

11. **But Christ.** Here is the principle of the rectification of worship. **being come.** R.V., "having come." **high priest of the good things to come.** Westcott and Hort say that the true reading is "that are come." The effects of the new priesthood are already seen in the new Christian life. **by.** Read "by means of." In the Tabernacle "pitched by the Lord" in the heaven of heavens there is greater room for the High Priest to receive the influence of the presence of

God. Contact with the life of God in all the manifold workings of His Spirit is the gift of Christ. Here it is as a Priest that He is represented as joining the life of man with the life of God. If He does that, His Priesthood is valid. **not of this building.** R.V., "not of this creation." In dealing with the furniture of the Jewish Tabernacle (ix. 2), the writer has pointed out that they were made of the material of this earth, whereas in the other world there is nothing material, transitory or incomplete. The contrast between earth and heaven is much in the writer's mind, and the Epistle opens out a rich vein of thought in this direction. The writer is a poet in the proper sense of the word—a creator: he moves in worlds unrealised by men who have not his insight and faith.

12. **but by his own blood.** Equally important with the pitching of the true Tabernacle for the High Priest in making His Priesthood complete, but not more so, comes the offering which He offered. The readers of the Epistle were brought up to the idea that without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin, consequently, a Christian interpretation of blood-sacrifice must be given them if they were to abandon the old ritual. This Christian interpretation is given very simply here. There has been a blood-sacrifice made, and so far as the material is concerned there is no change: it is blood that has been shed, but the gulf between the old and the new becomes clear and fixed when it is realised that what was sacrificed by Christ was *His own* blood; it was not a sacrifice of outward things, but took place in the depths of His own personality. **by.** As

throughout this passage "by means of." **holy place**,—*i.e.* "the Holiest." The procedure of the Aaronic high priest is a parallel in each particular. **eternal redemption.** In contrast to the annual deliverance of the old covenant. This general description of the work of Christ is made clearer in the next verse by the following twofold contrast. (a) Ver. 13, They will admit that the blood of bulls on the Day of Atonement did purify (Num. xix.), then much more will the blood of Christ. (b) Ver. 14, They admit that the blood of bulls, etc., did purify the *flesh*, much more will the blood of Christ purify the *conscience*. That is the general sense of the two verses.

13. **purifying of the flesh.** If the reader finds it difficult to realise how much the cleansing of the body was the chief religious interest to the ancient Jewish Church as well as to the heathen mind at the present day, read Num. xix. 13-17. There the ashes of a burnt cow, sprinkled on a man unclean from contamination with a corpse, made him ritually clean : purified his flesh : restored him to fellowship with God.

14. **purge your conscience from dead works.** The conscience or inner life is the part of our nature that needs purification in order to obtain access to God and share in His life. This purification takes place when the power to act wrongly (works which end in self and are dead) is replaced by a power to act rightly, which is the service of the living God. In this way the writer leads Christians to transfer emphasis from the body to the conscience, and in so doing discovers the method by which God is revealed as having a living share in the life of every soul. **through**

**the eternal Spirit.** Read "as Eternal Spirit," or "through an Eternal Spirit." Two important facts emerge here—(a) It was not the blood shed, but the spirit in which it was shed that gave power to the sacrifice; (b) being an act of the Spirit it is eternal. It is not merely historical, but significant as part of the life of man for ever. **without spot.** R.V., "without blemish." The High Priest took with Him into the heavens the spotless life He had lived on earth.

#### Heb. ix. 15-22.

#### FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS BEARING ON THE FORCE OF THE DEATH OF CHRIST.

15 And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are  
 16 called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the  
 17 death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while  
 18 the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament  
 19 was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book,  
 20 and all the people. Saying, This is the blood of the  
 21 testament which God hath enjoined unto you. Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the  
 22 vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

15. **for this cause.** The fact that it is the conscience or inner life that is purified by the



blood of Christ makes Him Mediator of a new covenant. It is **new**, in the sense which Jeremiah describes that in the heart is the theatre of the great spiritual struggle for God. **by means of death.** R.V., "a death having taken place." **the first covenant.** This is difficult: we should have expected the words "new covenant": instead of that the thought turns back to the sins of those who lived under the first or old covenant, and the death of Christ is declared to be of retrospective value (xi. 40). **they which are called.** Including both the ancient saints and the new Christians. **the promise of eternal inheritance.** Another description of the ultimate goal of religion (cf. "eternal redemption," and note on p. 123). It is not supposed that the readers of this Epistle will remain steadfast or even listen patiently to the abolition of their ancestral creed and worship unless their hearts are reached by the promise of a certain and ultimate Divine life.

16-18. A digression on another aspect of Christ's work.

16. **a testament.** In Greek this is the same word that has been used throughout for "covenant." It is a little awkward that it is here used in a new sense. Here it means a will which comes into force when the one who makes it is dead. The author, however, wants to make it extremely clear that the death of Christ is of saving power whether it is regarded as the death of One who leaves, as a legacy behind Him, an eternal inheritance, or of one who sacrifices blood at the making of a solemn contract between living people.

17. **otherwise.** Read "for."

18. **Whereupon.** Read "whence even." The writer returns to the idea of a contract again.

19-22. The historical illustrations of ver. 18 are taken from Ex. xxiv. 6. The reference is to the general ritual for the remission of sin (Num. xix. 6; Lev. xiv. 4). **hyssop.** Wild marjoram used in sprinkling the blood. **wool.** Wound round the stick of hyssop. Whenever the blood was sprinkled it was believed to cleanse the person, book, or vessel. **the blood** erased or obliterated in God's sight the uncleanness.

22. The writer himself, though educated as a Hebrew, seems surprised as he thinks over the place which the shedding of blood takes in the Hebrew ritual.

### Heb. ix. 23-28.

#### THE UNIQUE CHARACTER OF THE OFFERING OF CHRIST.

23 It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices  
 24 than these. For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence  
 25 of God for us: nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year  
 26 with blood of others; for then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the  
 27 sacrifice of himself. And as it is appointed unto men once  
 28 to die, but after this the judgment: so Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look

for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

There is an analogy as has been shown between the old purification by blood and his priestly work, but the analogy breaks down at an important point. The old high priest offered sacrifice year by year, Christ offered Himself once.

23. **therefore.** Read "you see." **patterns.** R.V., "copies," as in viii. 5. Where Moses is said to have received from God in the Mount a heavenly mystical type, according to which he fashioned earthly copies and shadows—his earthly tabernacle and its furniture. These copies being earthly are necessarily purified by material acts such as blood-cleansing, but the things of which these are copies must of course be cleansed with better sacrifices. Since, according to the teaching above given, it is the conscience or inner spiritual life which is dealt with by the High Priest of the new covenant, the very Tabernacle or meeting-place between the soul and God may be regarded as requiring due preparation and even cleansing for the holy work of bringing men into fellowship with their Heavenly Father. Such preparation must be made by a sacrifice of things pertaining to the conscience or inner life. The sacrifice of Christ has just been described as having this necessary quality: it was an offering made in an "eternal Spirit."

24. **For Christ.** All this purification of the path to heaven has been done because Christ has entered the tent of the Real Presence. **appearing in the presence of God for us.** This is the height and consummation of His High-priestly office. In order that His people may have access

to the life of God, their High Priest must be living that life Himself first. Compare St. John's simpler way of revealing the same truth, xiv. 1, "Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in Me. In my Father's house are many abiding-places. I go to prepare a place for you, that where I am there ye may be also."

25. **nor yet.** This is the point in which the analogy in the older priesthood entirely ceases. Christ does not go on offering Himself often, *i.e.* every year, nor does He offer alien blood as that of animals, but His own.

26. **often.** If it had been necessary for one in the position of the Son to offer often, He would have suffered over and over again in the course of time, and His deaths would have been recorded in history. **once in the end of the world.** Read "in the completion of the ages." The conviction that the age in which he lived was the last in the world's history, colours most of the religious thought of the writer (i. 2, x. 37). It helped him and other N.T. writers to bring out aspects in Christianity which made that religion the complete and final form of all religion. Without this conviction they might have insisted rather on those aspects of the revelation of Jesus which were more like the seeds of new ideas than their final form. For instance, here the sacrifice of Christ becomes of such tremendous value because, for the first time in history, an absolutely perfect sacrifice had been made body, soul, and spirit—were on the Cross consecrated by the Son of God. **appeared.** Both on earth and in heaven, fulfilling His priestly function in both spheres. **by the sacrifice of himself.** The author always returns to this—the

personal and ethical aspect of the blood-shedding of Jesus Christ. He has the boldness to go right into the heart of ceremonial Judaism, its doctrine of the worth of blood-sacrifice, and redeems it from materialism and superstition by his wonderful spiritual idealism. In doing this he also strikes a blow at the sacrificial systems of all non-Christian religions. The missionary value of this Epistle is therefore great.

27. **once to die, after that the judgment.** These two events in every man's destiny are represented in the two parts of the work of Christ—(1) He tasted death and turned death into a means of redemption transforming its character; and (2) He will come a second time in judgment to set all things to right.

28. **without sin.** R.V., "apart from sin," or better, "without any reference to sin," as the bringer in of a new era and a new world. Again the writer paints the future bright for Christians, and impresses upon them the glory and the mystery of the life that is to come.

#### Heb. x. 1-18.

### RECAPITULATION AND ENFORCEMENT OF THE WRITER'S MAIN POSITION REGARDING THE VALIDITY OF THE ORDERS OF JESUS CHRIST.

#### Heb. x. 1-4.

#### A FINAL CHALLENGE.

- 1 For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make

- 2 the comers thereunto perfect. For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.
- 3 But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made
- 4 of sins every year. For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

1. **For.** He wishes to illustrate further the imperfection of the ancient theory of sacrifice. **the law having a shadow.** The shadow of a tree cast on the ground is only an imperfect likeness, not the very image of the tree itself; the shadow has no colour such as the tree has nor any moulded form, so the actual ritual of the Hebrew religion was an imperfect shadow cast by the heavenly realities, and the sacrifices belonging to it are mere shadows and imperfect likenesses of what sacrifices ought to be. **can never . . . make the comers thereunto perfect.** They do not take away the power of sin over the inner man.

2. **Else would they not.** A natural conclusion from the frequency of Hebrew sacrifice is, that they were repeated so often because they failed so often to alter the moral condition of the worshipper.

3. **a remembrance of sins.** Even the Day of Atonement, the greatest of all the high days of later Jewish ritual, by recalling sins showed that they had not been really taken away.

4. **it is not possible.** A final challenge to the ancient system. From the standpoint of Christianity as now defined with its heavenly High Priest and heavenly sacrifice, and looking back upon the whole system of animal sacrifice, no one, the writer says, can fail to see such a system could not take away sin.

## Heb. x. 5-18.

## THE SPIRITUALITY OF THE SACRIFICE OF CHRIST AND ITS MORAL POWER.

5 Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, *Sacrifice*  
6 *and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared*  
7 *me: in burnt-offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had*  
8 *no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the*  
9 *book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God. Above*  
10 *when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt-offerings*  
11 *and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst*  
12 *pleasure therein; which are offered by the law; then said*  
13 *he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away*  
14 *the first, that he may establish the second. By the which*  
15 *will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of*  
16 *Jesus Christ once for all. And every priest standeth daily*  
17 *ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices,*  
18 *which can never take away sins: but this man, after he*  
19 *had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the*  
20 *right hand of God; from henceforth expecting till his*  
21 *enemies be made his footstool. For by one offering he*  
22 *hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. Whereof*  
23 *the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us: for after that he*  
24 *had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with*  
25 *them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws*  
26 *into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them;*  
27 *and their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*  
28 Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering  
for sin.

5. **Wherefore.** In consequence of the imperfect worth of the Day of Atonement and its yearly sacrifice, God announced that He had another and a better sacrifice in store. **when He cometh.** The Son is imagined as coming into the world

with this psalm upon His lips. In it (Ps. xl.) He makes two statements—one regarding the Father, and the other about Himself. (1) God not caring about animal offerings had prepared a Body for the Son to inhabit and to offer; (2) this offering was one of the whole Man—soul and body.

**7. the coming to do the will of God.** (For volume of the book (ver. 7), read “roll of the book.”) The Son came not with a burnt-offering, but with a roll on which the Will of the Father was written. Readers should consult St. John’s presentation of the obedient Son, especially chap. xvii.

**8, 9. Above when he said.** Paraphrase, “saying in the passage just quoted.” The writer is going back to His Scripture citation to point out that the first kind of sacrifice has been abolished because the second kind—the sacrifice of will—has come in to stay.

**10. By the which will.** “The will of the High Priest who offered Himself.” **we are sanctified.** R.V., “have been sanctified,” *i.e.* “brought into a new covenant relationship with God.” **through the body of Jesus Christ.** Care must be taken here not to separate the Body of Christ from the Will of Christ, otherwise we might fall into as material a theory of sacrifice as that of the older covenant with its offerings of the bodies of beasts. The writer’s doctrine is quite clear that the power of Christ’s sacrifice is its self-determined consecration of body, mind and spirit. **once for all.** This is a special point now repeated, and leading as often in this Epistle to a fresh expansion of meaning.

**11. every priest.** If you think of the work of the ordinary priests who offer daily sacrifices,



the distinct superiority of the self-sacrifice of Jesus is equally clear. **can never take away.** On the same ground as that given above (ver. 2). **if daily.** If the only result of sacrificial worship is to keep up the remembrance of sins, it cannot be said they are taken away. The worshipper goes away with his consciousness of being a sinner intensified, and on the other hand the feeling of the unworthiness of the worshipper is intensified in the mind of God.

12. **this man . . . sat down.** Christ would not have been able to rest at the side of the Throne if He had had to offer repeated sacrifices.

14. **perfected for ever.** As it is, He has brought mankind into the covenant relation for ever; they are sons of God potentially, if not actually. There is no going back. The whole saving attitude of God towards mankind is now intensified. It is His will now to save His people in the completest way—through His Son.

15. **Whereof the Holy Ghost is a witness.** Jeremiah's ideal of a true religion is again quoted, and the last line, **their sins will I remember no more,** leads up to the triumphant conclusion of the writer's long argument which he has developed with such painstaking detail right away from chap. vii. 1. The orders of Jesus Christ are valid, and His High Priesthood effective for ever. For "remembering sins no more" means that they are really taken away. The real remission of sins which is taking place amongst those who are leading the consecrated life looking unto Jesus, is an experienced fact which shows that there is no need of further offering for sin. The new covenant is made, signed, sealed, accepted.

Heb. x. 19-25.

## THE CONSECRATED WAY TO GOD.

19 Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the  
 20 holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way,  
 which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that  
 21 is to say, his flesh; and having an High Priest over the  
 22 house of God; let us draw near with a true heart in  
 full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from  
 an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.  
 23 Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without  
 24 wavering; (for he is faithful that promised;) and let us  
 consider one another to provoke unto love and to good  
 25 works: not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together,  
 as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another:  
 and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.

The Christian theory of Redemption arising from the progress of the Son to the Father is now sufficiently stated; it remains for the Hebrew Christian to put it in force with the utmost boldness.

19. **Boldness.** The word used for "boldness" often expresses freedom of speech. In iii. 6 the writer employs it in the same sense as here—boldness and frankness. It exactly describes the feeling of the religious soul when it has fought its way out of some burdensome ceremonial religion—the enjoyment of a traveller who, after wandering in the mazes of a wood, comes to the open road. **to enter.** This has a special meaning in the Epistle, signifying always a movement into some position or place nearer to God. **Brethren.** As in iii. 1, "holy brethren." This title marks the transition from the mood of intellectual argument

to the warmer attitude of exhortation and appeal. Notice also that the writer joins himself with this bold approach to the Holy Place, saying, in ver. 22, "let *us*." The whole of this passage is to be considered one of the most attractive in the Epistle to an inquirer. When the writer passes away from his citations from Scripture and minute analysis, his style rises to eloquence, and he spontaneously speaks the wingèd words of impassioned oratory. Cf. i. 1-4, iv. 14-16, xi. 1, xiii. 1, 2, 18-24.

20. **By the blood of Jesus.** By the offering He made of Himself. **new and living way.** In vi. 20 Jesus has been already called a Forerunner—One who prepares the way: here the uniqueness of His pioneer work is further emphasised. That the road had never been made before is told us in the epithet "new," and in the epithet "living" we are told that it leads living souls into the presence of their God. Beyond this no religion can go. **through the veil.** As the high priest of the Levitical order went into the Holiest by lifting a curtain, so those who pass along the Consecrated Way have entered it through lifting the curtain of the earthly life of Christ and penetrating His spiritual experience.

21. **an High Priest.** R.V., "having a great priest." It is sometimes said that it is a sign of weakness when a speaker or writer describes anything as "great." Here, after watching the steps of the exaltation of Jesus, and the richness of the priestly functions with which He is endowed, we feel that the word "great" is absolutely convincing and true.

22. **let us draw near.** This "drawing near"

is the bold movement of the spiritual life which is the response on the part of imperfect men to the call of the great High Priest. All ritual acts on the part of the worshipper are dispensed with, and the whole process of walking along the Consecrated Way is described in terms "pertaining to the conscience," to use the writer's own phraseology. Four conditions are to be observed in this momentous "drawing near" to the Father who is in heaven. (a) **With a true heart.** Cf. Ps. lvii. 7, "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed." There must be a pure desire to reach the Holiest: a desire not merely for the place but for the holiness of character symbolised by the place. Professor Davidson calls it "a fundamental genuineness." Its direct opposite is the spirit of a Mr. Facing Both-Ways: who accepts the Christian position of open personal access to the Father through the Son, and at the same time secretly desires the props and stays of a ceremonial religion.

(b) **in full assurance of faith,**—*i.e.* "faith at its faithfulest." Presently we shall find the author amplifying this idea in his great Hymn of Faith. Unless he were to make good in his reader's mind the place which this virtue must take in Christianity with all its heroism and spirit of adventure, few would tread the Consecrated Way.

(c) **having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience.** In the order of experience this would happen first of all, for, as has been made clear, the consciousness of guilt is that which is first removed from the soul which accepts the cleansing power of the offering of Christ.

(d) **and our bodies washed with pure water.** Again the language which belonged to the old sacrificial system is boldly transferred into the realm of Christianity. For sprinkling with water, equally with sprinkling by blood, was a method of cleansing used by the priests (Ex. xxix. 4). Following the interpretation of the words "through the body of Jesus Christ," in x. 10 (see note), we may understand by this washing of the body the completeness of the cleansing which is given. Body, mind and spirit, the whole man in fact, is cleansed by contact with the whole personality of Jesus Christ. It is difficult, however, to say whether mention of pure water also refers to the Christian sacrament of Baptism. Bishop Westcott says, "The reference here to baptism is unquestionable." Professor Davidson, more guardedly—"Possibly the water of baptism."

23. **the profession of our faith.** R.V., and the original Greek, "confession of our hope." **without wavering.** R.V., "That it (the confession) waver not." A Christian's confession is his religious standpoint, the whole of his mental outlook with which he perceives truth in religion. This Epistle, for instance, has for its basis or confession the whole mental outlook of its author. That is on the human side. The ultimate ground lies in the faithfulness of Him who makes the promise and inspires the writer's soul. "He is faithful who promised."

24. **Consider.** Paraphrase "take each other's circumstances, temptations, and weakness into account." **to provoke unto love.** Read "for a stimulus to love." **Good works.** "Kindness towards other Christians."

25. **the assembling of ourselves together.** A simple description of the Christian meeting. **but exhorting one another.** Examples of this are given by the writer himself in his warmer, more personal admonitions. Here the need of exercising strenuous influence is pressed home by reminding them that they lived in view of the mystery of the end. **the day.** The brevity of this reference to the end of the age shows how large a share of the attention of the Christian community the coming of Christ again took. They spoke of it just as we speak of some important happening which we all expect as *the event* or *the crisis*. Compare also the manner in which the early Christians spoke of *the Word* or *the Way*.

Heb. x. 26-31.

### ANOTHER SERIOUS WARNING AGAINST BACKSLIDING.

- 26 For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice  
 27 for sins. But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.  
 28 He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit  
 30 of grace? For we know him that hath said, *Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord.*  
 31 And again, *The Lord shall judge his people.* It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

26. **sin wilfully.** The sin which the writer has chiefly in mind all through the Epistle is that of apostasy—the drawing back from the Consecrated Way. Here their Christian experience is called a **knowledge of the truth.** Previously it had been called “a confession of their hope (ver. 23). **there remaineth no more a sacrifice.** This is the logical inference of the writer’s main contention. He has shown them that the sacrifices of Judaism, always imperfect, had now become invalid: also that the one great sacrifice of the Son could not be repeated. If they rejected that, by refusing to make it the basis of their new walking along the Consecrated Way, then there was nothing left for them to experience except the consuming fire of God. This miserable condition, involving the backslider in a present feeling of guilt and a certain dread of the future, is exactly the kind of inner life which is removed by a steadfast faith.

28, 29. The appeal is extremely forcible. They are in a better position upon the theory of the new covenant than they were under Leviticalism: it is therefore a greater sin to apostasise from the new than it was to reject the old, and that was serious and awful enough (Deut. xvii. 2-6). Three pregnant phrases follow, describing the heinousness of the sin of turning away from the light when once we have had a vision of the Consecrated Way. It is (a) **to tread under foot the Son of God.** As in vi. 6, “to crucify the Son of God and to put Him to an open shame.” There is a reminiscence here of the public derision of Calvary: it would have its analogue in the open rejection of Christ by a member of His visible Church. (b) **to count the**

**blood an unholy thing.** In becoming Christians they have already taken advantage of the position of Sonship which Christ had consecrated by the offering of Himself—through the blood. To go back now is to count that blood to be the blood of a common malefactor. (c) **to do despite to the Spirit of grace.** Read, “hath scorned the Spirit of grace.” This exactly represents the action of an apostate: he knows, for he has been within the Church, the influence for good which Christ has had upon his character (xiii. 9). He has come to know God as gracious: he has started along the way open by the perfect High Priest into the Holiest.

30. **For.** The certainty of punishment is proved by a quotation from the O.T. where retribution figures so largely in the prophetic revelation (Deut. xxxii. 35, 36; Isa. i. 24).

31. **It is a fearful thing . . . the living God.** The writer places himself in the position of the apostate. No one knows better than the author that the only remedy for man's imperfect life is that it should be inter-penetrated by the life of God: to fall into the hands of the living God is the best thing that could happen to any one. It is to help us to draw near to God that Jesus trod the Consecrated Way. But here the matter is viewed from the other side, so that his readers, if they are inclined to go back from the light and hope of Christianity, may weigh the consequences. In modern life there is much of this drawing back amongst people who have learned the Christian life: this Epistle has a living message to them; in the matter of religion, as in all the great concerns of life, there is an inexorable law, “To him that



hath shall more be given, and from him that hath not shall be taken even that which he appears to have."

Heb. x. 32-39.

## THE PERSONAL CONFIDENCE OF THE WRITER IN THE POWER OF HIS READERS TO ESCAPE THIS AWFUL SIN OF APOSTASY.

32 But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions ;  
 33 partly, whilst ye were made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions ; and partly, whilst ye became  
 34 companions of them that were so used. For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.  
 35 Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great  
 36 recompense of reward. For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive  
 37 the promise. *For yet a little while, and he that shall*  
 38 *come will come, and will not tarry. Now the just shall live by faith : but if any man draw back, my soul shall*  
 39 *have no pleasure in him.* But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition ; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

32. **the former days.** He asks them to recall their Christian experience from its commencement : they were not novices. In an earlier part of the letter (v. 12), he recalls to their mind the same fact. **after ye were illuminated.** R.V., "enlightened." Notice that here, and in vi. 4, their initial experience is enthusiastically called an "enlightenment." This is the normal effect of a true revelation. Revelation is the coming of light ; that which does not bring

light is not revelation. Teachers will find it to be an immense help in all discussions regarding the question, "What is revelation?" to keep in mind the simple fact that whatever else it is, or is not, its essential nature is light—its inevitable consequence upon the mind of the recipient is that he feels that he has got light, *e.g.* "There has come to me a thought about God that has transfigured everything; it contains all that is true in every worthy thought that men have ever had about Him, a thought about God which transfigures all life, a thought about God which is indeed life. It is this: He is a Being whose every thought is love, of whose thoughts not one is for Himself. Creation is one great unselfish thought, the bringing into being of creatures who can know the happiness which God knows" (E. H. Askwith). **endured a great fight.** Gk., "athlesis," a wrestling.

33. **made a gazingstock.** The Greek verb used is formed from the word "theatre," and means to be put in a place where one is gazed at by the public. It looks as if his readers had gone through some notable persecution in the cruel amphitheatres of the time. **became companions.** If they had not themselves suffered in this way, they had stood by others who had been dragged into the arena before their very eyes.

34. **of me.** Omit these words, which are not the original, and follow the R.V., "on them that were in prison." There is therefore here no allusion to the persecution of the writer, or, as some have supposed, to the imprisonment of St. Paul. **the spoiling of your goods.** As we gather from the Epistle of St. James, Hebrew Christians suffered much worldly loss from their old co-religionists.

It is probable that James himself suffered at the hands of the Jews. **knowing in yourselves.** R.V., "knowing that ye yourselves." **have in heaven.** Omit "in heaven," and read with Westcott, "knowing that ye had yourselves for a better possession and an abiding one." Stripped of their earthly possessions, they still retained their own integrity: they had won their souls in patience (Luke xxi. 19).

35. **your confidence.** R.V., "boldness." For this is the very word which is used in the great exhortation at the beginning of this section (x. 19). The same virtue with which they were to enter the Holiest by the Consecrated Way is to be exercised in maintaining their progress in the Way. "Audace, toujours audace." **hath great recompense.** He is dwelling upon the bright side of their destiny in contrast to the dark and ominous consequences which face those who turn back (ver. 31).

36, 37. **patience.** "Patient endurance." The quality most opposed to fickleness. "Real strength is shown not in sudden effort but in the patient bearing of burdens" (Carlyle). **the promise.** This, as usual with the writer, suggests some of the written promises in the Prophets and Psalms; he finds in Hab. ii. 3, 4, and Ps. xxxvii. 10, which he combines together in a composite quotation, a certain promise that the discipline of suffering is only temporary—there is an end to it.

38, 39. Summary. **the just**—or, "my righteous man," "God's righteous man." **my soul.** "God's soul." **But we.** As in other parts of the Epistle, the author joins himself with his readers in the fellowship of the Christian endeavour. **them who**

**draw back.** We are not men of cowardice but men of faith. **saving of the soul.** This more personal idea of what the end of the new covenant is to be—its final good—here takes the place of earlier expressions—“enter into rest,” “enter into the Holiest.”

Heb. xi. 1-40.

THE FUNCTION OF FAITH IN SHAPING  
THE MIND AND WILL OF THE  
CHRISTIAN TO TREAD THE CON-  
SECATED WAY.

THE MEN OF FAITH AND THEIR EXPLOITS.

- 1 Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the
- 2 evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders obtained
- 3 a good report. Through faith we understand that the
- worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things
- which are seen were not made of things which do appear.
- 4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice
- than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was
- righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being
- 5 dead yet speaketh. By faith Enoch was translated that he
- should not see death; and was not found, because God
- had translated him: for before his translation he had this
- 6 testimony, that he pleased God. But without faith it is
- impossible to please him: for he that cometh to God must
- believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that
- 7 diligently seek him. By faith Noah, being warned of God
- of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark
- to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned
- the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by
- 8 faith. By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out
- into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance,
- obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

9 By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange  
country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the  
10 heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a  
city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is  
11 God. Through faith also Sara herself received strength to  
conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was  
past age, because she judged him faithful who had pro-  
12 mised. Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as  
good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude,  
and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable.  
13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises,  
but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them,  
and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers  
14 and pilgrims on the earth. For they that say such things  
15 declare plainly that they seek a country. And truly, if  
they had been mindful of that country from whence they  
came out, they might have had opportunity to have  
16 returned. But now they desire a better country, that is,  
an heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed to be called  
17 their God: for he hath prepared for them a city. By faith  
Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he  
that had received the promises offered up his only begotten  
18 son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed  
19 be called: accounting that God was able to raise him up,  
even from the dead; from whence also he received him  
20 in a figure. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau con-  
21 cerning things to come. By faith Jacob, when he was a  
dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped,  
22 leaning upon the top of his staff. By faith Joseph, when  
he died, made mention of the departing of the children of  
23 Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. By  
faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of  
his parents, because they saw he was a proper child; and  
24 they were not afraid of the king's commandment. By faith  
Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called  
25 the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to suffer

affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the  
 26 pleasures of sin for a season ; esteeming the reproach of  
 Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt : for he  
 27 had respect unto the recompence of the reward. By faith  
 he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king : for he  
 28 endured, as seeing him who is invisible. Through faith  
 he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he  
 29 that destroyed the firstborn should touch them. By faith  
 they passed through the Red sea as by dry land : which  
 30 the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. By faith  
 the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed  
 31 about seven days. By faith the harlot Rahab perished  
 not with them that believed not, when she had received  
 32 the spies with peace. And what shall I more say ? for the  
 time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of  
 Samson, and of Jephthae ; of David also, and Samuel, and  
 33 of the prophets : who through faith subdued kingdoms,  
 wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the  
 34 mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped  
 the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong,  
 waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the  
 35 aliens. Women received their dead raised to life again :  
 and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance ; that  
 36 they might obtain a better resurrection : and others had  
 trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of  
 37 bonds and imprisonment : they were stoned, they were  
 sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword :  
 they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins ; being  
 38 destitute, afflicted, tormented ; (of whom the world was  
 not worthy :) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains,  
 39 and in dens and caves of the earth. And these all, having  
 obtained a good report through faith, received not the  
 40 promise : God having provided some better thing for us,  
 that they without us should not be made perfect.

1. **faith is.** There is no article in the Greek,  
 and the writer is not speaking of a body of

doctrine called *The Christian Faith*; he is stating the nature of faith as a characteristic effort of the human spirit. His view of it is to be abundantly illustrated, and evidently our interpretation of his conception of faith must be largely determined by the examples which he gives. **substance.** A glance at the R.V. will show the teacher that it is found difficult to discover one single word in English which translates the Greek satisfactorily. The following are suggested—"ground" or "basis," "confidence," "assurance," "giving substance to." As is often the case, the latter, which is the marginal reading of the R.V., gives the best sense: it retains the old word "substance," but gives it an active meaning. Faith is the act of giving substance to things hoped for: the process of making them substantial. The ideal becomes the real, to use the language of modern Christian philosophy. **the evidence.** R.V., "the proving." The act of proving or testing evidence seems to be opposed to the act of trust itself, but if we render "giving proof to" or "making experience of" (cf. our phrase, "experimental test"), the meaning will agree with that of the other phrase, "giving substance to," and is consistent to the primary act of faith or trust. A splendid example of giving reality to things unseen is this very writer's treatment of the exalted personality of Christ. All poets and prophets exhibit this power in their several degrees.

2. **For by it.** Read "in it," *i.e.* "in this state of faith." Cf. Rev. i. 10, "I was in the spirit on the Lord's day." **the elders obtained a good report.** R.V., "had witness borne to them." This point completes the definition of faith: if

this had not been added the writer might have become open to the charge of making faith manufacture its own objects. Here, on the contrary, he says that the very things which faith stretches out to grasp give evidence of their own existence and worth to those who show faith; they justify themselves in fact. This is a fundamental principle of revelation. It may be illustrated thus—an aviator trusts his machine and his planes as he sails off the ground, but presently the invisible air shows itself to be substantial and bears witness that the aviator's trust in it was not ill-founded.

3. **Through faith.** R.V., "by faith." This change to be made by the reader throughout this chapter (vers. 11, 28, 33). For faith is the dynamic *by* which the religious spirit moves. **we understand that the worlds.** The first example given of the working of the mind in giving substance to "things hoped for" and making experience of "things unseen" lies in our bringing the thought of God, the Divine Word, into relation with the world (that which we see), with the result that we perceive that the things which we see have not been made by other things we see, but by the working of invisible powers and ideas. See Lodge's *Substance of Faith*, p. 59.<sup>1</sup>

4. **by faith Abel.** The interpretation of Hebrew history as a series of acts of faith begins with Abel (Gen. iv. 3). The selection of heroes is interesting in respect of those chosen and those omitted: the amount of space given to each should be noticed. (Abel, one verse; Enoch, two verses;

<sup>1</sup> "The process of evolution can be regarded as the gradual unfolding of the Divine Thought throughout the universe by the action of Spirit on matter."



Noah, one ; Abraham, eleven ; Isaac, one ; Jacob, two ; Moses, five ; the whole people of Israel, two ; Rahab, one. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, the Prophets only by name and in the latter case not even by name. The selection may follow some scheme of instruction given in the synagogue and its schools, or else may be an oratorical device for giving a rapid and impressive view of the whole field of Hebrew heroism.) **by which.** R.V., "through which" he had evidence. **righteous.** In the sense of standing in a right relationship. **God testifying.** "Giving evidence." **of his gifts.** In respect of his gifts or offerings: how the evidence is given is not stated here nor in Genesis. **by it he being dead.** R.V., "through it," *i.e.* his faith. **still speaketh.** In Gen. iv. 10 Abel's blood is said to "cry unto the Lord from the ground": here the idea is that though dead the blood of a faithful man speaks.

5. **Enoch.** The account in Gen. v. 24 is very brief. The author shows here the same rich freedom of interpretation as he does in the treatment of Melchisedec. Enoch is proved to have an important place on the roll of the heroes by a simple syllogism, "without faith it is impossible to please God: Enoch pleased God": therefore Enoch was a man of faith. See LXX.

6. **he that cometh to God.** This term for active religion, "the coming to or the drawing near to God," is used often in this Epistle, generally in connection with prayer or worship (iv. 16, vii. 25, x. 22). In the great central appeal, the tenth chapter, it is used for the process of bringing the life of man to the life of God, which is the whole object of the

**Incarnation.** Here this coming is said to involve (a) a faith in the presence and reality of God, (b) a faith in His active response to those who seek Him. This is a brief form of the Christian Creed. It also introduces the personality of God, a thought absent from the more abstract definition of faith in ver. 1. It takes over the conception of a Personal God from the Old Testament into the New and revitalises it. God is to Christians a real Personal Being with character and responsibility. Both nature and humanity are less known and less real, than He whom Christ reveals as the Living One.

7. **Noah.** This Hebrew hero affords a better illustration of the state of mind which gives reality to the things not seen. For he made the Ark to meet a future contingency. **fear**—"with piety." **by which**,—*i.e.* "faith." Noah's faith was a condemnation of the faithlessness of his world which could not perceive when it was out of favour with God. He realised his responsibility by his perception of the invisible law of right and wrong, his contemporaries could not. **became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.** Realising his responsibility for himself and others, Noah became a type of that spontaneous kind of doing right which is the peculiar mark of a man whose conscience is kept alive by faith in a living God.

8, 9. **Abraham was called to go.** R.V., "when he was called to go obeyed to go out." Faith qualifies the words "being called." Abraham realised the genuine voice of God in his call and obeyed. **as in a strange country.** It was his own by promise, but he lived in it just as if it belonged to some one else, namely, **in tabernacles**

(R.V., "in tents"), which were moved from place to place as his cattle required pasturage.

10. **a city which hath foundations.** His "perceiving" mind made him aware of a mystic city built not as a tent, which has no firm hold in the ground, but with foundation, and made not with the hands of man, but by a Divine Architect and Builder, as in xii. 22, "the city of the living God." The Book of Genesis does not portray an Abraham of this kind. The writer is throwing over Abraham, as he does over all the heroes of his nation, the glamour of his own conception of faith, and of the world in which faith lives. Here he awakens the hope of a city-life which is founded upon the will of God. The Psalmist loved to think of the city of Jerusalem as the city of God, and when this Christian prophet thinks of the heavenly Jerusalem, the city or social idea remains, though its site is changed from earth to heaven.

11. **Sara** (Gen. xvii. 19, xviii. 11-14, xxi. 2). Abraham's faith was contagious, Sarah also shared its power. She **received strength.** In this case physical strength.

12. **one,**—*i.e.* Abraham. **as good as dead**—from age.

13. **died in faith.** "According to faith" (see ver. 7). "They faced death as men who retained their hold on the invisible" (Westcott). Their condition of mind is described in warm language: the promises as regards the future were "welcomed and confessed." This was no faintly trusting the larger hope. And he explains their attitude of open confession by adding, **they who say such things seek their own native land.** (The

word for "country" here is that from which the word "patriot" is formed: there is such a thing as spiritual patriotism.)

15. **might have had opportunity to return.** With his thoughts partly running on the Genesis narrative the writer speaks here of the possibility of returning—in Abraham's case to his own land of Mesopotamia.

16. **But now.** Better "But as it is." The verse again resumes the wider thought applicable not only to Abraham and his descendants, but to all men of faith. **they desire** (present tense) **a better country**,—*i.e.* "the country of the future and the eternal." **wherefore God is not ashamed.** Their strong passion of yearning faith receives the highest reward. "Their desire for fellowship with Him He meets with a public avowal of His relationship to them." As was explained in ver. 2, the hero of faith does not stretch out his arms into the empty air without finding them grasped by the substantial hands of God. **prepared for them a city.** He shows how much they belong to Him and He to them by preparing, not merely a country, but what to the Hebrew mind was the highest social good—a city. It is remarkable how the ideas of a holy place so prominent in the high priest section of the Epistle have given place to the ideas of a city, with its social activities and common citizenship. This picture of the other world is worked out in much detail in the Revelation of St. John. He perceives no temple there, and the High Priesthood of Christ does not form his central conception of the work of the Saviour, but he sees the heavenly Jerusalem descending in much splendour, and God

living in fellowship with its citizens, and in fact being as here, their God.

17-19. Abraham's offering. This is the third aspect of Abraham's heroic faith. **offered up.** Was in the act of offering. **from the dead.** This is not told us in Genesis. It is the writer's idea of the faith of Abraham. He is willing to sacrifice his son, but expected God to raise him from the dead. **from whence he received him in a figure.** R.V., in "a parable." Isaac was actually bound for sacrifice, Abraham had the knife in his hand, so that the boy was virtually offered and received back again from the dead.

20. **Isaac** (Gen. xxvii. 27, xlviii. 1). **things to come.** The things to which faith gives substance, generally the things of the spiritual world, but also, as here, events that happen in human history. Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, had the power of foresight in laying down the lines of a happy destiny for their descendants.

21. **worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.** The A.V. of Gen. xxxii. 10, following the Hebrew, has "bowed himself upon the bed's head." Our author follows the Septuagint (Greek) version, and gives the picture of the aged man needing his journey staff for support as he stands in the attitude of prayer.

23-28. **Moses.** He occupies a large place in the roll-call of the heroes: his life is divided into two movements of faith:—

(a) 24-26. The moral strength which lifted him above the temptations of Pharaoh's daughter, and above the painful shame of being one of a down-trodden race.

(b) 27, 28. The heroism of his exodus.

26. **the reproach of Christ.** This expression is used again in xiii. 13, where Christians are exhorted to go outside the ancient Church, not minding the unpopularity and disgrace of doing so. Here the heroic act of Moses in identifying himself with his down-trodden fellow-countrymen is regarded as a similar act. The writer possibly attributes to him the prophetic knowledge that he was in so doing bearing the reproach of one who should come after. "The wave of suffering and reproach that rose far back, even at the other side of the sea of time, and rolled ever in towards the shore, went, as it rose, over the people of God in Egypt; it broke in its height over Christ Himself; and believers since then are still struggling in its broken waters" (A. B. Davidson).

27. **endured, as seeing him who is invisible.** This sentence has become classical in Christian literature. The whole nature of faith and the effect of faith upon the will is expressed in a flash of marvellous light. To visualise the invisible is the first lesson in the obedience of faith, and it is a lesson which can never be forgotten.

28. **by faith he kept.** Even the Passover and the sprinkling of blood became of value only through this mental act of faith.

29. **they.** The faith of Moses is shared by the whole people: the Egyptians not having it were drowned (Ex. xiv. 22).

30. **Jericho.** The same power affected the fall of this city, the people giving outward expression of their faith in their marching round the city for seven days (Josh. vi.).

31. **Rahab** (Josh. ii. 6-17).

32-40. This reads like the preparation of a

sermon: it is not usual for a mere writer to say that he has not time to complete his task. Whether or not the passage was first spoken and then committed to writing, it is one of the most eloquent in the N.T. The names are given in the manner of a speaker rather than of a writer, in the order of popular importance, not of time, *e.g.* David is mentioned before Samuel. They are all national deliverers,—Gideon (Judg. vii.) overcame the Midianites; Barak (Judg. iv.), the Canaanites; Samson (Judg. xiii. 24), the Philistines; Jephthah (Judg. xi.), the Ammonites; David, the Philistines. The author is as much at home in the heroic period of Israelitish history as he is in the details of Tabernacle ceremonial, and expects his readers to be equally so.

The mention of prophets suggests the pregnant phrase, "wrought righteousness." Isaiah is a notable instance of one who worked righteousness and made real what he saw by the eye of faith, namely, the deliverance of Jerusalem from Assyria.

Dan. vi. 16 suggests the phrases, "stopped the mouths of lions," and "escaped the violence of fire." Jer. xvii. 12-18, may have suggested the idea of what has become another classical phrase in Christian literature, "out of weakness were made strong." The two last characteristics of the heroes of faith are illustrated in the early wars of Israel, and in the later struggles under the Maccabees (1 Mac. v. 1-7). In fact most of the trials of these faithful saints are reminiscent of those great wars for national existence under the Maccabean princes.

35. **were tortured** (2 Mac. vi. 18). Eliezar, an

aged man of eighty, was taken to the instrument of torture and died under the bastinado.

36. **trial of mockings** (2 Mac. vii. 10). Seven brethren were tortured and mocked in front of their mother; one was roasted alive, and another died after he had been "brought to the mocking."

37. **were sawn asunder** (2 Mac. vii. 4).

38. **wandering in deserts**. 1 Mac. ii. 28, where Mattathias and his sons flee into the mountains. **caves**. 2 Mac. x. 6, where the Jews relate that they kept the Feast of the Tabernacle "when they were wandering in the fields and the caves after the manner of wild beasts."

39. **these all . . . a good report**. R.V., "having had witness borne to them through their faith." Their resourceful faith was itself evidence that they were upheld, not by their own strength but by God Himself. **received not the promise**. This, repeated from x. 36, means that they did not enter into the enjoyment of what was promised.

40. **some better thing**. The perfection of the Consecrated Way with all its implications. **that they without us**. R.V., "apart from us." **made perfect**. This is the persistent idea in the writer's mind as the end of the whole faith movement. There is a solidarity between the Old Testament heroes and heroines of faith and those of the New. This idea is worked out by St. Paul on a different line, but it is revealed in the writings of both teachers of the philosophy of history. Here it is important as removing a difficulty which Hebrew Christians might have felt in the previous argument. They might have concluded that since the opening of the Consecrated Way to God and the



perfect life rendered the Hebrew ceremonial unnecessary, the piety of the ancients and their heroic faith in the future were also out of date. If this idea had gained ground it would have dethroned the O.T. altogether, and it would have ceased to be used in Christian circles. As it is, this Epistle did much to bring over into the Christian Church the record of triumphant faith which is the permanent glory of the older Scriptures.

## Heb. xii. 1-29.

## CONCLUDING EXHORTATION.

1 Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so  
great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight,  
and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run  
2 with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto  
Jesus the author and finisher of our faith ; who for the joy  
that was set before him endured the cross, despising the  
shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of  
3 God. For consider him that endured such contradiction  
of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in  
4 your minds. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving  
5 against sin. And ye have forgotten the exhortation which  
speaketh unto you as unto children, *My son, despise not  
thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art*  
6 *rebuked of him : for whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth,*  
7 *and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth.* If ye endure  
chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons ; for what  
8 son is he whom the father chasteneth not ? But if ye be  
without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are  
9 ye bastards, and not sons. Furthermore we have had  
fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them  
reverence : shall we not much rather be in subjection unto  
10 the Father of spirits, and live ? For they verily for a few

days chastened us after their own pleasure ; but he for our  
11 profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness. Now  
no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but  
grievous : nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable  
fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised there-  
12 by. Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the  
13 feeble knees ; and make straight paths for your feet, lest  
that which is lame be turned out of the way ; but let it  
14 rather be healed. Follow peace with all men, and holiness,  
15 without which no man shall see the Lord : looking dili-  
gently lest any man fail of the grace of God ; lest any root  
of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many  
16 be defiled ; lest there be any fornicator, or profane person,  
as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.  
17 For ye know how that afterward, when he would have in-  
herited the blessing, he was rejected : for he found no  
place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with  
18 tears. For ye are not come unto the mount that might be  
touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness,  
19 and darkness, and tempest. And the sound of a trumpet,  
and the voice of words ; which voice they that heard in-  
treated that the word should not be spoken to them any  
20 more : (for they could not endure that which was com-  
manded, and if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it  
21 shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart : and so  
terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear  
22 and quake :) but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto  
the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to  
23 an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly  
and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven,  
and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men  
24 made perfect, and to Jesus the mediator of the new  
covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh  
25 better things than that of Abel. See that ye refuse not  
him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused  
him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape,

if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven :  
 26 whose voice then shook the earth : but now he hath  
 promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth  
 27 only, but also heaven. And this word, Yet once more,  
 signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as  
 of things that are made, that those things which cannot be  
 28 shaken may remain. Wherefore we receiving a kingdom  
 which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we  
 may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear :  
 29 for our God is a consuming fire.

1. **Wherefore, etc.** R.V., "Therefore let us, seeing we are." **compassed about with so great a cloud.** A graphic picture of the appearance of a stadium or racecourse with its thousands of spectators thronging the seats. The poetic imagination of the writer, set on fire by his own roll-call of the heroes, sees them thronging the steps of that arena where Christians had to run the same race. The veteran athletes are looking on, and are there to put heart into the new generation of foot runners. **every weight.** As a runner strips for the race. In Jas. i. 21 the word is used of stripping or divesting oneself of an evil habit. **sin that so easily besets us.** Literally, that stands all round one. His readers were living amongst Hebrews, possibly in the Jewish quarters of the big towns, and the Epistle all through makes it clear that the besetting sin, which even the writer himself seems here to fear, was apostasy from the open road of Christian idealism. On this verse Sir Joshua Fitch writes in his *Lectures to Teachers*, p. 28: "There is a remarkable chapter in the Epistle to the Hebrews, in which the writer unfolds to his countrymen what is in fact a National Portrait Gallery, as he enumerates, one by one, the

heroes and saints of the Jewish history, and from his long retrospect draws this conclusion, 'Wherefore seeing . . . let us run with patience the race.' How much of the philosophy of history is condensed into that single sentence! To what end do we live in a country whose annals are enriched by the story of great talents, high endeavours, and noble sacrifices, if we do not become more conscious of the possibilities of our own life, and more anxious to live worthily of the inheritance handed down to us?"

2. **looking unto Jesus.** The metaphor of the race begun in the idea of stripping for it is continued: the eyes of the runners are to be fixed on the great Forerunner. Whilst the cloud of veterans, ancient witnesses to the reality of things unseen, inspired them to run with patience, an added motive lies in a perception of how the greatest Spiritual Athlete of all, ran the race. This perception is no vague admiration of Jesus. It includes (a) our seeing Him as **author and finisher of our faith**. Omit "our" and read with R.V., "Perfecter," or as in ii. 11, "Captain." Faith as throughout this Epistle is regarded not as a fixed form of words, but as a spiritual endowment growing with the growth of the ages until it reached its complete embodiment in Jesus. (b) We are also to see in Him one who (1) had a vision of joy, (2) a patient strength under suffering, (3) a reward of highest honour. These characteristics of the Saviour can be illustrated from the Gospels. The catalogue of the heroes of faith is brought here to its dramatic and proper end. Notice that amongst the motives which actuated Jesus in running the race is here said to be **the**

**joy set before him.** This revelation of the mind of Jesus is also given in St. John's Gospel. There is the joy of work accomplished (xvii. 4-11), and the language used is simpler perhaps than our writer's. To "sit at the right hand of God" is not so homely and fitted to the spiritual mind as that which the mystic John used in describing the passing of the High Priest into the Presence.

3. **consider.** Literally, bring as an analogy. **contradiction of sinners against himself.** The Gospels uniformly represent the beginning of the opposition to Jesus as a war of words. (Professor Davidson prefers the old reading here to that of the R.V., "gainsaying against themselves," saying that a turn of this kind looks like a conceit which some reader wrote upon the margin of the writer's manuscript, and that hence it got into the text.) **lest ye.** The patient strength with which Christ met the arguments and sophistries of the Pharisees should stimulate their minds to meet the tendencies of thought which were dragging them back into the old worship of Temple and Tabernacle.

4. **resisted unto blood.** Though they were persecuted they had not been martyred. **striving against sin.** The sin of drawing back from the Consecrated Way.

5. **ye have forgotten.** Not only was their suffering in the strain of the race more endurable than that which the Forerunner had borne, but they did not take the true view of suffering as it had been taught in their sacred book. **the exhortation.** Prov. iii. 11, and many passages, evidently running in the author's mind (Job v. 17; Ps. xciv. 12, cxix. 67, and Tob. xi. 5). **speakech unto you as unto sons.** R.V., "reasoneth with

you." They are to take full advantage of their new position as "sons" in a household where there is a mutual understanding and familiar intercourse between father and sons. No father reasons with his sons unless he has a respect for their reason and judgment. He wants them "to know His innermost mind" (Rugby Chapel, M. Arnold).

6. **chastening.** The Greek word all through this passage would be better rendered by our word "discipline." "The Hebrews alone amongst the nations of the time had a real salutary invigorating system of national education" (W. M. Ramsey). They did not hesitate to insist that their pupils should endure hard moral and mental discipline in their school life. The rich man's son equally with the poor man's was both punished and taught in the home and school. So the point of this appeal would be clear.

7. **If ye endure chastening.** Read "endure unto discipline," as the words are really an exhortation. The reason for endurance is given in the rest of this verse and the following.

9, 10. **fathers of our flesh . . . Father of spirits.** These are contrasted ideas: natural fatherhood and spiritual fatherhood. Of the first the writer takes the lowest view: it is a fitful discipline (**for a few days**) and mixed with selfish passion (**for their pleasure**). In the phrase "Father of spirits," the writer reveals a new name for God. It is in keeping with the later revelation of the O.T. In Job xxxiii. 4 it is the spirit of God that makes man, and His breath that gives him life; and in xxxii. 8 there is a spirit in man, and the inspiration of the Almighty gives him understanding. This idea

of spiritual kinship, implying a commerce of feeling and will, was brought to light in the spiritual perfection of Christ, "I come to do Thy will, O God,"—I am content to do it, even though it involves suffering. **and live.** As in Prov. x. 17, "he that observeth discipline is in the way of life."

10. **partakers of his holiness.** This is the object of the dealings of God with the soul. It is a discipline far more persistent and reasonable than that of earthly parents. Earthly fathers correct their sons "for a few days" after their own pleasure—a Heavenly Father corrects as long as is necessary for the development of our character in likeness to Himself.

11. **afterward it yieldeth . . . exercised thereby.** R.V., "it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, even the fruit of righteousness." St. James also is fond of emphasising the peaceable nature of Christian goodness. This is a gift necessary to the mind which has to endure the strain of prolonged conflict with religious adversaries (Jas. i. 2-4). The peacefulness of this righteousness is not the power of being a peacemaker, but the calm of the mind held steadfast within by the thought of the Fatherhood of God.

12. **Wherefore.** Their life has now been represented under two aspects—(1) as that of a foot-racer in the arena, and (2) of a son disciplined by a father; both preach strenuous and hopeful endurance, and now this is pressed home. **lift up the hands . . . make straight paths.** The proverb (iv. 25, 26), "Let thine eyes look right on, —make level the paths of thy feet," is in the

writer's mind. The picture is of a man who has lost heart: his hands, instead of being drawn up at right angles from his chest as a foot-racer's, hang down, and his knees are limp instead of being taut and ready: as a runner he will be liable to go off the track.

13. **lest that which is lame be turned out of the way.** Better "lest the lame joint be dislocated as by an accident." The runner is like a lame joint which may be entirely put out of place. This is the climax of slackness: the runner is not only feeble and gone to pieces, but lame. So, the writer suggests, is the character of his readers likely to be, if they do not practise the healing virtue of steadfast faith.

14-17. Another exhortation. **Follow peace with all men.** R.V., "Follow after peace." It is unusual in this Epistle to find reference to the duties of Christians to those whom they meet in the ordinary course of life. Here one is mentioned, but briefly: **holiness.** Better "the consecration without which no man can see the Lord." This is the inward condition of a life at "peace with all." "As when the tide recedes the waters fret and raise angry surfs upon the sunken rocks, but when it has advanced in full flow these rocks are submerged and there is deep stillness over them, so in the full tide of consecration unto God all causes of disquietude are swallowed up and covered" (A. B. Davidson). This consecration is equivalent to that singleness of heart or purity without which the Saviour said no one could have the vision of God (Matt. v. 8).

15. **Looking diligently lest any man fail.** The Christian community is to exercise vigilance



over its members. This duty is insisted upon far more often by St. Paul, but hardly implies any formal Church discipline. It is the feeling of mutual responsibility for helping one another along the Consecrated Way. **the grace of God.** This expression, so familiar to us, is seldom used by this writer. In x. 29 he speaks of doing "despite to the Spirit of grace." Here he is thinking of a possible failure to admit into their hearts the cleansing power of that religious standpoint which had been given them by the High Priest of their profession. **lest any root of bitterness.** This curious expression seems to have been suggested by Deut. xxix. 18, where idolatry is called "a root that beareth gall and wormwood." These are plants which grow in the desert. They are only eaten by camels, and their growth in desolate places, added to their bitterness, gives them a bad reputation. Here it is not idolatry that is the danger, but a similar falseness in their life which would have baneful effects on their fellow-Christians. **many.** R.V., "the many," *i.e.* the whole body of Christians.

16. **lest there be any fornicator.** He would be a notable instance of one who failed of the grace and missed thorough consecration. **or profane person.** The word translated "profane" is used rarely in the N.T. : four times in the Epistle to Timothy ; once in St. Matthew ; once in the Acts. It signifies "a man of a common type of mind devoted to lower and earthly pursuits without love or appreciation of what is nobler and spiritual" (A. B. Davidson). **his birthright,**—*i.e.* his right to be the channel of the Spirit to the world.

17. **ye know** (Gen. xxvii. 33). **he was re-**

**jected.** The hard fact is pointed out that Esau's act of folly was irrevocable. **no place of repentance**,—*i.e.* no standing ground for effectual repentance. He was sorry, indeed, but his grief could not alter the fact that he had rejected for himself and his race their Divine vocation. Ideals are so given us for a season, but once rejected are passed over to those who are willing to assimilate them. By this striking illustration the author is warning the Hebrew Christians against an Esau-like treatment of the Christian Ideal.

18-29. This warning enforced by a striking contrast between the nature of the two dispensations—Judaism and Christianity. The key-note of the passage is ver. 25, "See that ye refuse not him that speaketh." Borne along by a wave of deep earnestness, the writer contrasts the spirit of the new covenant with that of the old. His point may easily be missed, as is the case in the familiar hymn, "When God of old came down from heaven." It is not, as the hymn teaches, a contrast between the terror of one approach to God and the graciousness of the other—but between the unreality and transitoriness of the Mosaic revelation in comparison with the permanence and spiritual finality of that given in Christ (ver. 28). The latter is "a kingdom that cannot be shaken."

18. **not come unto**,—*i.e.* in vision, prayer and life. **mount.** Omit this word, which is not in the original, and read: "Ye are not come to a material and kindled fire." This is the first point in the comparison; and each of the words following is intended to bring out with added clearness the fact that the revelation to Moses was given through the senses—touch, sight, hearing.

19. **the voice.** Amid the material convulsions of the mountains came the Voice, but it was of so disturbing a character that the people did not want to hear it.

20, 21. **they could not endure.** The high moral commands burnt the conscience like fire, and to complete the terror of the revelation (*a*) a beast might not touch the mountain; (*b*) even the saint of God, Moses himself, was afraid of what he saw. **I exceedingly fear.** These words are not in the Pentateuch, and are what the writer supposes him to have said, and with good reason.

22. **ye are come,**—*i.e.* in vision, prayer, life. The second half of the comparison commences. **mount Sion.** This and each succeeding word brings out the spirituality of the new covenant. **city of the living God.** Evidently a city and mountain cannot be shown in terms of "fire and tempest," but in terms of human life. **living God.** This phrase, used also in iii. 12, ix. 14, x. 31, came to the writer from the Prophets and Psalmists. Knowing that his aim in this Epistle was to break up the hardness and deadness of Judaism, and fill his readers, who had been brought up in that faith, with the hope of finding God in a new and living way, we are not surprised to find that he uses it often. It marks a great step in religious progress when the soul passes from belief in a dead, or dying, creed into faith in a living and personal Father in heaven. Dr. Sanday writes: "How much richer and deeper is the old prophetic idea of the living God than our modern terminology—the Absolute, the Infinite." This significant and moving expression occurs in the prophetic writings (Deut. v. 26; 1 Sam. xvii. 26, 36; Jer. x. 10;

Jos. iii. 10; Hos. i. 10) and in the Psalms (xlii. 3, lxxxiv. 3). **to an innumerable company.** Literally, "to tens of thousands." In contrast to the loneliness of Sinai—the lonely God and the lonely prophet with the people hedged off—the real spiritual home of man is social. **angels.** See notes on i. 5 to ii. 16.

23. **and.** Omit this word as it is not in the Greek, and, with the R.V., take **general assembly and church** as a further description of the angelic host. The word for "general assembly" (found only here in the Greek Testament) is used elsewhere for the great festival of people gathered to witness the Olympic games. If his readers realised the allusion, it would, as in the previous phrase, "cloud of witnesses," give them a fine mental picture. They would imagine thousands upon thousands of angels gathered as at the games, tier upon tier, in the city of the living God. **church of the firstborn.** Another word commonly used in the LXX., for the Hebrew word meaning assembly (Hort). This also refers to the angels, if we follow Prof. Davidson, whose lengthy discussion (p. 247) of the problem whether "Church" refers to angels or men should be read. The fact that presently the writer speaks of "just men made perfect," makes it almost certain that by the "Church" is meant the angelic beings. The writer would hardly have "intercalated the N.T. Church beside the angels and afterwards refer to the O.T. believers separately." **the firstborn.** The angels were the original dwellers in the city. **are written.** R.V., "are enrolled," as citizens' names are put upon the city roll. **God the Judge of all.** This belief was one which the old and the

new theology held in common. **spirits of just men.** Both those who had been enumerated in the roll-call of the heroes of faith, and those who were following along the new way. **made perfect.** Again we find this favourite expression for finality. He never allows us to get far away from the persuasion that there is no possible religion more satisfactory to the soul or endowed with more perfect life than Christianity as he conceives it.

24. **to Jesus.** The High Priest of the new way to God is also in the city of the living God, fulfilling the duties of the office previously claimed for Him, namely, acting as Mediator of a new relationship between the life of man and the life of God. **to the blood . . . better things.** The Christian Church comes to God through a sacrifice that appeals more strongly to His love than the blood of the martyred saint.

25. **See that you refuse not.** This is the keynote of the exhortation, and the mind of the writer is now turning back to his contrast between the new and the old revelation (ver. 18). The contrast is expressed again. **if they**—*i.e.* the Israelites. **him that spake on earth.** The voice of God speaking on Sinai is regarded as a revelation of inferior quality, being made through earthly and material things, such as earthquakes. **him that speaketh from heaven,**—*i.e.* God's Son, who reveals His Father's nature and dwelling-place as they really are. The whole of this section shows a return to the author's philosophic position, and reference should be made to the Introduction.

26, 27. A little patience is here needed in unravelling the sequence of thought. The writer

wants to support from Scripture his contention that the voice of God, in revealing His Son and the Consecrated Way, is as powerful in shaking the heaven as it had been in shaking the earth under Moses. He finds this support in a saying of the prophet Haggai (ii. 6). Then, having cited this saying for one purpose, he uses it for another, and in ver. 27 tells us the meaning of the words **yet once more** in the citation. It means that something new was going to happen. This new thing was the removal of the things that can be shaken, such as the material earthly world, so that the ideal world may be seen. For **have been made**, see viii. 1, 2, ix. 24, where the same vital distinction is made between earthly things, such as the Tabernacle, made with hands, and heavenly things, which are regarded as pure spiritual creations.

28. **a kingdom which cannot be moved.** The ideal world, which is eternal. **let us have grace.** We should have expected a reference to faith, which has been urged as the quality which gives reality to the ideal, but he has lately spoken of the grace of God as a communicable power which must be carefully cultivated. **we may serve God.** R.V., "we may offer service well-pleasing to God." The service here meant is that which in ix. 11 can only be given by those whose inner life is freed from sin and the remembrance of it. The rigorous nature of this service—all the more severe because it does not consist in outward acts—is taught in the following sentence.

29. **our God** (ours because Christ's) **is a consuming fire.** He is not to be trifled with under the new dispensation, any more than under the old.

## Heb. xiii. 1-19.

AN APPENDIX WITH SUNDRY  
EXHORTATIONS.

1 Let brotherly love continue. Be not forgetful to entertain  
2 strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels un-  
3 awares. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound  
4 with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being  
5 yourselves also in the body. Marriage is honourable in  
6 all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers  
7 God will judge. Let your conversation be without covet-  
8 ousness; and be content with such things as ye have;  
9 for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.  
10 So that we may boldly say, *The Lord is my helper, and I*  
11 *will not fear what man shall do unto me.* Remember  
12 them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto  
13 you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the  
14 end of their conversation: Jesus Christ the same yester-  
15 day, and to-day, and for ever. Be not carried about with  
16 divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that  
17 the heart be established with grace; not with meats,  
18 which have not profited them that have been occupied  
19 therein. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to  
20 eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those  
21 beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the  
22 high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Where-  
23 fore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his  
24 own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth  
25 therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.  
26 For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to  
27 come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise  
28 to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving  
29 thanks to his name. But to do good and to communicate  
30 forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.  
31 Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit your-

selves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with  
 18 grief: for that is unprofitable for you. Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing  
 19 to live honestly. But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

This is like the appendix to some of St. Paul's Epistles (2 Thess. iii. 6-17; Rom. xvi.), for the discourse proper ends at the last verse of chap. xii. It is also written more in the style and manner of the great apostle: short, didactic sayings, but vers. 9-14 show that we are reading the same writer as before.

1. **brotherly love.** He had already commended the right feeling they had showed towards the **saints** (vi. 10); now he urges them to continue it. **strangers.** Christians coming from other places. Considerable light is thrown upon the life of the time by the constant reference in the Acts and the Epistles to the duty of hospitality. There was a constant movement of travellers along the roads of the Empire for commerce, letter-carrying, and religious propaganda. There was nothing remarkable in the Apostle Paul's journeys, except perhaps their enormous length. In times of persecution, such as the readers of this Epistle were living in, Christian communities were in duty bound to be more than ever hospitable to their Christian friends from other cities. **for some have entertained angels.** One might have expected the words "some have entertained apostles," but the writer is true to his O.T. education and refers to Gen. xviii. and xix.

3. **them that are in bonds**—prisoners. **as**



**bound with them.** Just as if you were prisoners yourselves. Sympathy with all sufferers, however degraded, was to be the special note of the new Christian life. **them which suffer adversity.** Literally, "those who are worsted in the struggle of life." **as being yourselves also in the body.** As people liable also to the pain of hunger and thirst. The earnestness of this appeal to put themselves in the place of others is not surpassed even by St. Paul; the writer, though he has prophesied wonderfully of the other world, knows how to bring the spirit of Christ into the struggle of this one.

4. **Marriage is honourable.** Omit "is" and read with R.V., "Let marriage be . . . let the bed be undefiled." To this writer, as to all responsible thinkers,—Christian and non-Christian,—marriage appears as the basis of the world's social life. It requires the most careful treatment by both religion and the law. **in all.** In all respects. **God will judge.** Those who destroy this most honourable relationship are liable not only to the censure of custom and right-minded public opinion, but to the condemnation of God, who is, they have just been told, "a consuming fire."

5. **Let your conversation.** The Greek word used (only here in N.T.) means "manner." Translate "let your character or disposition be without the love of money." It seems strange that people who were living in much distress and fear of death (x. 34) should be tempted by avarice, but all the first Christian teachers, including the Master, waged war upon this besetting sin of a commercial age, and of traders such as were the Jews and Christians (Luke xii. 15; Rom. i. 29; 1 Tim. iii. 3). It still eats the heart out of many who call them-

selves Christians. **be content.** This is much in the vein of the Sermon on the Mount, and of the ethical teaching of the wiser Jewish and Greek teachers. **he,**—*i.e.* God. The exact words are not found in the O.T., but in the Jewish writer Philo. The sense is found everywhere in the Psalms, and in our Lord's saying, "Your Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things" (Ps. xxvii. 1, xvi. 8, lvi. 4, 11, cxviii. 6).

6. Read as in R.V. the citation in metrical form.

7. **those that have the rule.** The Greek and R.V. is "those who had the rule and spoke." He means the first apostolic preachers and organisers. They are no longer alive, as is seen from the words which follow. **considering the end of their conversation.** Translate "looking back at the issue of their life, imitate their faith." It is not the authority of their rulers that they are to remember, but their life of contented faith.

8. **Jesus Christ the same yesterday.** A full-stop must be placed at the end of the last verse: then read (R.V.) "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, to-day, yea and for ever." For this sentence is not an expansion of the word "end" or "issue" in the previous one; it is an expansion of the word "faith." Their rulers had been full of Jesus Christ: the author wants to get his readers back to the first lessons they had received. These lessons contained elements of permanence—the impress of Christ's personality which remains the same through all time. In this way the writer safeguards the idea of unique revelation much as St. John does by his insistence that Jesus came in the flesh. There was a time when there was no Jesus Christ known to men. He came; and as

He came so He remains. "He was the King, and He was the kingdom. Grow how it will, as a vine stretching its branches all over the world, the Church is nothing but Christ; the saints but partake of His fullness. The fullness was there when He was there: the end was involved in the beginning: the fruit in the germ. After the fullness there could be no new revelation: only an endless unfolding."

9. **Be not carried about.** R.V., "Be not carried away." **doctrines.** R.V., "teachings." We are led up to this warning by ver. 7, where those who taught in the first age are mentioned. **For.** These strange teachings have to do with meats, not with the real relationship of the soul with God. By the **meats** he means the ceremonial rule of the Judaic cultus (see ix. and x.) which he has already proved to be unnecessary to the Christian religion. (For another interpretation see Introduction.) Teachers were evidently beginning to revive a belief in this ritual; over against their reactionary doctrine is placed the Consecrated Way, which the graciousness of God has opened—the strengthening of the heart by grace.

10. **We have an altar,**—*i.e.* we Christians. This has been proved in the earlier part of the Epistle. From the reference in ver. 12 to the fact that Jesus suffered "outside the gate" of Jerusalem, the writer may mean that the altar is the Cross. At any rate he wants his readers to remember that they have a sacrifice on which they can feed. **whereof they have no right to eat.** This tone of exclusiveness is not found previously in this Epistle, but is justified by the argument against Judaic sacerdotalism which has

been developed at such great length. The attitude of mind of the man who could use the sacrifices of the Temple is so opposed to the spirit of the new covenant that he could not conscientiously accept the Christian position.

11. **beasts . . . burnt without the camp.** Under the Jewish ritual the place for burning the beasts which provide the blood sacrifice is outside the camp.

12. **Wherefore.** Paraphrase "fulfilling this type Jesus with His own blood suffered outside the gate." Golgotha, as he assumes his readers know, was a hill outside the north wall of the holy city.

13. **Let us go forth . . . without the camp.** Christ is to be found not within the O.T. ritual but outside it; Christians must leave the Judaic institutional Church. **bearing his reproach.** See xi. 26. They must not mind sharing the disgrace which fell upon Him when He was excommunicated from the community and religious life of O.T. religion.

14. **no continuing city.** R.V., "we have not here an abiding city." Jerusalem on earth is left behind by those who go with Jesus outside its gates: therefore the Christian has abandoned the holy city and its associations, seeking a new one.

15. **sacrifice of praise.** The abandonment of Jerusalem and its religious institutions is not to be made regretfully. It is far better to go. For through Christ the sacrifice of praise can be offered continually. **the fruit of our lips.** The writer seizes here, as he did in his use of Jeremiah, one of those ideas which the prophets

revealed far in advance of their age. Hosea (xiv. 2), in speaking of the true sacrifice of the heart, says, "Take with you words of repentance, and so render as bullocks the offering of the fruit of your lips." **giving thanks to his name.** R.V., "the fruit of lips that make confession to his name." By the name of God the Bible expresses what He is held to be in His self-revealed character. The cause of the Christian's sacrifice of praise is the revelation of God as being worthy of praise according to Jesus Christ.

16. **to do good and to communicate.** Literally, "do not forget good deeds and fellowship." The word used for the last is generally connected with almsgiving. The writer is getting far away from the ritual sacrifice, and now calls deeds of kindness and brotherly feeling by the significant name **sacrifices**—acts of a consecrated will. Thus institutions and names of the old materialistic religions are transformed by the alchemy of Christian enlightenment.

17. **Obey them.** The previous section has been an exhortation to the remembrance of former leaders, and now he turns to the present condition of the Church. There is a duty laid upon them, to those who lead in teaching and in faith; he vindicates his ideal of Christian rulers. They (1) **watch on behalf of souls** as a guardian watches over his pupils; (2) are responsible to God for their conduct in office. **do it,**—*i.e.* "watch (not give an account).

18. **Pray for us.** The writer, himself a ruler, having just spoken of his high ideal of his office in the Church, feels a wave of humility passing

over him and a desire for sympathy. **we trust.** R.V., "are persuaded" **good**—honest. **willing to live.** "Desiring to live in all things honestly."

19. **I exhort you.** This is the first time that the writer speaks in the first person; apparently he had lived with the community of Christians whom he was addressing. From the sermonic and prophetic character of the letter we may conclude that he had been a preacher amongst them.

Heb. xiii. 20-25.

#### CONCLUDING PRAYER AND POSTSCRIPT.

20 Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our  
 Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the  
 21 blood of the everlasting covenant, make you perfect in  
 every good work to do his will, working in you that which  
 is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom  
 22 be glory for ever and ever. Amen. And I beseech you,  
 brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have  
 23 written a letter unto you in few words. Know ye that our  
 brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come  
 24 shortly, I will see you. Salute all them that have the rule  
 over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.  
 25 Grace be with you all. Amen.

20. **God of peace.** A name characteristic of the religious contentment which Christianity brought to the first believers. It is used six times by St. Paul, and not elsewhere except in this place. It may indicate that this concluding prayer is modelled on the prayers of St. Paul. **brought again from the dead.** This is the only reference to the Resurrection in the Epistle. **with the**

**blood of the everlasting covenant.** R.V., "eternal." This pregnant phrase sums up the Epistle in its three leading ideas. The revelation of Christ forms—(a) a covenant or Consecrated Way between man and God, God and man; (b) it is an eternal covenant wrought out permanently in the real world of spirit; (c) it is a relationship fashioned by sacrifice ("blood").

21. **working in you.** Greek and R.V., "in us." The writer is at one with them in this prayer, and the whole verse has become a model for the Collects of the Church.

22. Postscript. **the word of exhortation**—encouragement. Cf. Barnabas the Encourager. **written unto you in a few words.** It would not take more than an hour to read the Epistle out loud in the Church.

23. **Timothy.** Nothing else is known of Timothy's imprisonment. The language shows that the author was in communication with the circle of missionaries who carried on St. Paul's work.

24. **those who have the rule.** This class of people is again mentioned: the Hebrew Christian Church was organised (see Zahn, ii. 316). **They of Italy.** Italian Christians, so that either the writer was living with a colony of these outside Italy, or he was himself at the time actually in that country.

25. **Grace be with you all.** Every Epistle of St. Paul ends with a salutation of grace; it is the characteristic mood of Christianity. From the beginning to the end it is a movement of Divine life initiated and given by the God of grace.

## THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JAMES

*The Title.*—The title “General” or “Catholic” is prefixed in the English Bible to the Epistles of James, Peter, Jude, and John. It is a misleading title, if it suggests to the reader that these Epistles were addressed to the Church at large, whereas the other Epistles were addressed to some local church only. The Epistle to the Romans is more general and Catholic in this sense than the present letter, which appears to be addressed to Jewish Christians. The term, however, does not bear this meaning. It was used by the Eastern Church as equivalent to canonic, or “universally received” as part of the Holy Scripture, differentiating the seven Epistles from others which were not worthy to be received into the Canon.

Jas. i. 1.

### THE GREETING.

1 James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting.

1. **James, a servant.** There is no clue here to the identity of this James. The writer announces himself simply as a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ. It was as such that he wished to be heard. He does not call himself an apostle—a title given to those who were preachers and missionaries of the gospel. The simplicity of this address also may imply that his readers knew him and his ecclesiastical position. The word



‘servant’ (literally, “slave”) was applied honourably in Jewish circles to the prophets, and in Christian, to teachers (see note, 2 Pet. i.). In John xv. 15 it is implied that all the disciples were called Christ’s servants, but as their discernment of the mind of their Master grew in clearness, they were raised to the position of friends. **to the twelve tribes.** In this phrase, sacred to Jewish ears, the writer addresses the new spiritual Israel. “To him a Jew, who had refused the true Messiah, had ceased to have a portion in Israel” (Hort). **which are scattered abroad.** R.V., “which are of the Dispersion.” This term fixes the objective of the letter; it was intended primarily for Jewish Christians. The dispersion of the Jews had been going on ever since the fall of Samaria, c. 722 B.C., and when this letter was written, after some six centuries of travel and settlement, they were to be found in most parts of the known world. They treasured all their old traditions, keeping carefully records of their family and tribal descent, as we see in the genealogies of the Gospels (Matt. and Luke). “The Jews had a conspicuous share in the Hellenising of the East. They were chosen for this purpose from their pliancy and serviceableness on the one hand, and from their unyielding tenacity on the other. The Jews of the Greek towns became Greek-speaking Orientals; the use of the Greek language was compulsory. Mesopotamia was covered with Greek commonwealths: the inhabitants of Palestine were only a portion, and not the most important portion of the Jews. The Jewish communities of Babylonia, Syria, Asia Minor, and Egypt were far superior to those of Palestine”

(Mommsen). See also the list of places where the Dispersion lived in Acts ii. 9 and vi. 9.

**greeting.** The regular form of Greek salutation used only in the N.T. in connection with letters (Acts xv. 23, and xxiii. 26). It is more formal than the greetings in the Epistles of St. Paul and St. Peter (see note, 1 Pet. 1).

### Jas. i. 2-4.

#### THE CHIEF THEME OF THE EPISTLE.

2 My brethren, count it all joy when ye fall into divers  
3 temptations; knowing this, that the trying of your faith  
4 worketh patience. But let patience have her perfect work,  
that ye may be perfect and entire, wanting nothing.

2. **My brethren.** Often used in this Epistle and by St. Paul; 1 Peter prefers the more affectionate title of "beloved." **count it all joy.** A cheery opening to what is to be a strenuous appeal to the new-born Christian conscience (cf. Matt. v. 10-12). **divers.** R.V., "manifold or varied." **temptations.** Read with R.V. margin "trials." This word is entirely confined to O.T., Apoc., N.T., and arises from the religious view of life. That his readers should be congratulated upon meeting them needs the explanation that follows.

3. **knowing.** Better "realising." **trying.** R.V., "the proof." The word means, that by which you are tried. The writer here strikes the ethical key-note of his teaching—patient endurance—with emphatic clearness. The author of Hebrews has the same message to deliver, and in 1 Pet. i. 6 almost identical language is used. It was a hard

task for the Christian Jew to remain steadfast: he was in danger of despairing under the fierce hatred of his former co-religionists. The situation is repeated to-day in the case of conversions from strict Indian castes. The English Government has exactly the same difficulty which the Roman had in stopping the violence of persecutors.

4. **her perfect work.** Better "a perfect working." Patience as taught by this writer is no ordinary virtue. It involves a steady determination which moulds and completes the whole Christian character. **perfect.** In Heb. v. 12-vi. 1 this word is applied to the bringing of Christian teaching to its proper development; below (ver. 17), of the perfect gifts of God, *i.e.* gifts which exactly fit the intention of their Maker; in Phil. iii. 15 to those who have attained to a ripe understanding of Christian principles. **entire.** A sacrificial word used of a victim that is without blemish. **wanting nothing.** R.V., "lacking in nothing." This word and the last are used to complete the idea of full growth which the writer in his strenuous optimism considers to be the attainable end of the Christian builder of character.

#### Jas. i. 5-8.

#### EXHORTATION TO PRAY FOR WISDOM AND TO AVOID MISTRUST.

- 5 If any of you lack wisdom, let him ask of God, that giveth to all men liberally, and upbraideth not; and it shall be  
6 given him. But let him ask in faith, nothing wavering. For he that wavereth is like a wave of the sea driven with  
7 the wind and tossed. For let not that man think that he

8 shall receive any thing of the Lord. A double minded man is unstable in all his ways.

5. **wisdom.** The quality of foresight, insight, and practical sense. The writer is conscious that he is recommending an attitude towards trial and temptation which might lead the unwary into difficulty. **ask of God.** Prayer brings God near in His full resourcefulness. **who giveth.** It is interesting to watch as we read the way in which this "servant of God and of Jesus Christ" clothes his conception of God. This is the first quality—His givingness. **liberally.** This rendering of the Greek word is misleading, as it conveys the idea of one who is liberal with his gifts: really the writer uses a word which means "with singleness of mind." God has no *arrière-pensée* in His gifts to men. He gives with "frankness." **upbraideth not.** The writer had in mind Eccles. xx. 15, "A fool will give little, and upbraid much: to-day he will lend and to-morrow ask back; hated is such a man." This is the exact contrary to the disposition of God (Luke xv. 22).

6. **ask in faith.** Just as a Christian must show grave self-determination and patience, so in his prayer he must use equal will power—faith being an act, the life of man leaning upon the life of God. **nothing wavering.** The Greek word is found often in the N.T. of states of mind which are contrary to that of faith (Matt. xxi. 21; Mark xi. 23). It suggests the idea of two currents or waves of feeling moving against one another and promoting unrest. **like a wave of the sea.** Better "a rough sea." A brilliant analogy for the unrest of doubt: the first of the many natural images for spiritual

things in which this writer abounds and which make his Epistle, like the teaching of our Lord, so vivid and concrete.

7. **let not that man.** Notice the effort of the writer to make his meaning quite clear. Part of the previous sentence is caught up and repeated for the sake of lucidity.

8. **a double minded man.** Omit "is" with Greek and R.V., reading straight on, "a double minded man, unstable in all his ways." Double minded, having two minds—with one trying to come to God, with the other fearing that God will upbraid him if he does so come. **unstable in all.** Since the resting-place of our will is the will of God found in prayer, a division at the centre destroys unity and force of character, and this produces instability in the whole range of conduct.

#### Jas. i. 9-11.

### EXHORTATION TO A PARADOXICAL AND UNWORLDLY VIEW OF POVERTY AND RICHES.

9 Let the brother of low degree rejoice in that he is exalted :  
 10 but the rich, in that he is made low : because as the flower  
 11 of the grass he shall pass away. For the sun is no sooner  
 risen with a burning heat, but it withereth the grass, and  
 the flower thereof falleth, and the grace of the fashion of  
 it perisheth : so also shall the rich man fade away in his  
 ways.

9. **the brother of low degree.** As the Epistle develops it becomes clear that the community of Jewish Christians suffered specially from the social distinctions which wealth brought even

to the young Christian Church. **rejoice . . . is exalted.** Read with R.V., "glory in his high estate." This is the paradox proper to the Christian. He has spiritual wealth which ranges him high in the invisible kingdom of God. He must hold himself up in view of that. The best commentary on this teaching is the noble passage in Jer. ix. 23.

10. **and the rich . . . low.** This is the nut for the rich Christian to crack. He also has to look at life through a splendid paradox. He should have a "poor conceit of himself," and be glad if he is saved from the pride of wealth. **as the flower of the grass.** A quotation from Isa. xl. 6, "the bright blooms they grow with the grass."

11. **the sun . . . burning heat.** R.V., "with a scorching wind. This word is the Sirocco, and is used of all winds blowing in upon Palestine from the desert; they are hot winds (cf. Luke xii. 55). "They come with a mist of fine sand veiling the sun, scorching vegetation, and bringing languor and fever to men (cf. Jer. iv. 11)." (G. A. Smith, *Geog.* 67). **the flower faileth.** "The flower falls from its calyx." **the grace of the fashion of it.** Its graceful form (literally, "face"). **so also shall the rich man.** The uncertainty of human life is an additional reason for his keeping his position in humility.

## Jas. i. 12-15.

THE USE OF TRIAL AND TEMPTATION  
AND THE EXPLANATION OF ITS REAL  
SOURCE—THE INWARDNESS OF EVIL.

12 Blessed is the man that endureth temptation : for when he  
is tried, he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord  
13 hath promised to them that love him. Let no man say  
when he is tempted, I am tempted of God : for God cannot  
14 be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man : but  
every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own  
15 lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it  
bringeth forth sin : and sin, when it is finished, bringeth  
forth death.

12. **Blessed.** . . . This in style and meaning reminds us of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. v.) for. The first gain of temptation was (ver. 2) the trying of faith and the growth of patient self-determination; the second gain is now stated. **when he is tried**—"tested." **crown of life.** As a crown is placed on a king (Ps. xxi. 3), or a garland on a victor in the games (1 Cor. ix. 25), so is eternal life superimposed on the natural man. **which . . . hath promised.** To the Greek there is no subject to the verb "hath promised," and we do not know the exact promise to which the writer refers. It is likely that he had an unrecorded saying of our Lord in his mind.

13. **Let no man.** The explanation of the real source of temptation commences here. The unreal one is first mentioned. **I am tempted of God.** This idea may have arisen in the disputes of Jewish teachers which the writer had heard regarding the sin of Adam, who placed the responsibility upon

his Maker (Gen. iii. 12). Or he may have observed that some temptations seem to be so overwhelming that they might appear to come from the hand of God, as in Prov. xix. 3. **for God.** To accuse God is an error in the knowledge of God : it is equally a misreading of human nature. **cannot be tempted of evil.** A single word in Greek, not found elsewhere in N.T. or LXX. It is a verbal adjective formed from the negative and the word "tempt," and means "untemptable," and the argument seems to be that God is incapable of tempting others to evil because He is Himself unsusceptible to evil, just as we feel perfectly certain that such an one amongst our friends could by no possibility lead us astray. His character is far above such conduct. **he himself tempteth no man.** This consoling statement, plain and direct, separates God from any evil design upon man (see on ver. 5). Temptation has not the strength of Divine purpose, and is consequently not overwhelming to frail humanity. This statement is the best answer to any difficulty which may be suggested to readers of Exodus, when it is said that God hardened some one's heart. As in so many cases O.T. difficulties vanish in N.T. light.

14. **but each man is tempted when. . . .** Having thus denied our right to place the responsibility of temptation upon God, the writer makes us see by a lucid analysis where the danger really arises, and where by implication it has to be met and overcome. **drawn away and enticed.** An angler's metaphor (2 Pet. ii. 14). He uses the bait to draw the fish out of its retreat and then entices it along into the shallows where it can be caught. **by his own lust** (1 Pet. ii. 11). This



is the source of temptation, and now the whole strategy of evil, as it overcomes the citadel of a man's life, is opened out step by step—(1) desire, (2) the act of sin, (3) death. The mere desire is not evil, but becomes so as soon as conscience pronounces upon its evil qualities. This conscience may be external, as in Rom. vii. 8, or it may be the inward voice. Conscience being roused and perceiving evil in the desire is powerless unless the will responds. If it does not, the act of sin follows.

15. **sin . . . finished.** R.V., "full-grown or perfect." The third stage of descent. By repeated acts of wilful sin a habit is formed—an "evil spirit" which determines character and brings forth death. This death is the atrophy of spiritual power in man, or, looked at objectively, a shutting out from the eternal life and kingdom of God, who "brought us forth by His own will" (ver. 18) for a very different destiny.

### Jas. i. 16-18.

#### GOD AS THE GIVER OF GOOD.

16 Do not err, my beloved brethren. Every good gift and  
17 every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from  
the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither  
18 shadow of turning. Of his own will begat he us with the  
word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his  
creatures.

16. **Do not err.** Read "be not mistaken." **my beloved brethren.** He wishes specially to reach the heart of his readers on this point; he is pleading with them for nothing less than the true character

of God, and makes a full and impassioned statement of the real state of the case.

17. **Every good gift.** Read as in margin of R.V., "Every good giving," and lay stress on the word "good." So far from enticing to evil, God, in all His giving, has the good of His creatures at heart. **every perfect gift.** For "gift" read with R.V., "boon," and on "perfect," see on ver. 4. The writer is revealing his deepest impressions of the Divine character. Was he not the servant of Him who said, "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" ? (Matt. v. 48). **Father of lights.** This wonderful name for the Revealer and Giver of all good is original to this author. The next clause suggests that he is thinking partly of the heavenly bodies, but the context requires us to regard these as symbols of spiritual light. No one has quite reached the Christian standpoint until he finds that religious truth throws an actual light upon the terrible problems of life and the world. **with whom is no variableness.** R.V., "with whom can be no variation." The heavenly bodies vary in their place in the sky and in the light which they give; "one star differeth from another star in glory": not so God. **shadow of turning.** R.V., "shadow that is cast by turning." Sometimes we only see the heavenly bodies in shadow as if they had turned away from us as in an eclipse: not so God.

18. **Of his own will.** His disposition to us is not only perceived in the richness of His gifts—gifts good and attaining their end—but in His creation of the Christian life. **begat he us.** R.V., "brought us forth." The relationship is one of mother and child; in 1 Pet. i. 3 we have a similar expression for the creation of the living

hope in the Resurrection of Jesus Christ. **by the word of truth.** The creative will had acted through the message of the gospel (see ver. 21). Christian teachers appropriated early the great name of "truth": their message was no unsubstantial dream, but a revelation of the real facts of God and man (see 1 Pet. i. 23). **a kind of first-fruits.** The result of the gospel, determined as it was by the will of God, was to create a new order of beings—first fruits of the harvest (Rom. xvi. 5). The wonder that there should be such a thing as Christianity moves even this sober writer to enthusiasm.

Jas. i. 19-27.

**THIS REVELATION OF GOD'S CHARACTER DEMANDS A SPECIAL DISPOSITION IN HEARERS AND TEACHERS OF THEOLOGY.**

19 Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift  
20 to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: for the wrath of  
21 man worketh not the righteousness of God. Wherefore  
lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and  
receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able  
22 to save your souls. But be ye doers of the word, and not  
23 hearers only, deceiving your own selves. For if any be a  
hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man  
24 beholding his natural face in a glass: for he beholdeth  
himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth  
25 what manner of man he was. But whoso looketh into the  
perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not  
a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall  
26 be blessed in his deed. If any man among you seem to be  
religious, and bridleth not his tongue, but deceiveth his

27 own heart, this man's religion is vain. Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world.

19. **Wherefore.** R.V. (margin), "Know this." Something of great importance is to follow. **my beloved.** Again this term of earnest appeal is used. **swift . . . slow. . . .** A Christian's attitude to the word of truth is to be that of the wise men of the wisdom literature (Prov. x. 19; Sir. v. 11). But there this quick receptivity and deliberate speech is enjoined as a duty in all the affairs of life. Here it applies mainly to the teaching and hearing of religious truth. The writer sees that the only way of getting at the truth in this sphere is that of the patient inquirer, who seeks to know, not to argue. **slow to wrath.** The wrath of argumentation. The Pharisee of the Gospels is the man whom the writer has in mind. There is a remarkable contrast in his attitude towards the teaching of Christ and to that of the disciples, who had been trained "to take heed how they heard and what they heard." There is very little reported of their speech, because they said little; their memory became all the more retentive, and made the Gospels possible.

20. **worketh not.** Men in a passion cannot see or do the will of God.

21. **lay apart.** R.V., "putting away." The idea is taken from the putting off of clothes, as in Heb. xii. 1, putting off every weight which may hinder a runner in a race. In order to deal rightly with theology (the Word of God), the hearer or reader must be one who is willing to throw off any evil

mental habit which may hinder his perception of the things of God. **all filthiness.** The Greek word (connected originally with the wax in the ear) is used in the next chapter (not metaphorically), of the dirty clothes of a poor man (ii. 3). The writer may have been thinking of old prejudices which specially stand in the way of the reception of new religious truth, such as Christianity was to the orthodox Jew. **superfluity of naughtiness.** Read "excessive malice," *i.e.* a malice that overflows into words. Another translation — "the remainder of malice," old hereditary faults, such as the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees. **receive with meekness.** The new habit: a hard one to acquire by the argumentative type of mind, especially if he is seeking truth and learning theology with some kind of malice in his heart. The meekness desired is that of one who knows how mysterious truth is, how precious and rare a genuine religious teacher is, and how easily theology may be distorted (see 1 Pet. iii. 15). **ingrafted word.** This word is not found elsewhere in the N.T., but in Wisd. xii. 10. Here it means the "rooted word." There is something in the truth which, when it reaches the real man, has the power of growing up as part of his soul. It is so in the first perception of truth, as when a man says, "I knew in a flash that that must be true"; it is so in the growth of truth. How much follows in theology when we start from a true conception of God: the whole of the system of Christian thought seems to open out in our mind like a flower in the sun! When this letter was written, the idea which was opening out and found power to grow within men's minds, was that of the

**Incarnation. able to save.** In ver. 18 the teaching of Christianity was said to have within it the power of creating a new order of beings (firstfruits); here it leads to salvation. Christians could not be "firstfruits" of the truth unless the truth was so received as to save them. The desire to know and the desire to be saved are twin processes in the religious soul, part of the same effort to attain eternal life.

**22. doers of the word.** The thought of the infinite issue between salvation and the loss of it suggests the further warning that meek receptivity in a hearer is not enough. He must act upon it. **deceiving.** R.V., "deluding." The delusion lies in thinking that knowledge of the things of God is sufficient to save the soul. Christians might complacently listen to the gospel preached or read in their places of assembly and never carry the Word into action. The root of this delusion is the forgetfulness that religious truth is not abstract, but the opening out of the mind of a personal God.

**23. like a man . . . glass.** R.V., "mirror." The looking-glasses used at this period were made of brass and the image reflected would be dim.

**24. he beholdeth himself, and goeth.** Read "just a glance and he is off" (Mayor).

**25. whoso looketh.** This is not the same Greek word as is used for "beholdeth"; it signified one who bends over and examines minutely or peers into anything: in strong contrast to a mere glance.

**25. perfect law of liberty.** R.V., "the perfect law, the law of liberty." The writer seems to linger a moment on this great illuminating phrase, repeating it in ii. 12; it expressed the feeling

exactly of any one educated in the burdensome religion of the Pharisees, when he came face to face with the Christian vision of God and the freedom of the Christian life. **continueth.** The writer makes his point: even the glow of satisfaction in arriving at a perfect religion is not enough: he who enjoys the light must walk in the light. **a doer of the work.** R.V., "a doer that worketh." **blessed in his deed,** R.V., "blessed in his doing." For the whole idea see Ps. cxix. 33-45, and the Prayer Book phrase, "Whose service is perfect freedom."

26. **seem to be.** R.V., "Thinketh himself to be." This is the hasty listener who does not bring his theological knowledge into life. **religious**—in the sense of one who observes ritual. Religion,—*i.e.* ritual, such as the listening in church to the Word read or preached. **bridleth not his tongue.** This graphic metaphor occurs again in iii. 2. Such a man will exhaust his energy in argument instead of so assimilating the message that it becomes a "rooted word" within him.

27. **Pure religion.** This verse is often misquoted as if the writer was giving a complete definition of religion. The word he uses for "religion" precludes this interpretation; he is thinking of the outward acts of worship, such as Jews performed at the Temple, and says "pure ritual is kindness and sympathy, coupled with discipline of a man's own soul." "Four ways in which men delude themselves as regards their religious state have been mentioned—(a) fluency in religious argument; (b) religious zeal; (c) pleasure in hearing sermons or reading religious books; (d) punctiliousness at their religious ser-

vices: none of these are wrong: they may all be means of grace: but they are easily capable of becoming a source of self-delusion" (Mayor).

Jas. ii. 1-13.

**FAVOURITISM TO THE RICH AS A TRANSGRESSION OF THE PERFECT LAW OF CHRISTIAN CONDUCT.**

1 My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ,  
 2 the Lord of glory, with respect of persons. For if there  
 come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in  
 goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in  
 3 vile raiment; and ye have respect to him that weareth  
 the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a  
 good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or  
 4 sit here under my footstool: are ye not then partial in  
 yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?  
 5 Hearken, my beloved brethren, Hath not God chosen  
 the poor of this world rich in faith, and heirs of the  
 kingdom which he hath promised to them that love him?  
 6 But ye have despised the poor. Do not rich men oppress  
 7 you, and draw you before the judgment seats? Do not  
 they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are  
 8 called? If ye fulfil the royal law according to the  
 scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye  
 9 do well: but if ye have respect to persons, ye commit  
 10 sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors. For  
 whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in  
 11 one point, he is guilty of all. For he that said, Do not  
 commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou  
 commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a  
 12 transgressor of the law. So speak ye, and so do, as they  
 13 that shall be judged by the law of liberty. For he shall  
 have judgment without mercy, that hath showed no mercy;  
 and mercy rejoiceth against judgment.



1. **have not.** R.V., "hold not." **Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory.** The words "the Lord" are not in the original; take therefore "glory" as a designation of Christ, and read "The Lord Jesus Christ, the Glory (or Shekinah of God)." This is the first time that the letter tells us that the readers were Christians. To speak of Christ as the "Shekinah"—a name associated with the mystic presence of God in the Temple and ancient Tabernacle—was to make a great claim for Jesus in the estimation of the Jew. The writer also wished, before dealing with the rich and all their power, to remind them of the more excellent dignity of Christ. **with respect of persons.** Better "with partiality" (1 Pet. i. 17).

2. **assembly.** R.V., "your synagogue." Wherever they were numerous enough, Jewish Christians would get possession of their ancient place of assembly and use it for Christian worship, just as they took over the name of elder (presbyter) from the synagogue and used it for their own officials. The word "ecclesia" or church soon took the place of the older word "synagogue." **vile raiment.** See i. 21.

3. **Sit . . . here.** In the Jewish synagogues the chief piece of furniture was the Ark or Roll-chest: near the Ark were the chief seats facing the congregation. The rest of the building contained wooden seats to which an official took people as they came in.

4. **partial in yourselves.** Read "are ye not guilty of double-mindedness?" **judges of evil thoughts.** "Read "wrong - considering judges." There was a grave inconsistency and miscalculation in this discrimination between rich

and poor. As Christians, if they were to judge at all (Matt. vii. 1), they were bound not to judge people by their outward appearance, their "gold rings" or fine clothing—not because fine rings were wrong,—but because all such externals are of small importance when, as in synagogue or church, the real business in hand is prayer, the seeking of truth and the building up of character.

5. **Hearken.** The writer becomes very earnest here after the manner of a speaker or preacher, using again his full term of endearment—"my beloved brothers"; he is driving home an unpalatable lesson but does not forget his Christian courtesy. **the poor of this world,—i.e.** poor in the world's judgment. The Christian faith spread most rapidly amongst the poor of the great towns; it would have been disastrous if in any way they were to think that their outward poverty made them despised in the Christian Church. **heirs of the kingdom.** In a right judgment, the poor, being prospective heirs of a great spiritual estate, were to be highly honoured. **which he . . . promised.** Their heirship was not a sudden thought, but a long-premeditated gift, a fact which in itself should make them see the high worth of every Christian.

6. **ye have despised.** R.V., "dishonoured." They placed rich men in the front seats in their synagogues,—not because they were honourable but because they were rich (1 Pet. ii. 17). **oppress you.** Here the writer passes to another point: he has been thinking of rich Christians, now he turns to the rich generally; his voice rises high in anger. The Christian community has no reason for favouring the rich and

powerful. **draw you.** More emphatic,—“themselves drag you as with their own hands.” The writer is recalling some well-known act of persecution, such as we read of in Acts xvi. 19, when the owners of the ventriloquist slave-girl dragged Paul and Silas before the rulers.

7. **that worthy name.** The honourable name, *i.e.* Christian, as in 1 Pet. iv. 16, where if a man suffers as a Christian he is to glorify God in that name.

8. **If ye.** Read “however if.” The writer checks himself in his exposure of the cruelties of the rich Jews, and points out that the rich are not to be excluded from the law of neighbourliness. This law he calls a “royal law,” *i.e.* a law for kings and not for slaves. The heirs of the kingdom (ver. 5) ought to be ashamed to meet the rich with fawning politeness, offered under pretext of due brotherly love.

9. **convicted of the law.** R.V., “convicted by the Law.

10. None of the N.T. thinkers, by speaking of the freedom of the Christian life, the law of liberty, and of Christians being a royal race (1 Pet. ii. 9), intended to weaken the sense of law; where there is life, there must be law. So here love is a law which may not be transgressed. Love holds its own with all the majesty of law. **guilty of all.** This is a hard saying, and reveals the rigour of the writer's conscience. He was, in this as in the whole of his ethical teaching, an obedient “slave of Jesus Christ” (i. 1), who criticised the Pharisees from the same standpoint of the absolute authority of love, piercing with his invective the excuses of men who kept a

greater part of the Law, and yet transgressed it in one point (Matt. xxiii.).

11. **For he that said.** Morality in the view of a spiritual man is not a collection of maxims ; it is the expression of the will of God. Through the whole Law there is to be seen the spirit of one mind working, and this principle puts out of court the casuistry of which the rabbis of that time were so fond, and which poisons the conscience of the modern man. There is not one law for business, and another for the home, and another for religion. There is only one law of conduct—"Thou shalt love."

12. **So speak . . . so do.** The writer has in mind both the conduct of speech and the treatment of our neighbours—rich and poor. **as men that shall.** R.V., "as men that are to be judged by a law of liberty." See i. 25.

#### Jas. ii. 14-26.

### THE BARRENNESS OF FAITH WITHOUT WORKS.

14 What doth it profit, my brethren, though a man say he  
15 hath faith, and have not works? can faith save him? If a  
16 brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, and  
one of you say unto them, Depart in peace, be ye warmed  
and filled ; notwithstanding ye give them not those things  
17 which are needful to the body ; what doth it profit? Even  
18 so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea,  
a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works : shew  
me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my  
19 faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God ;  
thou doest well : the devils also believe, and tremble.  
20 But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works

21 is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works,  
22 when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest  
thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was  
23 faith made perfect? And the scripture was fulfilled which  
saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto  
him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God.  
24 Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not  
25 by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot  
justified by works, when she had received the messengers,  
26 and had sent them out another way? For as the body  
without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead  
also.

14. **faith.** In the previous section he had in the interest of faith (ii. 1) to dissociate it from an unloving distinction between rich and poor. He now criticises it from the point of view of action. **can faith save him?** Read with Greek, "can that kind of faith save him?"

15. **brother or sister.** The tender language of home life had passed into the Church, and they called one another brothers and sisters in real earnest.

16. **one of you say.** As an instance of faith which does not save, he draws a picture of a comfortable and pious man saying kind words and doing nothing. The picture is conceived in the same vein of sarcasm which we find in the denunciations of hypocrisy in the Gospels, *e.g.* the good men of one age saying to one another with much self-congratulation, "If *we* had been in the days of the Fathers we should not have . . ." (Matt. xxiii. 30).

17. **Even so.** What is the precise comparison? It lies between the picture of the man whose words are so kind but lead to nothing, and faith

which wraps itself in wordy disputations and ends there. **dead, being alone.** R.V., "dead in itself." The want of practical exercise reacts and kills the religious sense itself.

18. **Yea, a man may say.** R.V., "But some one will say." Here begins a dialogue between a Jew who comes in to criticise the Christian pious do-nothing. The Jew says, "You say you have faith? Well and good. I say I have works. Can you prove your case?" Pious Christian: "Well, I cannot show you my faith, because faith is hidden within me." Jew: "Then you must retire from the argument, because I can show you my works."

19. **Thou believest.** Read "Thou hast faith that." Either the imaginary critic or the writer in his own person pushes the man of faith even further. A belief in one God, a cardinal article of faith, is not necessarily a faith that saves, for the demons have that faith and shudder, as in the Gospels the powers of evil recognise the Messiah and yet wish Him to go away. This point might be taken up by a Christian missionary dealing with the Mohammedan, "You believe there is one God, but before I can regard your faith as a saving one I want to know what you do on the strength of your belief."

20. **wilt thou know?** He is now going to prove his point by an appeal which a Christian Jew will regard as final. **dead.** R.V., "barren."

21. **Was not Abraham?** This is the appeal: it is to the classical instance of Abraham. Even the Father of the Faithful showed his faith by his works. He offered up his son in intention, and the will was taken for the deed.

22. **You see faith wrought with.** Read

“worked with,” or in modern phraseology, “energised his faith.” **made perfect**,—*i.e.* “reached the end for which it was given.”

23. **for righteousness.** It saved him. **Friend of God.** It brought him into the highest rank of fellowship with God which a man could desire (Gen. xv. 6.).

25. **Likewise also.** This introduces another example. **Rahab.** Though far removed by race and character from Abraham, Rahab's act was accepted as a sign of faith. The Syro-Phœnician woman in Matt. xv. 28 in the same way breaks down the wall of partition between Greek and Jew by the energy of her faith. Notice that by the mention of an outsider the writer may have wished to make his argument appeal to Gentile readers.

26. **the body without the spirit.** This is the conclusion of the whole matter, and in a terse, forcible manner dismisses the case of the man who thinks that faith will save him apart from his actual conduct in the affairs of life, in his relations with his neighbour.

### Jas. iii. 1-12.

#### THE LOVE OF RELIGIOUS ARGUMENT AND THE USE AND ABUSE OF THE TONGUE.

- 1 My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall
- 2 receive the greater condemnation. For in many things we offend all. If any man offend not in word, the same is a
- 3 perfect man, and able also to bridle the whole body. Behold, we put bits in the horses' mouths, that they may obey
- 4 us; and we turn about their whole body. Behold also the ships, which though they be so great, and are driven of

fierce winds, yet are they turned about with a very small  
 5 helm, whithersoever the governor listeth. Even so the  
 tongue is a little member, and boasteth great things. Be-  
 6 hold how great a matter a little fire kindleth! And the  
 tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue  
 among our members, that it defileth the whole body, and  
 setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire  
 7 of hell. For every kind of beasts, and of birds, and of  
 serpents, and of things in the sea, is tamed, and hath  
 8 been tamed of mankind: but the tongue can no man tame;  
 9 it is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison. Therewith bless  
 we God, even the Father; and therewith curse we men,  
 10 which are made after the similitude of God. Out of the  
 same mouth proceedeth blessing and cursing. My brethren,  
 11 these things ought not so to be. Doth a fountain send  
 12 forth at the same place sweet water and bitter? Can the  
 fig tree, my brethren, bear olive berries? either a vine,  
 figs? so can no fountain both yield salt water and fresh.

1. **masters.** R.V., "teachers." Read "do not many of you become teachers." The teachers appear to have been a distinct class of Church officials (Acts xiii. 1; 1 Cor. xii. 28; Eph. iv. 11). In the earlier list of ecclesiastical officers, St. Paul places them next the prophets. In the *Didache* they are placed above the bishops (overseers). **greater condemnation** (Mark xii. 38-40). Read "heavier criticism," *i.e.* heavier than that which is meted out to those who do not set up to teach.

2. **we offend all.** R.V., "we all stumble." The writer speaks here with feeling: he is himself a teacher and feels the grave responsibility of the office. In interpreting all this part of the Epistle, it should be remembered that it was sent out into a world where many religions were contending for mastery, and where the victory of Christianity de-



pended largely upon the way in which its teachers handled the great idea of the Incarnation. Truth wins, not merely through its inherent force, but by the temper of those who expound it. **If . . . offend not in word.** R.V., "stumble not." **a perfect man.** This is always the writer's highest ideal (see i. 4 and Matt. v. 48). **able to bridle.** See i. 6. Control, self-direction is in this letter essential to right character. The fact that it regards the supreme law of conduct as a "law of freedom" must not blind us to the severe manliness of its directions to self-discipline. **the whole body.** He has just said (ii. 26) that the body is the visible organ of the spirit in a man, and that the body apart from the spirit is dead, now he thinks of the many members of the body, eye, ear, tongue, and how the spiritual man needs to bridle the whole organism. If he can manage his tongue, he can manage the rest.

3. **Behold.** This reading makes better sense than the R.V., "now if," and is defended by Mayor, 101. The writer gives this simple instance of how in the case of horses a man gets control. **their whole body.** There is not a member in the horse's great body which does not yield to the touch of the bridle. A man has a fine control there, and the suggestion is that when he does not stumble in word he shows as excellent a control.

4. **which.** Omit with R.V. **be.** R.V., "rare." **driven of fierce winds.** R.V., "driven by rough winds." **with a very small helm.** R.V., "rudder." Here a fresh thought meets us. The rider, the bridle and the horse, illustrated what a general control should be, now the power of a small thing,

such as a rudder, suggests the strange and awful power of that other small thing, a man's tongue. **whithersoever the governor listeth.** Better, whither the touch of the steersman decides.

5. **boasteth great things.** Punctuate as R.V. For the thought, see v. 13, 14, where the boasting of the business man is described. **how great . . . kindleth!** R.V., "Behold how much wood is kindled by how small a fire." Better "How small a fire kindles how large a forest." In dry countries forest fires are of frequent occurrence (see Ps. lxxxiii. 14; Isa. ix. 18, x. 17; Zech. xii. 6).

6. **the tongue is a fire.** A slander once started will work as much havoc as a spark from an engine in an American forest. **so is the tongue.** Punctuate and read this difficult verse as R.V., "the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue." He is about to show why; in ver. 2, he said that if a man can control his tongue, he can manage his *whole* body. This is because the tongue is such a power in every "world" which it reaches. (1) It is a little world itself, and just as the "cosmos" or world of corrupt men and women can defile society round them, so the tongue if it be evil defiles the whole body. Of course the tongue stands here for the thought which coming from the heart defiles the man (Matt. xv. 11). (2) This "little world" of influence reaches beyond the man who owns it. It is a fire in the midst of the "wheel of created things." This is perhaps the best translation of A.V. **course of nature.** R.V., "wheel of nature," which Dr. Hort calls "one of the hardest phrases in the Bible." Take the word "nature" first. It is used in i. 23 of a man's natural face (literally, face of nature), *i.e.* the face

with which he was created. There are also proofs that Philo, whose language influenced this Epistle, uses the same word in the sense of Creation. Then in Ezek. i. 15-19 we have the mystic vision of the four living creatures moving with the speed of a flash of lightning in and with certain moving wheels. This is a vision of Creation. The passage was called by later Jews the Chariot, and associated with the beginning of things. It may have suggested the thought of the wheel here. The idea then would be that the tongue is of such power for good and evil that it works strongly even in the midst of the manifold things that God has created and made. There is also a great deal of fire ("like the appearance of torches") moving up and down in Ezekiel's vision, and this may have suggested the idea of the tongue being a fire. **set on fire by hell.** It is the bad side of speech that colours the Epistle (except in ver. 9), and here the imagination is taken beyond the wheel of nature to Gehenna. For the explanation of this strong feeling as to the evil which the tongue may do, see on 2 Pet. ii. 18.

7. **For.** That this member of the body is untamable is a conclusion which follows naturally from the amazing description of its power just given. **every kind of beasts.** In the great cities of the Empire shows were held in the amphitheatres to amuse the people, where snakes were charmed, and lions and tigers tamed. In the temples also, especially in the temples of ancient healing, as those of Asclepius, tame serpents were kept. Fish also were brought into the pools of the temples and tamed. But the writer may have been referring to the general taming of the wild

things of the earth and sea, which is part of the prerogative of man (Gen. i. 28 ; Ps. viii. 6).

8. **but the tongue.** This member is imagined almost as if it had a separate life from the man himself. **unruly evil.** R.V., "restless." **deadly poison.** The snake has just been mentioned, and it suggested this imagery. Any one who has watched a snake knows that it puts out its quivering tongue restlessly in its efforts to poison its enemy.

9. **Therewith.** An example of the restlessness of human speech. **God, even the Father.** R.V., "the Lord and Father,"—a unique phrase in the Bible. "The Lord" refers to His supremacy over all things, and the name "Father" is added to lead up to the statement of the Divine sonship of man. **made after the similitude.** R.V., "made after the likeness." This likeness of human nature to the Divine is the great charter of the human race; it is much emphasised in the Jewish literature which influenced this writer (Sir. xvii. 3 ; Wisd. ii. 23 ; 4 Esd. viii. 44). Notice that man notwithstanding his sins of speech is regarded here as being still formed in the likeness of God.

10. **Out of the same mouth.** It is the inconsistency of this cursing and blessing by the same mouth that frets our author; in everything he is the Apostle of self-control and an orderly mind.

11. 12. **Doth a fountain. . . a fig tree. . . a vine. . . salt water?** A series of rapid pictures of abnormal, disorderly things is given, calculated to shame his hearers into seeing that those who use their tongue to bless God the Father and curse His children, are making an abnormal use of their nature. **They are acting clean contrary to the purpose for**

which God made the tongue and all the bodily members. In this way the extreme saying that "the tongue can no man tame" is qualified. If that dictum were taken literally, as in the burst of his indignant eloquence the writer allows himself to suggest, it would have been of no use to say to his readers, "My brethren, these things ought not so to be." No moral teacher, least of all a Christian one, however black he may paint vice, admits possibility of defeat. By virtue of his spiritual office he is bound to regard the moral nature to which he makes appeal as more powerful than the threatening evil. To this quieter and more invincible standpoint the Epistle now returns.

Jas. iii. 13-18.

THE CONTRASTS OF FALSE (13-16) AND  
TRUE (17, 18) WISDOM.

13 Who is a wise man and endued with knowledge among  
you? let him show out of a good conversation his works  
14 with meekness of wisdom. But if ye have bitter envying  
and strife in your hearts, glory not, and lie not against the  
15 truth. This wisdom descendeth not from above, but is  
16 earthly, sensual, devilish. For where envying and strife is,  
17 there is confusion and every evil work. But the wisdom  
that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and  
easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without  
18 partiality, and without hypocrisy. And the fruit of right-  
eousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

13. **Who is a wise.** Omit with R.V. the word "a" and "man." This bright way of introducing a subject is more rhetorical than literary; it is just what a speaker looking round his audience might

say to rouse attention; it is a method which was often used by our Lord (Luke v. 11). **endued with knowledge.** R.V., "understanding." This is almost equivalent to our "educated man." The Epistle is written to men of education, and a Jewish education was by no means a thing to be despised; this fact is to be remembered when the question is raised—How could the Galilean Apostles become preachers and authors? (See Ramsay, *The Education of Christ*, 67.) **conversation.** R.V., "by a good life." **with meekness of wisdom.** The writer has called his readers "educated men," and now he comes down on them with a sledge-hammer,—let the quality of your wisdom, your education, be meekness: be with all your learning and power of speech, gentle-men.

14. **envying.** R.V., "jealousy." A feeling which is, as experience has shown, common to men of learning and which has wrecked not a few of the Councils of the Church. **strife.** R.V., "faction." The Greek word is interesting: derived from a word used for a woman who spins for hire; then for people who canvassed at an election for hire, and thus by a natural evolution for partisans. It is used by St. Paul (Phil. i. 15; Rom. ii. 8; Gal. v. 20), and was regarded by him as one of the chief obstacles to the spread of the true Christianity. **glory not,**—*i.e.* do not boast of your enlightenment. **lie not against the truth.** What truth? Either the Christian doctrine which would be falsified by this partisanship (see ii. 1), or the truth of anything, as we might say "do not falsify the facts of the case." It is one of the most difficult tasks, even of the best intentioned of Christian teachers, not to go beyond the limits of his know-

ledge, and not to pretend that he knows more than can be known of the subject in hand. This is specially the case in matters concerning the future life.

15. **This wisdom descendeth not.** R.V., "This wisdom is not a wisdom that cometh down." If their learning and knowledge only involved them in bitter disputing, and split their Church into factions, they must realise that it is not a wisdom that comes from above. On the contrary, it is (a) **earthly**, in the sense that St. Paul speaks of the first man "as of the earth earthy"—a lower creation; (b) **sensual**, like an animal, self-seeking and so quarrelsome; (c) **devilish**, like that of Satan, who is the lord of division and an enemy of the unity of mankind. The Evil Spirit is throughout Hebrew thought regarded as a separator of those "whom God had joined together."

16. **For.** The writer wants to hold them to the point that wisdom which divides men is not Christian. **envying and strife**,—"jealousy and partisanship." **confusion.** Read "restlessness" or "disorder." It is the same word as is used in ver. 8 of the uncontrolled tongue—a restless evil. **every evil work.** R.V., "every vile deed."

17. **wisdom . . . from above**,—*i.e.* from communion with the Divine mind; one of the gifts which comes down from the Father of Lights; it bears the marks of its Divine origin. (1) **pure** in the sense of single-hearted. God has no other wish than that His children should attain their perfect life: His glory is theirs: He has no self-interest to serve. Those who share this kind of disinterested wisdom do not give way easily to the

grave fault of jealousy (ver. 14; see 1 Pet. i. 22).

(2) **peaceable.** It has no private cause to serve, such as those men have who are using their wisdom and knowledge to gain their own ends.

(3) **gentle.** Used of a master who is considerate to his household servants in 1 Pet. ii. 18. In 2 Cor. x. 1 it is used of the "gentleness of Christ," which was turned by Matthew Arnold into the beautiful phrase "the sweet reasonableness of Christ."

(4) **easy to be intreated.** Read "easy to be persuaded" or "compliant,"—*i.e.* willing to agree when a better case is presented. A teacher who thinks that he cannot be mistaken has not the gift of this kind of wisdom.

(5) **full of mercy.** Mercy may be called the great ethical discovery of the Hebrew prophets, who, seeing it in the character of God, demanded the same mercy from man to man. Here, where the factions which divided religious men are in view, it means the mercy which the stronger and victorious cause should show to those who are vanquished. How often in the history of the Church has one side taken a "cruel advantage" of the other and numerically weaker side, creating a permanent schism.

(6) **without partiality.** See i. 6, ii. 4. Read "whole-heartedly."

(7) **without hypocrisy.** Read "genuine," as in 1 Pet. i. 22, "genuine love." The stain upon Jewish piety was that it lacked this genuine spirit. Its teachers gave the impression that they were teaching and practising religion with an eye to themselves (Matt. xxiii. 4).

18. **the fruit of righteousness is sown.** A little difficult because we do not usually speak of sowing fruit. But we do speak of sowing a harvest, and the difficulty is removed if we read, "A



harvest of righteousness is sown in peace, for them that make peace." Sowers and reapers get the right kind of harvest if they combine without quarrelling and strife. In Heb. xii. 11 that which results from the discipline of suffering is called "the fruit or harvest of righteousness."

#### Jas. iv. 1-4.

### DENUNCIATION OF RELIGIOUS STRIFE.

- 1 From whence come wars and fightings among you? come they not hence, even of your lusts that war in your
- 2 members? Ye lust, and have not: ye kill, and desire to have, and cannot obtain: ye fight and war, yet ye have
- 3 not, because ye ask not. Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts.
- 4 Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.

1. **From whence.** A rhetorical question which gives life and force, as in iii. 1. Still more stirring is the true reading (Hort), which repeats "whence" twice—"whence are wars, whence are fightings?" **wars.** Considering the objective of the letter—Jewish Christians in the cities of the Empire—the reference is not to political but to religious strife. The wars are Christian factions on a large scale, the battles are casual quarrels. **lusts.** R.V., "pleasures"; either those which arise from the joy of possession after some fierce quarrel, or from the mere gratification of hatred. **that war in your members.** Our author is much at home when he has an opportunity of describing the inner workings of the soul (see i. 14). Here he uses a graphic

phrase for the competing desires for pleasure within a man; it may be translated "who are on a campaign in your members" (cf. 1 Pet. ii. 11).

2. **Ye lust, and have not.** In a series of short pithy sentences the folly of their quarrelsomeness is brought to their notice. Notice that it is a little difficult to account for the severity of the charges which are here made in a personal manner against the Christian Jews; it looks as if the writer was taking a wider view and aiming his invective against the Jewish character in general. The Acts reveals a background of religious hatred leading easily to murder, and the writer may also be thinking of the hatred which killed the Christ. **Ye have not, . . . ask not.** A sudden turn is here given to the invective; it is not disputing, but prayer that brings the good gifts of the "Father of Light."

3. **Ye ask, and receive not.** But even their prayer is vitiated at its source, for they do not pray for the triumph of truth nor the Kingdom of God, but for the things which give them personal pleasure. **upon your lusts.** Read "squander them in your selfish pleasures."

4. **Ye adulterers and adulteresses.** Omit "adulterers" with R.V. The remaining word plainly follows the O.T. manner of speech, first developed by Hosea (ii. 12), of using the broken marriage bond as a forcible symbol for religious faithlessness. Here it is used of the conduct which their treatment of the rich and poor in their synagogue exemplifies. It is at bottom false. **friendship . . . enmity.** To stand on terms of friendship with the world would mean conformity to heathen standards of living. There was danger

that in the Dispersion, Jews would lapse into the loose morality of the lower type of Gentiles. It is evident from 1 Pet. iv. 3 that before their conversion his readers had walked in lasciviousness, lusts, wine-bibbings, revellings, carousings, and abominable idolatry. **whosoever therefore.** This sentence summarises the whole position of the Christian conscience in dealing with the world as it then was; a man could not face both ways. It says much for the strength of the writer's Christianity that with so much knowledge and insight into the sinful state of the Jewish and Gentile world, he should have abandoned the Judaism of his youth and early manhood and found in the service of Jesus Christ the force required to redeem both Jew and Gentile.

#### Jas. iv. 5-10.

#### EXHORTATION TO A RETURN TO GOD.

5 Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit  
6 that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy? But he giveth more  
grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but  
7 giveth grace unto the humble. Submit yourselves therefore  
to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you.  
8 Draw nigh to God, and he will draw nigh to you. Cleanse  
your hands, ye sinners; and purify your hearts, ye double  
9 minded. Be afflicted, and mourn, and weep: let your  
laughter be turned to mourning, and your joy to heaviness.  
10 Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord, and he shall  
lift you up.

5. **Do ye think.** R.V., or "think ye." The writer's tone changes from a fierce invective to a gentler appeal. **the scripture saith.** There is

no passage in the O.T. known of this kind. **The spirit . . . envy.** This is to be regarded as the quotation, and is so punctuated in the R.V. It is a question—Doth the spirit which He made to dwell in us long unto envying? The answer expected is “No”: the spirit which He gave us could not possibly move to the kind of envy and strife that you are showing. The second interpretation is—Doth the Scripture say in vain, “the Spirit which . . . jealously yearns after the whole devotion of the heart”? The connection then will be that the friendship of God is not compatible with the friendship of the world unless the Scripture speaks vainly when it says, “God jealously desires your whole heart.”

6. **But he giveth more grace.** The meaning of this will depend upon which of the two above interpretations we take. If the first (the R.V.), the meaning will be this—far from His giving a spirit that moves to envy and strife, He gives on the contrary the more excellent gift of grace. If we follow the second interpretation, we shall understand—just in consequence of the affection which He has for His people, God gives greater grace or acceptance (cf. Isa. liv. 7). **Wherefore he saith,**—*i.e.* the Scripture saith, in Prov. iii. 34 (cf. 1 Pet. v. 5). **the proud**—scorners, insolent folk. They appear in the Gospels, and insolence comes in the list of those things which defile a man (Mark vii. 22). We meet them often in the Proverbs and in the Psalms. **resisteth.** Literally, sets himself in battle array. **the humble.** Read “those of low estate.” These are the “poor” of whom the Psalms and the whole of the O.T. have so much to say. As a class they came first into prominence

after the successful wars of Jeroboam the Second created a rich class who despoiled the peasantry of their land. Later at Jerusalem Isaiah met with the same terrible increase of poverty due to the land-grabbing of the governing classes. It is certainly true that all through Hebrew and Jewish history the poor were always with them. **grace.** In the older and simpler sense of "acceptance," as in the Psalms. To find grace in a person's sight is to be accepted and welcomed. In Proverbs, together with the idea of acceptance, there is, in the use of the word grace, the idea of acceptability. God will not accept any one unless He sees in him something which ennobles him in His sight. It is not only lowliness of estate that commends the poor of Scripture, but their humble piety. They are the friends of God.

7. **Submit yourselves.** R.V., "be subject to." This is a favourite word in 1 Peter, and both here and there the English word "subject," which has a derogatory sound, should not be used, and "obey" or "obedience" should be substituted. **the devil.** His special function is to create a spirit of mistrust between man and God, and between man and man.

8. **Draw nigh.** This is the great privilege revealed in Scripture, and meets the deepest desire of the religious soul. It was effected through the priest under the old covenant (Ex. xix. 22); through Christ in the new (Heb. iv. 16, vii. 19). **Cleanse your hands . . . purify.** Ritual terms suggested perhaps by the "draw nigh" of the preceding sentence. These terms had, however, been already spiritualised in the later Psalms (xxiv. 4, lxxiii. 13). **sinners.** This is the first time the

“beloved brethren” have been so called (see iv. 3).

9. **Be afflicted.** The word is only used here in the N.T., but is found in the LXX. with the meaning of physical hardship. Here it refers to the giving up of the comforts and luxury of riches.

10. **Humble yourselves.** This is the climax of the exhortation. The factious spirit of his readers and their open quarrels, were the signs of an insolent high-mindedness which could only be cured by repentance. “Humility is not only a virtue in itself, it is a vessel to contain other virtues” (Thomas Adams). “Humility is the hall-mark of wisdom” (Collier).

#### Jas. iv. 11-v. 6.

#### EXHORTATION AGAINST THREE FORMS OF IRRELIGION — FAULTFINDING (11, 12); WILFULNESS (13-17); DEPRIVING THE LABOURER OF HIS WAGES (v. 1-6).

11 Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law : but if thou judge the law,  
12 thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge. There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy : who art  
13 thou that judgest another? Go to now, ye that say, To-day or to-morrow we will go into such a city, and continue  
14 there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain : whereas ye know not what shall be on the morrow. For what is your  
15 life? It is even a vapour, that appeareth for a little time,  
16 and then vanisheth away. For that ye ought to say, If the Lord will, we shall live, and do this, or that. But now ye rejoice in your boastings : all such rejoicing is evil.

- 17 Therefore to him that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.
- v. 1 Go to now, ye rich men, weep and howl for your miseries  
 2 that shall come upon you. Your riches are corrupted, and  
 3 your garments are motheaten. Your gold and silver is  
 cankered; and the rust of them shall be a witness against  
 you, and shall eat your flesh as it were fire. Ye have  
 4 heaped treasure together for the last days. Behold, the  
 hire of the labourers who have reaped down your fields,  
 which is of you kept back by fraud, crieth: and the cries  
 of them which have reaped are entered into the ears of the  
 5 Lord of sabaoth. Ye have lived in pleasure on the earth,  
 and been wanton; ye have nourished your hearts, as in a  
 6 day of slaughter. Ye have condemned and killed the just;  
 and he doth not resist you.

11, 12. (a) Against faultfinding. **brethren.** This title has not been used since iii. 12. Prophetic indignation at sin such as we have seen in the last sections does not easily yoke itself with the kindlier forms of Christian speech. **speakeeth against the law and judgeth the law.** How does faultfinding between the brethren of the Christian society lead to a finding fault with the law? The "law" is "the law fit for kings" (ii. 8), "Thou shalt love thy neighbour." This is not a human but a Divine law for the wellbeing of all social life. Consequently, to judge one's brother by that law and accuse him of breaking it is to take out of God's hand His special function and to be guilty oneself of censorious pride. Our Lord gives a simpler reason for checking the habit of censoriousness, "Judge not that ye be not judged." "There is no fault which brings about its own punishment more certainly than that of fault-finding. While we become quick to see the mote

in our brother's eye, the beam is still growing in our own. The habit of negative criticism is destructive to the creative faculty and to much else beside."

13-17. (b) Planning out of life irrespective of the will of God. In this, and the following passage, we get a glimpse of the occupation of the people, whom the writer is calling to repentance—the teaching classes in the city and the employers of labour in the country farms.

13. **we will go.** The Jews were great travellers. Antioch, if this be the destination of the letter, was a commercial centre. The words are vivid, and remind us of the description which Amos gives of the teaching class of his day. You see merchants looking at a map and putting their finger on such and such a city—Tarsus or Corinth—and saying, "On such a day we will be there."

14, 15. The rebuke of this spirit is given first from the point of view of the uncertainty of life. There is a Jewish story that Rabbi Simeon heard from the Angel of Death that his office was to kill those who boasted of the things they were about to do.

15. **For that ye ought to say.** The rebuke then passes to higher grounds and is given with all the dignity of a master in Israel, trained by the Wisdom literature to see God's hand in all the details of life. It is unfortunate that in certain circles of English piety the phrase *Deo volente* has degenerated into a catchword. Notwithstanding, it remains an axiom of the Christian life, that since God has a plan of life for every man, it is the business of every man—trader, shopkeeper, business man, farmer, soldier—to find out God's will in exercising it.



16. **glory in your boasting.** The high-mindedness of the men of the world is here exposed. His confidence in his cleverness, luck, strength, skill, is a sin.

17. **to him . . . knoweth.** This verse is a parenthesis, and should be taken as a summing up of all that has gone before. There is a knowledge of what is right and wrong in the Christian community. To that knowledge or conscience the whole letter has been appealing. Knowing is useless without doing; a conscience unpractised in good is a source of sin.

(c) v. 1–6. Wealth getting by defrauding labourers is the third form of irreligion.

1. **ye rich.** The rich employers of the poorer Christian community. The writer rises to prophetic indignation against them—a Christian Isaiah (cf. Luke vi. 24, xviii. 24; 1 Tim. vi. 9, 10). **miseries.** The instability of social life in all ages of Syrian history is a contrast to the ordered life of Western communities. The prophets and preachers always took advantage of the fact to show the worthlessness of riches. **that shall.** R.V., “that are coming.” The events that the writer sees about to happen, or the woes which the seers always associated with the coming of the Lord (cf. Matt. xxiv.).

2. **Your riches and garments, gold, silver.** The parables of the Gospels show us a background of wealthy society—“the man clothed in purple and fine linen”—“the treasures of gold and silver hid in the field”—“the treasury in the house with things in it new and old.”

3. **a witness against you.** In times of social disturbance, prelude of the last days, the **trappings**

of wealth are valueless, and are left to decay in the cupboard, or hidden away in the damp earth. Their condition is a witness to the sin of ill-gotten hoards. **shall eat your flesh.** A rusty ring will eat into the flesh, like fire, and leave its mark—perhaps festering. So in the day of calamity wealth becomes a sore. The rich are the first to be plundered. **Ye have heaped . . . ye have laid up your treasure in the last days.** The last days have actually commenced, and it is a bad time to amass wealth.

4. **Behold**—vivid concrete style. **the hire of your labourers.** Again the background of the parable appears, and the readers remember the labourers receiving their daily wage in the vineyard and grumbling at the amount. Here the employers—either wealthy city merchants or farmers—are guilty of keeping back wages due. This kind of cruelty had been denounced in Deuteronomy (xxiv. 15). (See also Lev. xix. 13.) **the cries have reached.** The words are evidently an echo of the Deuteronomist, in whom every Bible reader who cares for the poor finds a friend, then as now. **the ears of the Lord of sabaoth.** A majestic title for God Almighty (Leader of the celestial armies)—taken from that creator of impressive religious oratory—Isaiah of Jerusalem. The strangeness of the title would remind Jewish readers of the whole of that great statesman's plea for the poor and arraignment of the unjust and the oppressor. (Sabaoth—"Jehovah of hosts"—is nearly our Almighty or Omnipotent—A. B. Davidson.)

5. **Ye have lived in pleasure.** R.V., "lived delicately" (the noun from the verb is found in

2 Pet. ii. 13). **been wanton**—and taken your pleasure (elsewhere only 1 Tim. v. 16). **as in a day of slaughter.** Omit “as.” The phrase corresponds to “in the last days” of ver. 3. The contrast between the pleasure-loving lives of these people and the times in which they were living is very strong. They are like sheep who feed themselves full on the very day in which they are taken to the slaughter-house. A terrible commentary on this is taken from the account of the siege of Jerusalem in Josephus, *B. J.* v. 10. 2. The richer Jews, whether they stayed in the city during the siege or tried to escape the Romans, were equally destroyed. Every such person was put to death on the pretext that he was preparing to desert, but in reality that the plunderers might get his possessions. Those whose bodies showed no signs of privation were tortured to make them reveal the treasures they were supposed to conceal.

6. **the just one.** R.V., “the righteous man.” The poor labourer who has done no wrong. There is no point here in a reference to the Crucifixion.

#### Jas. v. 7-18.

**FINAL EXHORTATIONS TO PATIENCE (7-11);  
SELF-CONTROL IN SPEECH (12); AND  
COMMON PRAYER (13-18).**

7 Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he  
8 receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth  
9 nigh. Grudge not one against another, brethren, lest ye

be condemned: behold, the judge standeth before the  
 10 door. Take, my brethren, the prophets, who have spoken  
 in the name of the Lord, for an example of suffering  
 11 affliction, and of patience. Behold, we count them happy  
 which endure. Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and  
 have seen the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very  
 12 pitiful, and of tender mercy. But above all things, my  
 brethren, swear not, neither by heaven, neither by the  
 earth, neither by any other oath: but let your yea be yea;  
 13 and your nay, nay; lest ye fall into condemnation. Is any  
 among you afflicted? let him pray. Is any merry? let  
 14 him sing psalms. Is any sick among you? let him call for  
 the elders of the church; and let them pray over him,  
 15 anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: and  
 the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall  
 raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be  
 16 forgiven him. Confess your faults one to another, and  
 pray one for another, that ye may be healed. The  
 effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much.  
 17 Elias was a man subject to like passions as we are, and he  
 prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it rained not  
 on the earth by the space of three years and six months.  
 18 And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the  
 earth brought forth her fruit.

7. **therefore.** The oppressed Christians need special exhortations to patience, as the writer felt from the first (chap. i.). The kinds of trials and temptations about which he encouraged them have now gained more definite colour. The motive for endurance is also changed: at first it was the perfection of the Christian character, now it is a very different thing—the mysterious **coming of the Lord**. This is now much in the author's mind (vers. 3, 5, 8). It is strange that this motive for a sober and godly life was not brought before the

readers earlier. It may be regarded as a fact showing that the writer had only partially assimilated the Christian standpoint. **Behold.** This arresting exclamation — the mark of a speaker — is used four times in the passage (v. 4, 7, 9, 11). **the husbandman . . . the early and latter rain.** What a peaceful simile for the "Day of the Lord"! The brethren are to be patient field-labourers who wait for the certain spring and autumn rains. The former rain comes just after the wheat is sown; the latter just before the ripening, the most gracious feature of the climate of Palestine.

8. **stablish your hearts.** The true remedy for double-mindedness (1 Pet. v. 10; 2 Pet. iii. 17). **draweth nigh.** R.V., "is at hand." The word used is exactly that which the Gospels use:—"the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (1 Pet. iv. 7). **coming of the Lord.** It is noticeable how little the phrase is expanded; the readers must have been accustomed to the idea of the mysterious coming.

9. **Grudge not.** R.V., "Murmur not." Their conduct wrought much on his mind still, and he brings in the most solemn of all conclusions—**the judge standeth before the door.** Notice the echo of the Saviour's similar demand for the control of the censorious spirit.

10. **Take, brethren.** Patience is the great virtue for their practice. He has no remedy for their outward lot to offer, neither does he assume that their rich oppressors will be moved by his appeal to justice. They must wait for what will be to them a gentle coming of the kingdom of God. **the prophets.** The principal theme of their disclosure being this very "day of the Lord,"

it was natural to a writer to bring them before his readers as examples of patience. They were to behave like the glorious prophets of old, who themselves suffered, waiting for the Divine transformation of social life—Micah, Isaiah, Jeremiah. This argument for endurance is used in the Epistle to the Hebrews (vi. 12, xiii. 7). In the last of these two passages, Mayor thinks there may be an allusion to the life and death of St. James himself. He had to bear as many trials—hardship, poverty, persecution—as had the missionary Apostles who had left Jerusalem.

11. **patience.** R.V., “endurance.” This gives a better sense, because Job was by no means a patient man. His greatest speeches were full of the wrongs of his position and impatience with the condolences of his friends; but all through he maintained the fine temper of faith, “though He slay me yet will I trust him” (xiii. 15)—a sentence which has helped thousands of suffering saints to endure. **the end of the Lord.** The way in which God made everything to turn out well for the much tried man.

12. **above . . . at all.** The type of Christian man after St. James’ own heart has been fixed in the earlier part of the letter. He is firm, even buoyant, in the fire of temptation: controlled in speech: wise in action. The opposite type held up to abhorrence is the argumentative, excitable, inconstant man, and here he returns to the point which he labours so much that we can almost imagine him in the midst of an angry, vociferating assembly of Jewish divines, who are calling upon heaven and earth to witness that they are right, and the Christian wrong. “To this day,” says

Dr. Thomson in *The Land and the Book*, "no people that I have ever known can compare with these Orientals for profaneness in the use of the name and attributes of God. They swear by their head, by their life, by heaven, and by the Temple, or what is in its place—the Church." **let your yea be yea: and your nay, nay.** This is the wish of our Lord and in His own words. How exactly they express the man of sound judgment, who having weighed the matter in the light of "wisdom that cometh from above," expresses himself with simple directness: his yes is yes, and his no is no—and you may depend upon him. George Eliot's "Caleb Garth" is the type as taken from English country life of the last century. Dean Stanley found the same quality in the boys of the training ship *Goliath* (*Sermons to Children*, xl. 4).

13. **afflicted** ("suffering") **among you.** The writer here shows a tenderer feeling for his readers than is usual, and a sense of their mutual responsibilities more like that great builder of churches in the one spirit—St. Paul. **let him pray.** Especially for the endurance proper to a Christian. **merry**—cheerful, or in good spirits. **let him sing psalms.** R.V., "let him praise" either with the voice, or on a stringed instrument.

14. **let him call for the elders of the church.** This was the Jewish custom. We know from the Gospels that the physicians of the time made people worse rather than better, and so the rabbis were called in from the synagogue. Sometimes as many as four would visit a sick man during a day. Here the Christian local church is meant, and the elders were the official representatives

of the congregation (cf. Acts xi. 30 and xx. 17). The widespread feeling that healing was a function of the Church must have largely helped the faith of those who came to Jesus and His Apostles. **anointing . . . with oil.** This also was the custom of the time. Herod, in his last illness, was recommended a bath of oil. The Twelve (Mark vi. 13) anointed the weakly with oil. (See Mayor, p. 159, for interesting note upon the gradual development from this time through thirteen centuries of the sacrament of Extreme Unction.)

15. **the prayer of faith.** This, not the oil, is the cause of the cure. The Lord used prayer in His acts of healing, with various symbolic acts—such as touching the eyes or lifting by the hand. **if he have committed sin.** This idea is exactly what we find in the Gospels, where sin and disease are regarded as cause and effect. In one of His first acts of healing our Lord said to the paralysed man, “thy sins be forgiven thee.”

16. **Confess your faults (sins) one to another and pray.** So closely connected are sin and disease that the act of healing is really a spiritual act, in which the whole Church may share, if there is an acknowledgment on the part of the sick man, of his transgression. (This passage is used in the controversy regarding Extreme Unction, and regarding Auricular Confession. For those interested in points which have nothing to do with the interpretation of the Epistle, two facts may be mentioned. It was not until the thirteenth century that Extreme Unction was made a sacrament: and the practice of Auricular Confession was not made obligatory until the Lateran Council of 1215. Both are late



developments). **the fervent supplication . . . availeth much.** "Fervent"—the word is translated in the R.V. as "in its working." Scholars are divided, and either sense is good: (*a*) prayer energised by the Spirit—cf. St. Paul's "the power that energises (works) in you" (Gal. iii. 5; Phil. ii. 13); or (*b*) prayer effects much—in its working—in its result, of which an example immediately follows. So far from regarding the act of healing, or the reception of confession as the work of an official,—though the elders by custom would be the first to do these things,—the instance of successful prayer is simply that of the **righteous man**—a man like Elijah—who was as human as ourselves.

17. **rained not . . . for three years and six months** (1 Kings xvii. 1). The length of the drought is not fixed in the original account, but there seems to have been a tradition amongst the rabbis about the time of Christ which fixed the period at three and a half years (cf. Luke iv. 25). For the rain prayer, cf. 1 Sam. xii. 17. The exact time is immaterial to the force of the illustration.

#### Jas. v. 19, 20.

#### FINAL EXHORTATION ON THE TREATMENT OF AN ERRING BROTHER.

19 Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one  
20 convert him; let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins.

19. **My brethren, if any of you.** There is very little in this Epistle about the work of

bringing back the sinner through faith and repentance. It is a surprise to find the Epistle closing with such tender solicitude. The previous passage, with its expressed wish that the whole brotherhood should be a healing Church, prepares us in a measure for this. Here the sin has nothing to do with physical disease, and is described rather in the manner of the Johannine writings as "error from the truth." In i. 18 the writer has spoken of Christians as being "brought forth by the word of truth." Here the "truth" signifies the Christian ideal of life.

20. **shall save a soul from death.** The wages of sin throughout the N.T. is death. **shall cover a multitude of sins.** Either the conversion by bringing a forgiveness of all that is past will cover up a multitude of past sins; or, the Christian who effects the conversion will have as a reward the blotting out of his own sin, because of his charity to his brother. This is less likely, unless the writer thought of these things in his more Jewish manner. In Christianity, nothing brings the grace of forgiveness except the fact that repentance on the part of the sinner has made him forgivable. Nothing that he could do for others would avail unless that condition was first fulfilled.

## THE FIRST EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

This title is not found in the older MSS., which label the Epistle as Peter 1. The word "general" or Catholic was added later.

1 Pet. i. 1, 2.

### THE WRITER AND HIS GREETING.

1 Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and 2 Bithynia. Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied.

The points of interest are—(a) the full title of the writer; (b) the destination of the letter; (c) the description of his readers in weighty religious language.

1. **Peter.** The Epistle purports to have been written by Peter. This name was given by our Lord to the disciple who is called Simon (Symeon, 2 Pet. 1). The actual word which our Lord used was Cephias, the Aramaic for a rock; this name survived in the Palestinian churches, and was the Apostle Paul's usual name for him (1 Cor. i. 12, iii. 22; Gal. i. 9). **an apostle of Jesus Christ.** An envoy or missionary (Matt. x. 2; Mark vi. 30; Luke ix. 10), distinct from the stay-at-home disciple and the local "elder" with his first duty

to his own church. It is clear from the desire which St. Paul felt to claim apostleship that even as early as his Galatian letter the name carried weight and authority. **to the strangers scattered.** R.V., "to the elect who are "sojourners." **Elect,** — *i.e.* Christians, see ver. 2. **sojourners.** In the religious sense, as in Ps. xxxix. 12, as pilgrims moving from one home to another; also in a popular sense of strangers who stop in a town but do not possess a permanent home there; a name appropriate to Christian Jews who were in foreign lands. **the Dispersion.** See note on Jas. i. 1. **Pontus . . . Bythinia.** A map of the Roman roads in Asia Minor shows that a letter-carrier, making a circular tour and starting from the seaport town of Amastris on the Black Sea, after his voyage from Rome, would carry his letter exactly through these provinces in the order in which they stand (see *Introd.*).

2. **according to—in—unto.** He is laying down the three conditions—past, present, and future—of their being the "elect." (*a*) **according to**—the predisposing cause. Presently this will be defined as a will working historically through the prophets. (*b*) **in** (not "through"). The present environment, *i.e.* the sanctification of the Spirit (2 Thess. ii. 13). (*c*) **unto**—the resulting life: described as one of obedience. Much is to be said in this Epistle of Christianity being an obedience (i. 22, ii. 8, iii. 6). **sprinkling of the blood.** A sharer in the sacrifice and suffering of Jesus Christ, which was to be the special discipline by which the Christian priesthood of his readers was to be developed (ii. 9.) Let it be noted that the rest of the chapter expands these three ideas—a fore-

knowledge of God, 3-12; a sanctification of the Spirit, 13-17; a sprinkling of the blood, 18-25. If these ideas are worked out separately, a deep insight into the mind of the writer will be gained. **Grace and peace to you.** This tender and expressive greeting is coined in the Christian mint. It is a combination of the Greek and Jewish forms of greeting: the Greek said "chaire"—"Greeting"; and this was Christianised from a resemblance in sound into "charis"—"Grace be to you." The Jew on meeting said "Peace" (John xxi. 26), and this remains as the second half of the Christian salutation. St. Paul uses it in his earliest Epistles, whilst James uses the more conventional and colder "charein"—"Greeting."

#### I Pet. i. 3-12.

### THE BLESSING OF GOD THE FATHER FOR WORKING UP TOWARDS THE CHRISTIAN REVELATION.

- 3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, which according to his abundant mercy hath begotten us again unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ
- 4 from the dead. To an inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for
- 5 you. Who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.
- 6 Wherein ye greatly rejoice, though now for a season, if need be, ye are in heaviness through manifold temptations:
- 7 that the trial of your faith, being much more precious than of gold that perisheth, though it be tried with fire, might be found unto praise and honour and glory at the
- 8 appearing of Jesus Christ. Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see him not, yet believing,

9 ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory : receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls.  
 10 Of which salvation the prophets have enquired and searched diligently, who prophesied of the grace that  
 11 should come unto you : searching what, or what manner of time the Spirit of Christ which was in them did signify, when it testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and  
 12 the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things, which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven ; which things the angels desire to look into.

3. **Blessed be.** The letter begins in praise in a form frequent in Jewish prayer books, and in the letters of devout Jews (cf. 2 Cor. i. 3 and Eph. i. 3). **God and Father of our Lord.** God as revealed in Jesus Christ. **Our Lord.** This title comes back to the earliest times of discipleship. "In the time of St. Paul 'Lord' was throughout the whole Eastern world a universally understood religious conception. The Apostle's confession of his Master as our Lord Jesus Christ, with the complementary idea that Christians were His slaves, was intelligible in all its fullness to every one in the Greek Orient" (Deissmann). **Jesus Christ.** The inseparable name of one personality originating, not in the mind of the disciples, but in the religious consciousness of Jesus Himself. **which.** R.V., "who." **hath begotten us again.** The idea of re-birth, especially applicable to Jewish Christians, who had been once-born into Judaism. **lively hope.** R.V., "living." Their Judaism was dead ; they were now re-born into a new world of hope. **by the resurrection.** This was the most

illuminating fact of the early Christian experience of God. The religious sense cannot live without having ample scope for its movement. The mystery of the world to come is one of its most absorbing interests. We moderns require an awakening to the same living hope regarding the perfect and eternal life in front of us.

4, 5. Notice the cumulative force of the writer's style: not like that of St. James, conversational and spontaneous, but moving steadily on in the manner of a writer who wishes to teach the slowly unfolding movement which gave birth to Christianity. Here the living hope is described as being fixed upon as **an inheritance** or paternal estate. **incorruptible**,—*i.e.* Divine and eternal. **undefiled**. Incapable of pollution (cf. Rev. xxi. 27). **that fadeth not away**. Like a flower, if one could imagine it, that never fades. **Who are kept**. R.V., "Who by the power of God are guarded." The word used for "guarding" means to keep a city safe with a garrison. The parenthood of God is shown not only in His prevenient grace, but in His present guardianship. **through faith**. He acts in conjunction with the faith of those who are the garrison of the city. **unto salvation**. R.V., "unto a salvation ready to be revealed in the last time." Faith, as in Heb. i. 14, fastens on the future, and the perfect life remains as the goal of the far-seeing working of God.

6. Another long and weighty sentence, containing a most notable description of the standing of Christians towards their hidden Lord. **Wherein**. Does this refer to "faith" in the preceding verse or to "the last time"? If to

“faith” the writer uses faith in the sense of an enthusiasm which enjoys the future long before it actually possesses it. If he refers to the word “last day,” he means that they are glad that there is to be a “last” day to their troubles (Matt. v. 11, 12). **though now for a season.** R.V., “for a little while.” **if need be,**—*i.e.* if it be God’s will. Those who have read this verse to people in suffering realise how wise and tender this reference to present trial proves to be. Without this touch of sympathy the thought of ultimate deliverance would irritate, rather than comfort; we require to feel that God not only holds out a future release but sympathises with our present struggle.  **manifold temptations.** In the sense of Jas. i. 12, not of temptation arising from evil, but trials sent by God to develop the higher life.

7. **that the trial of your faith.** R.V., “the proof,” *i.e.* that which remains after your faith has been proved. The writer foresees that character is transformed by trial nobly borne, and it is this character which survives better than gold, and will be found in full activity even in “the rigour of the eternal day” (the revelation of Jesus Christ). **gold that perisheth.** Notwithstanding all its durability under proof, gold does perish.

8. **Whom not having seen, ye love.** This is notable: it expresses in simplest language the present standing of the Christian. He has something more than the joy of expecting his patrimony: he has in his soul a new-born affection for One whom he has never seen. **In him . . . yet believing.** R.V., “on whom . . . yet believing.” Christ is the personal resting-place of their faith: one notices how entirely absent in the other



writers to the Dispersion is this enthusiastic apprehension of Christ as One to be loved and trusted. **rejoice . . . glory.** Read "with joy unutterable and glorified." Their relationship to Christ gives the kind of joy that can only be described in the language of the perfect life that is to come; though experienced here it belongs to another world ("glorified"), and imagination fails to symbolise it in words ("unutterable").

9. **receiving . . . faith.** A colon should be placed at the end of ver. 8, for that verse is a parenthesis. The writer now catches up the thought of ver. 7, and sets forth the final deliverance of those who stand trial faithfully. **the end of . . . faith.** That in which faith becomes completely developed is the salvation of souls, *i.e.* the perfect life towards which God is working.

10. **Of which salvation.** R.V., "Concerning which salvation." The writer is now showing that the fore knowledge of the Father had been working through the prophets towards the Christian life. To realise the continuity of this religious growth was important in two ways: (*a*) in assuring them of the fore knowledge of God (ver. 1); (*b*) in raising their minds to a sense of the greatness of the spiritual movement by which they were encompassed. This approaches the modern idea of religious evolution.

11. **searching.** The revelation of the prophets did not come mechanically without study and reflection. **what time or what manner of time.** They thought to determine the age and the character of the age. **the Spirit of Christ which was in them.** They were guided in their search by the same intuition as that which moulded

the consciousness of Christ Himself. **when it testified.** This intuition took the form of a Christ who suffered. **them,**—*i.e.* the sufferings. The prophetic intuition did not stop at the fact of a suffering Christ; it passed on to the results. **the glories.** The salvation of souls—the production of the perfect life is so wonderful that it comes properly under the category of “a glory.” The “faith” in ver. 7 is also “a glory.”

12. **To whom**—the prophets. **unto us.** R.V., “unto you.” **did they minister.** The writer of the Hebrews (xi. 39, 40) speaks similarly of the heroes of O.T. faith. The only difference is that according to Hebrews the prophets did not know that their revelation was so imperfect, whilst here it is said that they realised how provisional and fragmentary their work was. **these things.** The things relating to Christ. **which are now reported.** R.V., “which have now been announced,” or better, “made the subject of a gospel to you.” **with the Holy Ghost**—by the Holy Spirit. The preachers of the Gospel were in a line with the older prophets, moving as they had done under the impulse of the Holy Spirit. The writer wished his readers to feel this was essential to their position. **by them that have preached.** The Acts of the Apostles, after the first twelve chapters, concentrates so entirely on the missionary work of St. Paul, that it requires an effort to remember that throughout his lifetime an equally earnest if not influential Christian propaganda was being conducted by other missionary Apostles. James was at Jerusalem, Barnabas laboured at Antioch in Syria; Thomas is said even to have reached India; even women took a share in the

work, as we know from the case of Priscilla. **into which**,—*i.e.* into which sufferings. **the angels desire to look.** This expresses the feeling of wonder with which the Jew regarded a suffering Christ. Trained to look for a Messiah who should slay with the breath of His mouth the wicked, he found the Cross a stumbling-block. The writer implies that there is ground for their hesitation and surprise, since even angels desire to look into the strange story of a suffering God.

## I Pet. i. 13-17.

THE SECOND ASPECT OF THE CHRISTIAN'S  
VOCATION—THE HOLINESS OF THE  
ENFOLDING SPIRIT OF GOD.

13 Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto  
14 you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; as obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in  
15 your ignorance: but as he which hath called you is holy,  
16 so be ye holy in all manner of conversation. Because it is  
17 written, Be ye holy; for I am holy. And if ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear.

13. **Wherefore.** From teaching them to realise that they are caught up in a foreordained movement, he passes to deal with their present sanctification (ver. 1). **gird up.** R.V., "girding up." The metaphor is taken from what an Oriental does in preparing for a long journey or in running a race. He fastens his long garments round his loins to give his limbs free play. From this the word

passed into common use for bracing anything up. **loins of your mind.** Put under the control of your will the whole mental force you have—memory, imagination, reflection—like a racer braces himself for his great effort. **hope to the end.** R.V., “set your hope perfectly.” **is to be brought.** Read “is being brought.” They are already immersed in the tide that is setting in towards them from the eternal world. **the revelation of Jesus Christ.** This is that mysterious unveiling of the returning Christ which bounds their future.

14. **as obedient children** (see ver. 2). Sobriety and obedience are kindred marks of the Christian character in this Epistle. **not fashioning yourselves** (cf. Rom. xii. 2). **your former lusts.** This indication of the moral state of his Jewish readers before conversion agrees with our Lord’s criticism of His contemporaries, with St. James’ appeal to the same people in his Epistle, and with St. Paul’s indictment in Rom. i. Sin reigned in Jew and Gentile.

15. **as he which calleth you is holy.** Read “after the pattern of the Holy One who called you” (Bigg). God the Father and His Fatherhood is to be taken with all seriousness. **in all manner of conversation**—all manner of living. The sphere of this life is defined later as the Home, the State, and the Christian Brotherhood.

16. **Because it is written** (Lev. xi. 44).

17. **if ye call upon him as Father.** Referring possibly to the Lord’s Prayer. **who . . . judgeth.** It is often supposed that the regal or judicial relation of God to men implies strict and faithful hatred of men’s evil, while the parental

relation stands for softness, indulgence, and comparative moral indifference. But nothing could be more untrue. Who feels the criminal's sin and shame more keenly — the judge who passes sentence on him, or the parents who gave him life?" (Newton Clarke). **in fear.** There is a wholesome and an unwholesome fear of God and the real things of God. The writer reminds them of this fact. "We of this age also need to be brought back to the same wholesome fear of God, regaining the power of taking our thoughts of God seriously. Upon us all is now exerted the stern and unalterable demand of God that we be true sons to our Holy Father."

## I Pet. i. 18-25.

**THE THIRD ASPECT OF THEIR LOCATION.  
THE SPRINKLING OF THE BLOOD.**

18 Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with  
 corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain con-  
 19 versation received by tradition from your fathers; but  
 with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without  
 20 blemish and without spot: who verily was foreordained  
 before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in  
 21 these last times for you, who by him do believe in God,  
 that raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory;  
 22 that your faith and hope might be in God. Seeing ye  
 have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the  
 Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love  
 23 one another with a pure heart fervently: being born  
 again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the  
 24 word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever. *For all  
 flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of  
 grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth  
 25 away: but the word of the Lord endureth for ever.*

And this is the word which by the gospel is preached unto you.

18. **Forasmuch as ye know.** R.V., "knowing." Not only is the Fatherhood of God to be felt by them in all its seriousness, but they are to remember that their call came through the suffering of Christ. **that ye were not redeemed.** Transpose the negative till after the verb and read "ye were redeemed not." **with . . . but.** Christ came into their life as a Redeemer (Matt. xx. 28). He ransomed or bought them out of slavery—the simplest idea of the Atonement. **from your vain conversation.** R.V., "your vain manner of life." **Handed down.** Although the life of his readers, when they professed the Jewish religion, could not have been as "vain" as the Gentile life around them, still much that was evil had been handed down from the Fathers who had persecuted the prophets (Matt. xv. 2; Gal. i. 14; Jas. iv. 1-6).

19. **but with precious blood.** This is what the redemption cost. It is contrasted with a ransom made by perishable things; the blood therefore is not perishable, and signifies the precious soul or life of Jesus sacrificed. Notice that in the R.V. the words "of Christ" are placed at the end of the sentence. **as of a lamb . . . spot.** The purity of the life offered gave higher worth to the sacrifice; in this way the idea of sprinkling of the blood in ver. 1 is expanded.

20. **who verily was foreordained.** R.V., "foreknown indeed." Again notice the writer's desire to make the redemption of Christ part of a movement from a distant past. Here it is placed

beyond the time of the prophets, and is said to have been thought out even before the world was created (cf. Matt. xiii. 35). **manifest in these last times**,—*i.e.* disclosed in the last of the times or epochs of the world's history. **for you**. They needed in their troubles a strong encouragement like this. The Church, now as then, needs to realise the weight of its own evolutionary destiny. Its missionary zeal depends as much upon the force that propels it from its own historic past as upon the keenness of its vision into new fields and forms of Christian life.

21. **who through him are believers in God**. There is a difficulty here, if only Jewish converts to Christianity are meant, for they believed in God before they heard of Christ. The explanation may be that the writer regards their earlier faith valueless, just as he regards their earlier life sinful (ver. 14). **which raised him . . . hope might be in God**. The vision of the Resurrection was an experience of such other-world significance that the soul of those who felt its power was thrown absolutely upon God. This is the more or less uniform result of the visions of heavenly things which have called and converted men and women (cf. the conversion experience of Isaiah, Jeremiah, the Apostle Paul).

22. **Seeing that**. The writer is now passing from the facts of their religious conversion to their new moral life. **in obeying the truth through the Spirit**. Omit "through the Spirit," and read with R. V., "in your obedience of the truth" (see on vers. 2 and 13). **unto unfeigned love**. Their obedience had not produced cold stoical characters, but hearts set on fire with love of the brethren.

Is it this lack of interest in each other's faith, hope, and character that makes modern church life insipid? or has the growth of personal independence in religion destroyed the possibility of love of the brethren?

23. **being born again.** They are reminded the second time of their entrance into the new life. In ver. 3 it was the creation of a living hope in the eternal world that was the occasion of their entrance; here they are born again by the Word of God—a growing seed of truth, imperishable (Isa. xl. 6-8).

1 Pet. ii. 1-10.

### EXHORTATION TO FULFIL THE CALLING OF A PRIESTLY RACE.

1 Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and  
2 hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings, as new-  
born babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that ye  
3 may grow thereby: if so be ye have tasted that the Lord  
4 is gracious. To whom coming, as unto a living stone, dis-  
allowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious,  
5 ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an  
holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable  
6 to God by Jesus Christ. Wherefore also it is contained in  
the scripture, *Behold, I lay in Zion a chief corner stone,*  
*elect, precious: and he that believeth on him shall not be*  
7 *confounded.* Unto you therefore which believe he is  
precious: but unto them which be disobedient, *The stone*  
*which the builders disallowed, the same is made the head*  
8 *of the corner,* and *A stone of stumbling, and a rock of*  
*offence,* even to them which stumble at the word, being  
9 disobedient: whereunto also they were appointed. But  
ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy  
nation, a peculiar people; that ye should show forth the



praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his  
 10 marvellous light : which in time past were not a people,  
 but are now the people of God : which had not obtained  
 mercy, but now have obtained mercy.

1. **Wherefore laying aside.** The list of sins to be avoided is not a general one ; but contains sins of temper and of the inner life, known to us in the Pharisee of the Gospels and in the people with whom St. James deals in his Epistle. There was in the Jewish type of a good man a fund of easily roused wrath : in bad men the same passionate nature led easily to cruelty and murder. **guile, and hypocrisy.** The sins of all ecclesiastical corporations where men are tempted to do evil that good may come. **envy and evil speaking.** The life of St. Paul illustrates the ease with which Jews attacked their enemies by word of mouth. The Gentile character was less guilty of these sins of temper, but far more of the sins of the flesh. The best type of Roman gentleman was self-controlled in speech, and yet his sensual vice was often great.

2. **as new-born babes . . . milk of the word.** The new birth into Christianity, mentioned in i. 23, suggests this simple simile, which in turn takes us to the Gospel teaching upon our "becoming as little children." For "milk of the word," the R.V. substitutes "spiritual milk" : Dr. Hort, "rational milk." The old rendering suits the context best (see Dr. Bigg's note and discussion on this difficult passage, p. 126). Christian teaching is "sincere" in the sense that it produces sincerity, or "without guile" in the sense that it is the very opposite of that Pharisaic

proselytism which seeks to win men, not for their own good, but for the sake of a system or a church. **that ye may grow thereby.** Add, with R.V., "unto salvation." The vices of the unregenerate Jewish type are to be displaced by the growth of new graces.

3. **if ye have tasted.** The initial experience by which they became Christians was a foretaste of greater good to come (Ps. xxxiv. 8). Notice that this Psalm is in the writer's mind throughout this Epistle (cf. ver. 9 with i. 15-17; ver. 4 with i. 17; ver. 13-17 with iii. 10-12).

4. **To whom coming.** Put comma instead of a fullstop after last verse. **a living stone.** The writer is working towards some concrete image to express the ideal into which they are to grow, and wavers between a well-built temple and a priesthood within the temple. **elect, precious.** Suitable words for a corner stone which the Master-builder chooses with great care.

5. **as lively stones.** R.V., "as living stones." Nothing is so dead as a stone, and therefore a building does not lend itself so naturally to figurative use as does the human body. When a writer wants to expound the upbuilding of the Church, by reference to the building of a house, he is obliged to add the word "living" in order to make the comparison intelligible. **a spiritual house.** "A house for the Spirit," as St. Paul's "temple of the Spirit"; or else a spirit-transmitting society. **an holy priesthood.** Here his readers cease from being "living stones" in a building, and are thought of as working within the building itself. **to offer . . . spiritual sacrifices.** Since the primary duty of priests is to offer sacrifice, the primary duty of the Christian society as a holy

priesthood and spiritual house is to offer the sacrifice of a consecrated will, which is the only sacrifice acceptable to God who is Will and Spirit. That this is the nature of the sacrifice is proved by the words which follow—**through Jesus Christ.** He is the Living Stone on which believers are built, and the only sacrifice which is of highest worth is of the same nature as His.

6. **Wherefore.** R.V., "Because." Scripture gave authority for the figurative use of the corner stone. The quotation is an amalgam of several passages (Isa. xxviii. 16; Ps. cxviii.; Isa. viii. 14, xliii. 20; Ex. xix. 6; Hos. i. 2). It was in the mind of our Lord (Matt. xxi. 42) and of the first preachers (Acts iv. 11). The importance of having a firm corner stone, well chosen, "precious," to Eastern builders, lies in their method of laying foundations. Instead of digging trenches as our builders do, for the first course of stone, they dig pits at each of the four corners; fill these with masonry, and then run an arch from one to the other. Hence the corner stone must be well set and of the best material. To illustrate the religious situation, this corner stone was peculiarly useful. (1) It suggested to believers their safe position: they were built upon a select and sure stone. (2) It explained the disaster of those who disbelieved. They found the stone not as a corner stone of a spiritual house but a rock in the way, over which they stumbled and fell. **shall not be confounded.** R.V., "shall not be put to shame."

7. **Unto you,**—*i.e.* his Christian readers. **he is precious.** Better, either—(1) "there is the honour," *i.e.* either of not being put to shame; or (2) "there is the preciousness," *i.e.* of knowing

upon what a firm corner stone their faith was built. **unto them which be disobedient.** R.V., "to such as disbelieve."

8. **at the word.** The word of prophecy which anticipated a suffering Messiah. **whereunto . . . they were appointed.** The idea that the Christian Revelation was no upstart, but planned by the Divine mind from the first, has been set forth already (i. 2, 10, 20); now the rejection of that Revelation is regarded as also appointed. This view, as the Church has learned, must not be pressed into a final philosophy of history. We cannot think of people's hearts being hardened in any rigid sense: there has always been room for human choice and responsibility in the dealings of God with man.

9. **But ye.** The grandeur of the idea of Divine election now receives further emphasis in a series of significant names for the Church of Christ taken from the O.T. (a) **a chosen generation.** R.V., "an elect race" (Isa. xliii. 21), blood relations in the new covenant. (b) **a royal priesthood.** "Royal" because Christ is king; "priesthood" because they offer spiritual sacrifices. (c) **a holy nation.** A nation with a vocation for holiness (Ex. xix. 6). (d) **a peculiar people.** This is a mistranslation for "a people purchased for possession," the sense of the verse which the writer is using from Isa. xliii. 21, "The people I formed for myself."

10. **were no people.** The writer has left Isaiah and is now applying Hosea, the first of the evangelical prophets (ii. 23). The Jewish readers of this Epistle would follow and welcome these ancestral promises of grace. 'They were made to

feel that they and not their unbelieving compatriots were the true Israel. The noble pride of the Hebrew race was touched and enlisted in the service of Christ.

## I Pet. ii. 11, 12.

**EXHORTATION TO LIVE IN THE HOME, THE STATE, THE CHURCH, IN OBEDIENCE TO THE LAW OF EACH.**

- 11 Dearly beloved, I beseech you as strangers and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts, which war against the soul ;  
 12 having your conversation honest among the Gentiles : that, whereas they speak against you as evildoers, they may by your good works, which they shall behold, glorify God in the day of visitation.

11. **beloved.** The first time the writer uses a term of warm affection. Does it imply that he is now addressing them on the subject which made him take up his pen? **strangers and pilgrims.** R.V., "sojourners and pilgrims." Possibly only a reminder of their temporary sojourn in this world, but notice also that the first of these designations is found in i. 1, and there it helps us to decide whether Jewish or Gentile Christians are the readers addressed in this Epistle (see *Introd.*). The other word "pilgrims" also has some bearing on the matter. It is used for strangers resident in a certain place who are not citizens but live under the protection of the State. If this meaning and not the religious one was uppermost in the writer's mind here, the designation leads up naturally to an exhortation on behaviour due to those in authority. The position of his readers should make them

specially careful to obey the law. **to abstain.** Though the Jews were not so tempted by the lusts of the flesh as were the Gentile converts of St. Paul, they needed to be reminded of this fundamental law of life. In the Gospels we have pictures of the adulterous woman, of the covetous rich farmer, and of people living in dangerous luxury: on the other side we have the thief that breaks through the wall of the poor man's hovel (see also Jas. iv. and v.). **which war against the soul.** In Jas. iv. 1 we have the same expression, "pleasures which are on a campaign in your members."

12. **conversation.** R.V., "behaviour." **seemly**—"noble." **among the Gentiles.** The term embraces all the mixed races of the provinces to which the letter was sent (i. 1). It would however be the stricter Romans who would, as magistrates and officials responsible for law and order, criticise the conduct of the Christian communities. **you as evildoers.** Either a false suspicion or a not undeserved comment from outside: if it was altogether unfounded, why should the writer caution them against giving colour to it? The fact revealed here, as in all the Epistles, is rather that the Christianising of life by the Holy Spirit was a very slow process even in the days of the first enlightenment. **good works, which they shall behold.** For "good works" read "noble actions." Neither withdrawal from the world nor contempt for the ordinary opinion of good men is recommended. The life of Christians is to be at least equal to that of the finer type of the Roman or Greek in all the relations of life.

## I Pet. ii. 13-17

THE VIRTUE OF ORDERLY OBEDIENCE  
AS CITIZENS.

13 Submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for the Lord's  
 14 sake : whether it be to the king, as supreme ; or unto  
 governors, as unto them that are sent by him for the  
 punishment of evildoers, and for the praise of them that  
 15 do well. For so is the will of God, that with well doing  
 ye may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men :  
 16 as free, and not using your liberty for a cloak of  
 17 maliciousness, but as the servants of God. Honour all  
 men. Love the brotherhood. Fear God. Honour the king.

13. **Submit yourselves.** Neither the A.V. nor the R.V. ("be subject to") give the best sense to this word, which is used repeatedly in the Epistle. The English words—"submission and subjection"—carry with them a derogatory sound. The writer does not intend this. He simply wants obedience to recognised institutions and authorities, and "be obedient to" is the right translation here and in ver. 18 (iii. 1-5, v. 5). **to every ordinance of man.** Better "be obedient to every human institution." This is a remarkable testimony to the soundness of the imperial government. It is difficult to believe that any Christian would have said so after Nero. Government is regarded here, not as divinely appointed—St. Paul's doctrine—but as being human. None the less it is worthy of obedience. The motive of obedience is **for the Lord's sake** ; either because Christ led no revolution or because such dutiful citizenship would give honour to His name. The distance travelled from the ordinary Jewish standpoint of secret or

open rebellion against the Empire is remarkable: it is a tribute to the tranquillising effect of the Gospel and a sign of its purely religious origin. **to the king.** This title was given to the Cæsar in all Greek-speaking communities.

14. **governors.** Readers of the Gospels and Acts are familiar with these officials: pro-consuls, like Gallio, men of education and senatorial rank; procurators, like Pilate, men of lower rank. Each province mentioned in the greeting (i. 1) had its governor. Pliny wrote his famous report upon the Christians in Bythinia about 87 A.D. as governor of that province. **for punishment . . . for praise.** Two functions of the State. The Roman governor had many duties besides dealing with law-breakers; he was the "father" of his province: specially responsible for the welfare of the children and freed-men. The family life of Christians would come under his notice.

15. **put to silence the ignorance.** Better "muzzle the ignorance." The communities were not to suffer in silence but to develop a positive Christian life, which would effectually stop all attacks upon their conduct as citizens.

16. **as free, and not using your freedom.** The fact that they were living in obedience to the will of God gave them freedom from slavish obedience to the standards current in a heathen State: neither was their conscience bound by the Jewish Law. Evidently this freedom—taught far more plainly by St. Paul—might degenerate into licence (2 Pet. ii. 19): the Christian society might be a cloak to hide vice from the authorities. In later times, whenever a wave of exalted spiritual fervour has passed through the Church, there has



been the same danger. **as servants of God.** These words have passed into our ordinary religious language, and the more exact expression—slaves—jars upon the ear. Still, readers should remember that the bond between Greek and Roman slaves and their masters was very close and not undignified: often the slave was teacher of the children, and, as in the Gospel parables, the steward of the estate. He occupied nearly the position of a son, and was distinct from a servant hired for a time, who had no permanent share in the house and its welfare (Luke xv. 17-19). The idea of bond-service and bond-servant, of slavery and slaves, as applied to the religious bond, carries with it from the N.T. a good deal of the atmosphere of closely knit home life.

17. **Honour all men.** This, in a writer of Jewish birth, is wonderful. The Jew was the most exclusive man under the sun; his nation was consumed with hatred of its neighbours. "Even the Messianic hope became a curse when Israel's mission to be the light of the world was forgotten in fierce longings to see confusion, wrath, and vengeance poured out upon the heathen" (Gwatkin, i. 18). The Gospel alone was Catholic. **Love the brotherhood.** If the Christian attitude towards all men and races was that of an honourable respect, towards the Christian brotherhood it was to be one of warm-hearted affection. "The Christians were not brethren merely because they all worship Christ. It was not a formal unity of worship, but a mystic unity of life, in Christ, where there was no room left for selfishness. If they loved the brotherhood they could not choose but honour all men" (Gwatkin, i. 227). **Fear God.**

The hallowing the name as in the Lord's Prayer and i. 17. **Honour the king**—the Emperor. This also is the more remarkable when it is remembered the Emperors claimed Divine honours.

1 Pet. ii. 18-25.

### THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE HEAD OF A HOUSEHOLD TO ITS MEMBERS.

18 Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward.  
 19 For this is thankworthy, if a man for conscience toward  
 20 God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when ye be buffeted for your faults, ye shall take it patiently? but if, when ye do well, and suffer for it, ye  
 21 take it patiently, this is acceptable with God. For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps:  
 22 who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth:  
 23 who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him  
 24 that judgeth righteously: who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were  
 25 healed. For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.

18. **Servants.** The word here is not "slave," the term usually used for those who serve in the household, but "oiketes," and might be used for wife, child, or any member of the household. There was a close bond existing in the home, especially in the homes which inherited Jewish traditions of family life. At the same time, the

counsel to domestics which follows shows that the writer was also thinking of Christian servants who might be living in heathen homes. **be subject . . . with all fear.** The work of the home could not be carried on without reverence to the head of the household, *e.g.* a steward must be honourable when his master takes a long journey and he is left to manage the estate; he must not beat his fellow-servants (Luke xii. 45). **not only to the . . . gentle but to the froward.** For "gentle" read "reasonable": it is the same quality St. James sees in "the wisdom from above" (iii. 17): for "froward" read "harsh." The counsel is a hard one, for nowhere do unreasonableness and harshness seem so bitter as in the daily intercourse of the home.

19. **For.** The writer sees that he must bring some very strong motive to bear in creating the right habit in this case. **thankworthy.** Better "this is a grace." He is indicating an act which is so supremely good that it carries in it the Divine quality of grace. In iii. 7 he speaks of life itself having this same fine and subtle quality. **conscience toward God.** Better "consciousness of God." The realisation in a man's inner being of God's presence and relation to himself. The strongest motive to a controlled temper that we can put over against our rising wrath is the thought of God's presence and His reward for self-conquest. **suffering wrongfully.** Better "unjustly." The Christian teacher sees that a master may treat his household with injustice. Aristotle, on the contrary, taught that there is no such thing as justice or injustice between a man and his chattels and his slaves (*Eth. Nic.* v. 8-10).

20. **For.** Another motive for patient self-control.

**what glory is it?**—*i.e.* in the sight of God. **if ye be . . . faults.** R.V., “if ye sin and are buffeted.” **acceptable.** As in ver. 19, read “this is a grace in the sight of God.”

**21. ye were called.** The writer returns to his earlier thought—the Divine plan in which the Christian movement was being developed. Patience is the quality needed in working out all the parts of God’s plan; of this patience in suffering Christ is an example. **an example.** A rare word. (1) In 2 Macc. ii. 28 it means the outlines of a sketch which the artist fills in with details. This would give excellent force here, for the life of Christ is an outline, the details are left to the mind and conscience of each disciple; (2) the word is also used for the perfect copy placed at the head of a child’s writing-book: hence example or model. In either case Christ’s example or outlined life is regarded from one point of view only, namely, as an example of suffering endured patiently and with a deliberate purpose. **that ye.** The passage which follows expands these two thoughts, and in so doing gives the Church one of its most precious statements of the meaning of the Cross.

**22. who did no sin.** Isa. liii. 9 supplies this summary, although for the word “injustice” in the Hebrew prophet the Christian writer uses the more intensive word “sin.” Earlier, in i. 19, the sinless character of Christ had been alluded to—“a Lamb without blemish, without spot.” **guile.** An awful transparent sincerity is of the essence of the holiness of Jesus Christ as He appears in the Gospels.

**23. reviled not . . . threatened not.** These

are marks of what "patient endurance" means; there is evident reference here to the Gospel accounts of the demeanour of the Lord before Judas, soldiers, the high priest, Pilate, Herod, and the impenitent companion of His Cross. **but committed himself.** The agony in the Garden was the occasion of this commitment of the soul, "Not as I will, but as Thou wilt."

24. **who his own self.** Heightened colour is now given to the Cross. It was not only an example of perfect determination of spirit, but had an object beyond. **bare our sins.** The writer places himself with his readers. The up-bearing of sin by a sacrificial body is the blood-sacrifice of Atonement. **that we.** The thought of the sin of the world determined the Saviour's action. **being dead unto sins.** Better "becoming separate in regard to our sins." It is this separation, effected by Christ, that gives the soul power and time to regain its proper self-determination towards right. **live unto righteousness.** The normal life asserts itself, which finds its pleasure in the will of God. **by whose stripes.** Read "scars"—the marks left by scourging (Mk. xv. 15). Cf. for the idea, Isa. liii. 5.

25. **returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls.** For "Bishop" read "Overseer." Who is meant? Not Christ but God the Father, for they had never been Christ's followers before and could not be said to return to Him (see vers. 1, 2). Moreover, throughout this Epistle God is regarded as the end of the Christian's life (i. 21), "That your faith and hope might be in God"; and iv. 6, "Live according to God in the spirit."

(cf. iv. 16, 19, v. 10). On the other hand, Christ is called "Chief Shepherd" in v. 4.

1 Pet. iii. 1-6.

DEALS WITH THE BEHAVIOUR OF WIVES  
TO HUSBANDS.

1 Likewise, ye wives, be in subjection to your own husbands ;  
that, if any obey not the word, they also may without the  
2 word be won by the conversation of the wives ; while they  
3 behold your chaste conversation coupled with fear. Whose  
adorning let it not be that outward adorning of plaiting the  
hair, and of wearing of gold, or of putting on of apparel ;  
4 but let it be the hidden man of the heart, in that which is  
not corruptible, even the ornament of a meek and quiet  
5 spirit, which is in the sight of God of great price. For  
after this manner in the old time the holy women also, who  
trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection  
6 unto their own husbands : even as Sara obeyed Abraham,  
calling him lord : whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do  
well, and are not afraid with any amazement.

1. **ye wives.** From the household attendants the writer passes to the wife, and teaches that here too obedience is a virtue. **be in subjection** (see on ii. 13 ; cf. Eph. v. 22 ; Tit. ii. 4). **your own.** A closer tie than that between domestics and masters exists between wives and husbands. Husbands are their "very own." **that.** The motive for obedience. **if any obey not the word.** Just as Christian slaves might find themselves bound to a heathen master, so Christian women might find themselves allied to a Jewish or heathen husband. The Word, like

the Way, was becoming a technical term for Christianity.

2. **conversation.** R.V., "behaviour." **chaste . . . fear.** These words in the Greek form one phrase which might be translated "the pious chastity of your behaviour." The idea is that just as the consciousness of God brings to the Christian servant the power of patient endurance, so the fear of God brings self-control into the behaviour of the Christian wife. "The fear" inculcated is therefore not the fear of the husband as is commonly supposed. The power of example in cases where, as here, the lips are sealed between a wife and husband who belong to different religions, is regarded as extremely great. Notice also that the honour of effecting conversion is given to the wife,—an instance of the quiet way in which the Church was lifting the status of women everywhere. "Within their own limits the apostolic churches solved almost by the way the social problem which baffled Rome and baffles Europe still. They had lifted woman to her rightful place, restored the dignity of labour, abolished beggary, and drawn the sting of slavery" (Gwatkin, i. 73).

3. **Whose adorning.** Seizing a natural point of contact with a woman's mind—her love of beauty—the writer without condemning it suggests its exercise in a new direction—beauty of mind and character. **plaiting . . . apparel.** Both Greek, Roman, and Jewish women wore ornaments of gold around their hair, fingers, arms and ankles.

4. **the hidden man of the heart.** St. Paul uses the phrase "the old and the new man" for

the two selves or personalities which have to be dealt with in the self-discipline of a Christian, but it is a little awkward here in connection with a woman's nature. The meaning, however, is plain enough from what follows. There is an inner personality in every woman which needs adornment. **ornament . . . of spirit.** The love of beauty can be exercised in the cultivation of spiritual grace. The worry and care of outward adornment destroys the peace of many a modern Christian woman and mars not a few Christian marriages. **meek . . . quiet.** The ideal given is one of the passive kind. Nature demands of women much that can only be borne by a spirit at peace with itself and with God. There is no need to suppose that the writer of a short Epistle like this was laying down the complete ideal of womanhood.

5. **For.** The argument goes back to Jewish social life; the writer again finds a continuity between the Old and the New. If he had been writing to Gentiles the case of Abraham and Sarah would have had little force, but it appealed to Jews.

6. **lord.** A title which reduced her to the position of a dependant, as was in keeping with the social ideas of ancient society. **whose daughters . . . amazement.** R.V., "whose children ye now are, if ye do well and are not put in fear by any terror." The writer, with his reverence for the older religion and the Hebrew race, thinks that no higher place could be given to women than to be reckoned as the children of Abraham's wife. The rest of the verse is taken from Prov. iii. 25. It is to be understood as an expansion



of the idea of the meek and quiet spirit given above. The opposite of this is a frightened, nervous, over-anxious temper, which destroys a woman's power to be a wife, to have children, and to order a house.

## 1 Pet. iii. 7.

**THE BEHAVIOUR OF HUSBANDS TO WIVES**  
 — AN APPEAL (a) TO KNOWLEDGE,  
 (b) CHIVALRY, (c) THE IDEAL LIFE.

7 Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered.

7. **Ye husbands.** In criticising the ethical teaching just given regarding the right conduct of women in the home, readers should carefully weigh each point in this exhortation to men. The relationship is regarded as a moral relationship to be governed by a moral ideal. **dwell with your wives.** There is no trace here of the idea that abstention from marriage is the highest duty. This false asceticism is probably "even more the offspring of impurity than a reaction from it" (Gwatkin, i. 242). **according to knowledge.** A man must understand the conditions of true marriage—(1) the moral ("honour"); (2) the physical; (3) the spiritual (the grace of life). This understanding would in the writer's day lie specially with the Jews, whose family life was the purest and best in the world. To-day this knowledge has gathered such volume

that the responsibility laid upon the husband is intensified beyond measure. **giving honour unto the woman.** This is the moral condition of marriage. The first duty of the husband is that he must act with chivalry. **to the weaker vessel.** This call to chivalry rests upon facts set deep down in Nature. **as being heirs together of the grace of life.** This is the summons to a spiritual ideal of marriage: it is perhaps the most uplifting ethical thought in the Epistle. All unworthy distinction between man and woman on grounds of sex or social custom are done away. They are regarded as co-heirs of life in all life's Divine charm and grace. **that your prayers.** The sense of a co-partnership in the high gift of wedded life expresses itself naturally in common religious worship and a mutual fellowship with God.

1 Pet. iii. 8-13.

### THE GENERAL CONDUCT OF CHRISTIANS TO ONE ANOTHER.

8 Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion one of  
9 another, love as brethren, be pitiful, be courteous: not  
rendering evil for evil, or railing for railing: but contrari-  
wise blessing; knowing that ye are thereunto called, that  
10 ye should inherit a blessing. For *He that will love life,*  
*and see good days, let him refrain his tongue from evil,*  
11 *and his lips that they speak no guile: let him eschew evil,*  
12 *and do good: let him seek peace, and ensue it. For the*  
*eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are*  
*open unto their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against*  
13 *them that do evil.* And who is he that will harm you, if  
ye be followers of that which is good?

8. **Finally.** Better "to sum up." The letter passes from special to general admonition. **all.** Masters, husbands, wives, household servants. The Christian spirit is to govern every one. Throughout this section we have been studying ideas of social relationship which led to what is called by the latest historian of the period—"the greatest revolution which the world has seen, namely, the change from self to unself as the spirit of human action." **of the same mind.** Better "of like mind." **having compassion one of another.** Literally, "sympathetic." This was directly opposed to the fashion and law of that age: women were regarded as inferiors, not as joint-heirs of the grace of life: a father was in no way bound to rear his child, but might expose it to death if he pleased: the slave had no right against his master. **love as brethren.** R.V., "loving as brethren"; they are to bring from the family into the Church one of the finest feelings of humanity—comradeship, loyalty, mutual sacrifice. **be pitiful.** R.V., "tender-hearted." **courteous.** We must sacrifice this word, as it is in only two manuscripts, and read with R.V., "humble-minded." The sin of the Jewish spirit, as the writer knew, was its racial and religious pride; it is the same spirit that to this day assaults all earnest churches, and if it be not resisted, turns the Christian religion into a source of separation between man and man (cf. Jas. ii. 1).

9. **rendering . . . blessing.** This and the opening salutations of the Epistles of St. Paul, and of the other N.T. writers, are excellent illustrations of the primitive instinct of the Church to regard itself as sent primarily as

a great blessing to the world. If the world will not receive it, that is not the Church's fault; its responsibility begins in its message of peace and good-will, and no provocation from without or weakness within ought to break into this its essential spirit. **for hereunto were ye called.** The writer is here back again upon his favourite standpoint—election. Christians are recipients of the long-intentioned grace of God. *Noblesse oblige.*

10. **For.** The thought of this vocation or election is enforced by a quotation from Ps. xxxiv. 12, showing that they had indeed inherited from the heart of the older religion this temper of "seeking peace and pursuing it." **he that will love life.** Better "he that willeth to love life." "Life" is life upon earth in the same sense as grace of life in ver. 7.

11. **eschew.** R.V., "turn away from." **ensue.** R.V. "pursue."

12. **the eyes of the Lord are upon.** As the eyes of a king are turned upon his court with favour. By an unfortunate misinterpretation of Hagar's saying, "Thou God seest me" (Gen. xvi. 13), the idea is common that it is terrible to be seen of God. Really in that classical passage and in this, the care and graciousness of the Father is revealed. **them that do evil.** The evil specially meant is that of bad temper, quarrelsomeness, leading to cruelty. The ideal good man of the Wisdom literature and the Psalms was a man of gentle speech, peaceful demeanour, active work.

13. **who . . . good.** Cited from Ps. xxxiv. 12. The appeal is made to the general good feeling of Jew and Gentile. The great injustice of the

persecution of Nero, felt by the best Romans as well as by the Christian Church, lay in its outrageous attack upon Christians as "enemies of the human race." But at present this calamity had not fallen.

## I Pet. iii. 14-17.

## WISE COUNSEL IN CASE OF PERSECUTION.

14 But and if ye suffer for righteousness' sake, happy are ye :  
 15 and be not afraid of their terror, neither be troubled ; but sanctify the Lord God in your hearts : and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason  
 16 of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear : having a good conscience ; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse  
 17 your good conversation in Christ. For it is better, if the will of God be so, that ye suffer for well doing, than for evil doing.

14. **But and if.** There is a note of uneasiness here. The Jews remained hostile in every city, and possibly the writer had heard of ominous rumours of persecution from the Gentile governing classes. **happy are ye** (cf. Matt. v. 10). **terror.** The fear caused by the anti-Christian element in the population.

15. **but sanctify.** R.V., "sanctify in your hearts Christ as Lord." This is a most important change from the A.V. The writer has in mind Isa. viii. 12, 13, but alters the words of the passage by inserting the name of Christ. It is an important instance of the inspired freedom with which the Christian teachers of that time used the O.T. To "sanctify" is to regard anything at its true value,

as in the second petition of the Lord's Prayer; it involves here a clear perception of what the revelation of Jesus Christ meant, and careful meditation upon its full bearing. Religion is not really known until it is felt; it stands in this respect like all the great realities with which the human soul has to deal. **ready . . . to give an answer.** Out of the heart the mouth speaketh. Those who love "Him whom they have not seen" will find it easy to answer those who attack them. **a reason of the hope.** R.V., "a reason concerning the hope." The writer himself has been giving an excellent example in this very Epistle of the reasoning by which he substantiates Christianity. For the advice, see Hort's *Hulsean Lectures*, p. 176: "There can be no surer sign of decrepitude and decay in faith than a prevalent nervousness about naming and commending reason. . . . The faith of ordinary people would be far more clear and sure if they had been instructed freely in the responsibilities of reason. Our present cowardice moreover is of modern growth."

16. **with meekness and fear.** They were not to imitate the proud dogmatism of the Pharisaic apologists nor the nimble-witted reasoning of the Greeks. Christianity being a disclosure of profound facts and ideas, requires the same kind of meekness which a modern scientific man feels in the presence of the great facts of Nature. The precious liquor of truth must not be spilt in the harsh and windy ways of argument. "Fear" lest the very God whom we are defending may be displeased with our presentation of His character. **having a good conscience.** This is the strongest defence of all; he has already explained

to husbands, wives, domestic servants, and Christians generally the kind of conduct which proceeds from a good conscience. He now calls that orderly life which he had outlined as a good manner of life in Christ. **in Christ.** A mystical idea, common in St. Paul (thirteen times in the Epistle to the Romans); expressed in different language in St. John (xv. 1-5, xvi. 33, xvii. 21); used by the writer only here and in v. 10 and 14. Here "Life in Christ" is that orderly life of social relationship which has for its condition and groundwork Christ inwardly received and hallowed (ver. 14).

17. **it is better, if.** Since suffering is likely to be God's will for them, it is better that they should suffer as men of good report.

#### I Pet. iii. 18-22.

### A DIGRESSION ON CHRIST'S PREACHING TO THE SPIRITS IN PRISON AND ON BAPTISM.

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death  
 19 in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit: by which also  
 20 he went and preached unto the spirits in prison; which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by  
 21 water. The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the  
 22 resurrection of Jesus Christ: who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him.

18. **For Christ suffered.** The writer starts with this reminder that they were following a suffering Christ, but wanders from it into other matters. In iv. 1 he resumes the thread of his argument. **for sins once.** This is another (ii. 24) simple account of the Atonement. The word "once" recalls Heb. ix. 28, where it is important to the theory that Christ's priestly sacrifice was final and complete, whereas Leviticalism had to go on making atonement. For sin—the sacrificial term used in the Law, quite intelligible to people brought up in Judaism. **just for the unjust.** This was what would make His sacrifice such a power to the conscience of men threatened with persecution not as unjust but as just men. **that he might bring us to God.** The purpose of the sacrifice of Christ is here stated. The "bringing to God" is the goal of His work upon the soul, involving in the process forgiveness of sin. **quicken<sup>d</sup> in the spirit.** This may allude to the Resurrection, which was clearly a manifestation of the power of the world to come. With that power upon Him Christ could communicate with "the spirits in prison."

19. **by which.** R.V., "in which," *i.e.* in which Spirit. It was a current Jewish belief that the Messiah would visit the under-world. **preach.** Literally, "evangelise."<sup>1</sup> **spirits in prison.** The Jewish Schools were full of speculation as to the life of the antediluvian beings, (see 2 Pet. ii. 4 and 5; the Book of Enoch).

<sup>1</sup> There is so much dispute regarding the meaning of this passage, that nothing certain can be affirmed. The writer evidently intends to express the belief that Christ visited and evangelised the world of the dead; all beyond this is doubtful.



21. **The like figure whereunto** (Westcott and Hort think that there is a textual error here, see *Gk. Test. Ap.* 576). Neither the A.V. nor the R.V. are clear. The best method is to read—to which (escape by water) baptism is an antitype. **and doth now save us.** The writer wants to point out the analogy between Christian baptism unto repentance and the escape of the ark, but also he sees that the analogy of Noah's escape from the evil world does not fully explain the force of baptism. The latter is something more than an escape from evil ("putting away the filth of the flesh"). **answer of a good conscience towards God.** This difficult passage is made much clearer by observing that the word here translated—answer—is a word used of the inquiry made before God by people seeking an oracle from him. In this light the "inquiry of a good conscience" means the desire of the baptized Christian who has put away his former sins to inquire further and learn more of God and His grace. **through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.** As water was a medium of Noah's salvation, so the manifestation of Divine life in the Resurrection is the hope that inspires the Christian's effort to begin in baptism the eternal life.

22. **who is on the right hand.** This exalted place implies—(1) authority to command as the power nearest the throne; (2) close access to the throne to work on behalf of His people on earth as "advocate," or as priest (*Heb.* viii. 1). **angels and authorities and powers.** The other world was, in the Jewish mind, full of beings intermediary between God and man; in the Book of Enoch (70-64 B.C.), we read of Cherubin, Seraphin,

Ophanim, and all the angels of power, and all the angels of principalities. The Book of Jubilees says that the highest angels are those that stand before the Face, next come the angels of glory, the angels of winds, of clouds, and darkness, of snow, hail, and frost.

1 Pet. iv. 1-11.

**RESUMED EXHORTATION REGARDING THE GOOD MANNER OF LIFE IN CHRIST.**

1 Forasmuch then as Christ hath suffered for us in the flesh,  
 2 arm yourselves likewise with the same mind : for he that  
 3 hath suffered in the flesh hath ceased from sin ; that he  
 4 no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh to the  
 5 lusts of men, but to the will of God. For the time past of  
 6 our life may suffice us to have wrought the will of the  
 7 Gentiles, when we walked in lasciviousness, lusts, excess  
 8 of wine, revellings, banquetings, and abominable idolatries :  
 9 wherein they think it strange that ye run not with them  
 10 to the same excess of riot, speaking evil of you : who  
 11 shall give account to him that is ready to judge the quick  
 and the dead. For for this cause was the gospel preached  
 also to them that are dead, that they might be judged  
 according to men in the flesh, but live according to God in  
 the spirit. But the end of all things is at hand : be ye  
 therefore sober, and watch unto prayer. And above all  
 things have fervent charity among yourselves : for charity  
 shall cover the multitude of sins. Use hospitality one to  
 another without grudging. As every man hath received  
 the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good  
 stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak,  
 let him speak as the oracles of God ; if any man minister,  
 let him do it as of the ability which God giveth : that God

in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

1. **Forasmuch then** (see iii. 18). **suffered in the flesh.** The bodily suffering of Christ is remembered because the writer knows that it is bodily suffering that is threatening his friends. **arm yourselves** (cf. i. 13). **the same mind.** The mind that enabled Christ to endure bodily suffering. **hath ceased from sin.** Bodily suffering has a purifying effect on the character; it diminishes the power of temptation in many directions.

2. **that he no longer.** Read "so that he lives the rest of his time in the flesh, no longer by the lust of men, but by the will of God." "Persecution" in particular, by cutting a man off from his ordinary intercourse with the world and its standards, throws him more completely into fellowship with God; in this sense he ceases from sin.

3. **For the time past of our life.** Omit, with R.V., "with our life." **the will of the Gentiles.** The moral standard of the people—a very low one, judging by what follows. **lasciviousness.** The sins mentioned are those portrayed on the walls of the houses of Pompeii. We have probably small conception of the temptations to sensual life which these early Christians met with. **revelling.** — merry - makings. **abominable idolatries.** Better "unlawful." "The really popular religions of Greece and Rome were forms of devil-worship, intimately blended with magic" (Bigg). If the author is writing only to Jewish Christians, how could he speak of their having ever shared in such heathen practices? Probably he knew of renegade

Jews. Philo's nephew became an idolator. Deissmann has found a magic formula composed by a Jew of that age, and Prof. Gwatkin says: "A Jew was even better than a Greek at fortune-telling and imposture generally."

4. **they think it strange.** Christians could not possibly join in the social life which centred round the temples of Aphrodite, Diana, or Isis. The difficulty came up in an acute form at Corinth, and St. Paul had to point out the right course to take at their semi-religious banquets (1 Cor. x. 14-22). **speaking evil of you.** Literally, "blaspheming"; it would be blasphemy to suppose that any one who was endeavouring to live "in Christ" could join in excess of any kind.

5. **who.** There is a Day of Judgment for all people—Jew and Gentile. The appeal to Him that judgeth righteously is in the background of all N.T. argument with the many sects and nationalities who crowded the cities of the Empire; the idea that there could be a different standard for different nations or religions had not become prevalent, and would not have been accepted by the primitive Church. The only difference which they admitted was that the Christian law went deeper and was more inexorable than any other: that morality changes with the points of the compass is a doctrine which needs carefully watching.

6. **For for this cause.** Even the dead have been brought within the scope of the universal judgment since they have been evangelised by Christ (iii. 19). Notice how very much there is in this Epistle that afterwards entered into the structure of the Apostles' Creed, e.g. "judge the quick and the dead." **that they might live.** The life of fellow-

ship with God was even offered to the spirits in prison when Christ appeared to them. Thus the writer extends the hope that is in Christ to the furthest limits, embracing all spiritual beings.

7. **But the end.** The mention of "judgment" suggests to him the belief that it would soon come. **be ye therefore.** The impending crisis known only within Christian circles required of them a great sobriety of life. **A sound mind.** A mind that perceives the necessity of careful obedience to the will of God. **sober and watch.** Omit "watch" with R.V. (cf. i. 13 and v. 8). "The only real way to 'prepare to meet thy God' is to live with thy God, so that to meet Him shall be nothing strange" (Phillips Brooks).

8. **above all things.** Even prayer is not their chief duty. **have fervent charity.** The emphasis is on the word "fervent" (see on i. 22). Examples of this intense goodwill amongst Christians follow: the whole passage to the Doxology at the end of ver. 11 glows with warm feeling and vigorous thoughts regarding the essentials of Church life. **charity covereth** (cf. Prov. x. 12 and Jas. v. 20).

9. **Use hospitality.** Literally, "be hospitable." The circumstances of these small Christian communities surrounded by people of alien faith rendered a continual interchange of friendly visiting necessary. The nascent Church was knit together by visits from Christians from other lands: there was no post for the public use: letters had to be brought by personal messengers: any day one might have to use hospitality to a young missionary such as Timothy or Titus (1 Tim. iii. 2; Tit. i. 8; Heb. xiii. 2).

10. **the gift.** R.V., "a gift"—the gift of hospitality or of religious speech. **stewards.** Every man in the Church is regarded as having a share in the manifold grace of God. This comfortable word, "grace," was applied in iii. 7 to describe the charm and excellence of married life; here it is used for the bounty of God in all its many-sidedness (see also v. 12).

11. **let him speak as the oracles,**—*i.e.* as oracles speak;" by this is meant the Hebrew Bible (Rom. iii. 2; Heb. v. 12). In Acts vii. 38 the Ten Commandments are called "the living oracles." Christians are to speak in regard to religion and life just as the prophetic Scriptures do—with gravity and authority. **ministering.** The initial virtue of all who follow the Son of Man, who came to minister (Matt. xx. 28), but it must proceed from souls which have grown strong from personal contact with the rich life of God. **that in . . . all things.** The service which Christians render to one another is part of a comprehensive movement in which everything shall be brought to perfection through Jesus Christ. **whose is the glory.** The writer here lets his own heart rise in adoration to the Saviour.

1 Pet. iv. 12-19.

### AN APPEAL TO STAND FIRM UNDER PERSECUTION.

12 Beloved, think it not strange concerning the fiery trial which is to try you, as though some strange thing happened  
13 unto you: But rejoice, inasmuch as ye are partakers of Christ's sufferings; that, when his glory shall be revealed,

14 ye may be glad also with exceeding joy. If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you: on their part  
 15 he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified. But let none of you suffer as a murderer, or as a thief, or as an  
 16 evildoer, or as a busybody in other men's matters. Yet if any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed;   
 17 but let him glorify God on this behalf. For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God: and if it first begin at us, what shall the end be of them that  
 18 obey not the gospel of God? And if the righteous scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?  
 19 Wherefore let them that suffer according to the will of God commit the keeping of their souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator.

12. **Beloved.** As in ver. 2, the personal salutation, rarely used by this writer, precludes a specially earnest appeal. **the fiery trial which is to try you.** "The fiery trial which cometh upon you to prove you" (R.V.). The sufferings hinted at earlier in the letter (iii. 14) have now assumed a more definite and terrible shape. They are a "fiery trial coming." Tacitus (*Ann.* xv. 44), writing in the summer or during the autumn of the year 66 A.D.—the year that Nero attacked the Christians of Rome—says that there had been a feeling of hatred to Christians growing up for some time amongst the populace. This letter was written in Rome; the writer is describing the same dangerous state of public feeling as Tacitus. **think it not strange.** They have already been taught how to regard such persecution: it is a trial of their character, and a means of its further growth into perfection (i. 7).

13. **ye are partakers.** As has been made so clear in this Epistle. **when . . . revealed.** R.V.,

“at the revelation.” The power of Christ in God is by no means limited to the conditions of this world.

14. **reproached for the name of Christ.** Almost the exact words of Matt. v. 11, 12. From the time when Saul wrought havoc of the Church of God, and the martyrdom of Stephen, this reproach had been upon the Church. **the spirit of glory.** Better “the spirit of glory, yes, the spirit of God” (Bigg). The idea is taken from Isa. xi. 2 and Christianised. When God acts with the immediacy and nearness of spirit, the soul grows strong to do His will. The “glory” of Christ who also was full of the Spirit rests in fact upon them (iii. 16).

15. **as a murderer.** In reading the exhortation to orderliness of life, in respect of the State, the Home and the church in chaps. ii., iii., one wonders what kind of danger the writer was really apprehending. Here he makes it clear that he feared even in these Christians an outbreak of crime (1 Cor. vi. 8-10; Eph. iv. 28). The Christian life had to be built up from the very bottom, and that in times of persecution. **a busybody in other men's matters.** This seems to be hardly a fault which could be classed with murder and theft. The Greek is a compound word not found elsewhere in literature: it means one who busies himself with (*a*) other men's things so as to correct them; (*b*) things foreign to a man's character as a citizen: tampering with family arrangements; causing sedition (Ramsay); (*c*) outlandish, heathenish things: many trades were bad in themselves, and all trades had something to do with the heathen temples. If this last is what the writer means, the



situation is repeated in India, and in parts of Africa, where a Christian must be clean from any profession or trade connected with the temple, or the usual life and habits of heathenism.

16. **Christian.** The name was first given to the brethren at Antioch about 43 A.D.; used by Agrippa later (Acts xxvi. 28); by 64 A.D. current in Rome; possibly it is to be found on the walls of Pompeii before A.D. 74; completely accepted by the Church by the time of Ignatius (c. 80-115). It was practically at first a nickname of a complimentary character. Chrestus ("good") was familiar to Gentile ears, and this was identified with Christus—Christ. **on this behalf.** R.V., "in this name." They were to raise the name of Christian to a high pitch of honour by their patience.

17. **For the time is come.** The writer regards the imminence of the fiery trial as an indication that the mysterious end and judgment had begun. The Christian community (the house of God) is being tried first.

18. **scarcely.** Because of the tribulation through which he passes, and which has been emphatically dealt with in this Epistle.

19. **them that suffer according to the will of God.** Those who accept suffering as a training-school of eternal life. **commit their souls.** The Greek word is used of depositing money or goods with a friend, when one is going a long journey; so it may be translated here—"deposit their souls in the safe keeping of a faithful Creator." **faithful.** "Worthy of the trust imposed." **Creator.** This is the background of the wide sweep of the writer's mind. From the first, faithful working

towards evolving the perfect life of man, has been God's way (1 Pet. i. 20). **in well doing.** The ethical and the religious spirit are here, as throughout the N.T., kept as yoke-fellows: neither may be separated from the other, least of all, when the day of God is imminent.

**1 Pet. v. 1-4.**

**EXHORTATION TO THE ELDERS OF THE CHURCHES.**

1 The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also  
 2 a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy  
 3 lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over  
 4 God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away.

1. **The elders.** These were the officials upon whom the "shepherding" of the Christian community devolved. The Jews were familiar through their synagogues with these ecclesiastical officers; in fact it appears from the Acts that the custom of appointing them in the Christian societies grew up very early (Acts xi. 30, xiv. 23, xv. 23, xx. 17-28). The last reference throws most light upon the present passage. The Apostle Paul says to the elders of the Ephesian Church, "Take heed to all the flock over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you the overseers to feed the Church of God." From the rest of the citations from the Acts, Dr. Bigg concludes that here "the presbyter

appears as treasurer, member of the Church parliament, ambassador, shepherd; as teacher, as exercising some kind of authority in faith and discipline; as deriving his power from the Holy Ghost; as ordained by the Apostles; and we gather also that there were, as a rule, many presbyters in each Church." **I exhort.** Together with husbands and wives and other members of the Church, "the elders" are to regulate their behaviour according to the Christian standard; they are not placed above the law. **am a fellow-elder.** The writer calls himself an Apostle in i. 1; it appears here that he has also become attached to one definite church, and is one of the official elders in it. He understands from personal experience the temptations of the office. **a witness.** He is also entitled to speak to them though they were elders because he had been a witness of the sufferings of Christ, either as one who had endured suffering himself, and so could bear witness to the redeeming power of suffering with Christ, or as one who had been an actual eye-witness of the Cross. The former interpretation suits the context best. **also a partaker.** He is entitled to further hearing by the fact that he shares in their hope of the perfect life that is to be revealed.

2. **Feed the flock.** Better "shepherd the flock of God." This letter gives one an idea how this duty of the elder might be carried out by inspired teaching and exhortation. **taking the oversight.** Omit this with margin of R.V. and with WH. The words which follow will then explain the spirit in which the elders are to shepherd the flock. **willingly.** R.V., "willingly, according unto God," *i.e.* just as God shepherds His

flock (see ii. 25). **not for filthy lucre.** This implies that the elder was in receipt of a stipend.

4. **the chief Shepherd.** Deissmann points out that this title has no "official ring," but, since it is found on a wooden tablet of the Roman period, hung round the neck of a mummy, identifying the deceased as a chief Shepherd, it was a genuine popular title (*New Light*, 39).

### 1 Pet. v. 5-9.

#### EXHORTATION TO HUMILITY AND SOBERNESS OF LIFE.

5 Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder.  
 Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed  
 with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth  
 6 grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under  
 the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due  
 7 time: casting all your care upon him; for he careth for  
 8 you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the  
 devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he  
 9 may devour: whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing  
 that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren  
 that are in the world.

5. **younger.** The elders were naturally men of experience and age, chosen for official position on that ground. Here the younger men are differentiated from them simply on account of age. **be subject**,—"show obedience to" (see on ii. 13). **Likewise**, as in iii. 3, where wives are brought under the same rule of orderliness as other members of the household. In 1 Tim. v. 1-17, a younger man, even though he has a special apostolic commission, must not rebuke an elder,

but exhort him as a father. **Yea, all of you.** He passes rapidly and with tact—for young men will not endure much exhortation—to the whole Christian community. **clothe yourselves.** A rare Greek word, used of garments fastened over others for special purpose, such as sleeves fastened on a sleeveless tunic, or an apron tied by a blacksmith round his waist (cf. iii. 4, “the incorruptible apparel of a quiet spirit”). **for God** (Prov. iii. 34; Isa. ii. 11). There is so much resemblance here to the language of St. James (iv. 10), that it suggests with other passages that the writer had St. James’ Epistle before him.

6. **mighty hand.** The Exodus from Egypt throughout O.T. literature is the classical instance of the “mighty hand.” Jews would remember this as they read this verse, and hope for their own exodus from present hardship and danger, under the same “mighty hand.”

7. **all your care.** The anxiety of the persecuted (Ps. lv. 22).

8. **your adversary the devil.** Literally, “your adversary Diabolus”—the Slanderer. The clue to the intense feeling regarding Satan, reflected in the Gospels and here, lies in the fact that Christianity was from the first misunderstood, misrepresented, and its Founder slandered. The Jew is the slanderer. See Harnack, *Acts of Apostles*, p. 24: “The Jew is in a sense the villain in this dramatic history—the real Jew in his manifold gradations of Pharisee, Sadducee, aristocrat, Jew of Palestine or of the Dispersion.” **a roaring lion.** He acted partly like the Satan of Job, accusing men before the throne, partly as a roaring lion, searching for prey. In every city

and every province, as is evident from the Acts, there was a movement from the centres of orthodox Judaism against Christianity. And now, as the writer was closing his letter, the Roman government threatened a more fiery trial, and the basis of the accusation was a slander. Christians were enemies of the human race.

9. **stedfast.** Literally, "solid," read "impenetrable." **in the faith.** Here faith means the convictions and doctrines which made the strength of their position, as in 1 Tim. i. 19, v. 8, vi. 10, 21. In other places, as in 1 Cor. 13, it is a quality of the soul, like love. **same sufferings . . . in the world.** Persecution. The best rendering of this difficult sentence is—"knowing how to pay the same tax of suffering as your brethren in the world."

1 Pet. v. 10, 11.

#### FINAL SALUTATION.

10 But the God of all grace, who hath called us unto his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that ye have suffered a while, make you perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle you.  
11 To him be glory and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.

10. **God of all grace.** The "many-sided grace of God" (iv. 10). **who called.** The idea of the prior working of God, which gave such strength to the opening of this letter, is repeated at the end. **his eternal glory** (1 Pet. i. 8). **in Christ.** This more mystical expression for the Christian life is Pauline (but see p. 267). **a while,**—"a little while." **perfect.** Read "restore." The word is used as a surgical term for setting a broken bone.

11. **To him . . . dominion.** Read, "His is

the power." He has the mighty hand. All through, it has been the aim of the writer to make his readers think grandly of the ways of God to man, past, present, and to come.

I Pet. v. 12-14.

THE POSTSCRIPT.

12 By Silvanus, a faithful brother unto you, as I suppose, I  
 have written briefly, exhorting, and testifying that this is  
 13 the true grace of God wherein ye stand. The church that  
 is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you ; and  
 14 so doth Marcus my son. Greet ye one another with a  
 kiss of charity. Peace be with you all that are in Christ  
 Jesus. Amen.

12. **By Silvanus, a faithful brother.** R.V., "our faithful brother." This was St. Paul's friend and faithful companion on his second missionary tour. He appears first as one of the leading brethren at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts xv.), where he would get to know the Apostle Peter well. He was one of the delegates appointed to carry the decree to Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia. He was a prophet with powers of persuasion, eloquence (Acts xv. 32): preached at Corinth (Acts xviii. 5 and 2 Cor. i. 19). Although eclipsed by the great missionary Apostles, and not made much of by St. Luke in his book, St. Paul joins his name with his own in the greetings of 1 and 2 Thess. He was a proved and trusted brother, a traveller. An epitaph has been found in Rome concerning a certain Silvanus, an official in the Imperial household. "Our Silvanus had a namesake at court ; it is in no wise surprising to find him at Rome"

(Bigg). He was known throughout the Church. **as I suppose.** R.V. "as I account him." There is no suggestion of any doubt as to his trustworthiness (1 Cor. iv. 1). **I have written.** The full phrase is "I write by Silvanus." Does he mean that he dispatches the letters by Silvanus, or that he has used Silvanus in the actual composition of the Epistle? In Acts xv. 23 the Apostles write "by Silas," and there is no suggestion in that case that Silvanus and Barnabas composed the decree. The first is the simplest interpretation. On the other hand, it is argued that if the Apostle Peter was the author of this Epistle, and was an unlearned man (Acts iv. 13), he would have required help in its composition, and that Silvanus, who was an educated Roman citizen, gave this help (see p. 58). **briefly.** In comparison with what he would like to have said to them, if circumstances had allowed. **that this,**—*i.e.* the testimony and exhortation of my Epistle. **the true grace of God.** We can imagine the writer adding the postscript after reading through the Epistle, and summing up the whole message that he had delivered in this happy phrase. He set out in the hope that their grace and peace would be increased (i. 2), and now with satisfaction he reviews what he has been moved to write, and finds it to be "true grace," **wherein ye stand.** Place colon after "God" with R.V., and read, "stand fast therein," *i.e.* in the strong, patient, dutiful Christian life now set before them.

13. **The church.** Read with R.V., "She." This is a most important alteration. The original does not contain the word "church." How are we to interpret the phrase "she that is in Babylon"?



If we accept the argument of the introduction and identify the writer with St. Peter, it will mean that the Apostle is here speaking of his wife (Mark i. 30). She did accompany him on his missionary journeys (1 Cor. ix. 5). Clement of Alexandria says (155-215 A.D.) that she was martyred after her husband; if so, she must have been, like Priscilla, a prominent member of the Church in her lifetime. If "the Church" is meant, it is difficult to see why Marcus should be singled out from the Church and mentioned by name. "My wife and Marcus my son" is an intelligible combination. **Babylon** (see p. 53),—*i.e.* Rome. "That Rome was commonly spoken of as Babylon by Jewish writers of an apocalyptic tinge is beyond question. No one doubts what is meant by Babylon in the Book of the Revelation" (Bigg, 76). **elect together with you.** His readers and his wife are bound together by the bond of a common vocation, and he therefore associates her with them and himself in this farewell salutation. **so doth Marcus my son.** For the use of the words to express the religious bond between a younger Christian and the older Apostle who had brought him to Christ, see 1 Tim. i. 2. They had met at Jerusalem at the home of Mark's mother Mary. At first Mark accompanied his cousin Barnabas on missionary tours (Acts xii. 25, xiii. 13, xv. 37); he then appears to have been in Rome, evidently reconciled to St. Paul (Col. iv. 10; Philem. 24; 2 Tim. iv. 11). After that there are traces in the early Christian writers of his becoming closely associated with St. Peter (Papias, 70-150? A.D.; Irenæus, 130-180 A.D.). It is held that after the latter's death he wrote down "the

substance of Peter's preaching"—the original of St. Mark's Gospel.

14. **a kiss of love.** "The kiss is one of the most ancient of ritual usages." Justin Martyr (145-162 A.D.) says that it was, in his day, part of the ceremonial of the Communion. In the Latin Church it was continued till the end of the thirteenth century. In the Russian, the clergy still kiss one another during the recital of the Nicene Creed. In the English service it survives in the Benediction or "Peace of God" at the close.

## THE SECOND EPISTLE GENERAL OF PETER.

*The Title.*—Read with the three oldest uncial manuscripts  
—The Second (Epistle) of Peter.

2 Pet. i. 1-11.

THE GREETING, 1-2; THE CHRISTIAN POSITION DEFINED IN VIEW OF FALSE TEACHING, 3-4; AN EXHORTATION TO PROGRESS, 5-11.

2 Pet. i. 1-2.

### THE GREETING.

- 1 Simon Peter, a servant and an apostle of Jesus Christ, to them that have obtained like precious faith with us through the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ :
- 2 grace and peace be multiplied unto you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord.

1. Compare this with the salutation of the First Epistle. Notice that this letter is addressed to a wider circle of readers. **Simon Peter.** The Hebrew form — Symeon — is read here in the R.V. (cf. Acts xv. 14). The Lord gave Symeon the name of Cephas, an Aramaic word which became in Greek — Petros. **to them.** There is no mention of the Dispersion, or any geographical or racial limit: it appears as if the Church had become more consolidated, and that the first dis-

tinctions were dying out. **that have obtained like precious faith.** Better "a faith of equal honour with us." The Greek word is used of civic equality. "Faith makes men burgesses in the city of God equally with the Apostles" (Bigg). **through.** R.V., "in." The righteous disposition of God is the condition of faith on the principle, "We love Him because He first loved us." This interpretation of the word **righteousness** follows the usual custom of the Petrine Epistles, where "righteous" and "righteousness" are used not in the manner of St. Paul, but of the O.T. **our God and Saviour.** The question whether two persons are spoken of here, or only one, is difficult to decide. The grammatical construction of the Greek words favour the latter; the next verse, where two persons are distinguished, is in favour of the former interpretation.

2. **through the knowledge.** The R.V. makes a most important change, by substituting "in" for "through." The writer is thinking of their growth in knowledge. Here, and in three other places (ver. 8, ii. 20, iii. 18), he speaks of Christianity as "knowledge." He greets his readers as co-partners in a common science. It is the knowledge of the "glory and virtue" of Christ.

### 2 Pet. i. 3-4.

#### THE CHRISTIAN POSITION DEFINED IN VIEW OF FALSE TEACHING.

- 3 According as his divine power hath given unto us all things that pertain unto life and godliness, through the knowledge  
4 of him that hath called us to glory and virtue : whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises : that

by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust.

3. **According as.** R.V., "seeing that." He is giving the reason for offering them such gifts as are grace and peace. **his divine power,**—*i.e.* the Divine power of God. This is the force with which they had become acquainted. **all things . . . godliness.** A full definition of Christianity. Divine power gives not only the things pertaining to piety, but to the whole of life. **through the knowledge . . . to glory.** R.V., "by his own glory and virtue." His—*i.e.* Christ's. It is the knowledge of the personality of Christ that gives power.

4. **Whereby,**—*i.e.* by His glory and virtue. **promises.** The character and life of Christ are an earnest that all God's promises will come true. **that by these.** R.V., "that through these," *i.e.* the promises. **ye may become partakers of the divine nature.** This is the highest gift that God can give to man—the only way in which imperfect human life can be made perfect. **having escaped.** This is a necessary condition: the Divine nature cannot grow unless an escape from the corruption of the lower world is made. **by lust.** This defines the corruption. The danger to the up-growing Divine life of man is the adverse force of the self-centred desires and passions which belong to purely human conditions.

### 2 Pet. i. 5-11.

#### AN EXHORTATION TO PROGRESS.

5 And beside this, giving all diligence, add to your faith  
6 virtue; and to virtue knowledge; and to knowledge  
temperance; and to temperance patience; and to patience

7 godliness; and to godliness brotherly kindness; and to  
 8 brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you,  
 and abound, they make you that ye shall neither be barren  
 nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.  
 9 But he that lacketh these things is blind, and cannot see  
 afar off, and hath forgotten that he was purged from his  
 10 old sins. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence  
 to make your calling and election sure: for if ye do these  
 11 things, ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be  
 ministered unto you abundantly into the everlasting king-  
 dom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

5. **And besides this.** Take the stronger rendering of the R.V., "yea, and for this very cause," *i.e.* because of their share in a Divine nature and the splendour of its promise. **supply.** The history of the Greek word is interesting. In a Greek theatre the leader of the chorus, who was called the "choragus," provided every thing that was necessary for its equipment—dress, masks, and rehearsals, etc. Here the word used for "supply" is formed from "choragus," and the passage may be rendered "add to your faith an equipment of virtue." The choice of the gifts which the writer wishes his readers to cultivate is mainly dictated by the character of the false teachers whom he is about to attack. They conspicuously lack the gifts. Their faith had not virtue, for it degenerated into immorality (ii. 10): their virtue was not equipped with knowledge (ii. 21).

6. Their knowledge was without temperate conviction, since they railed in matters of which they were ignorant (ii. 12), and uttered swelling empty words. **patience.** The real Christian knows that "a thousand years are but as one day with God," and so can be patient (iii. 8).

7. **godliness.** Read “piety”—the expression of faith in worship and prayer. **love of the brethren**—churchmanship. **supply love.** The writer knew that there might be a love of Christians—a churchmanship without genuine goodwill or unselfish devotion.

8. **For if.** Read “if you are equipped for the part in this way.” **and abound.** Read “increase.” The writer thinks of the Divine nature working as leaven leavening the whole lump. **barren.** R.V., “not idle.” The Christian character is not passive like the Oriental, but of a great activity. **in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.** As we should say, “in a man’s profession of the Christian religion.”

9. **cannot see far off.** Literally, is shortsighted. **and hath forgotten.** Read “because he hath forgotten.” He has a short memory as well as a short sight. **that he was purged.** His cleansing from his old sins when first he became a Christian is a circumstance which he never passes in review: it is too far off for his mental vision. In two ways the remembrance of a conversion is useful for progress—(1) it keeps alive the dread of backsliding; (2) it shows that the same power which cleansed from the old sins could now develop the Divine nature to the full.

10. **calling and election sure.** The emphatic word is the last. The writer has now described fully the Christian position: he is shortly going to denounce the danger of false Christian teachers: he wants his readers therefore to do their utmost to make their position sure, and promises a double reward. The very effort to do these things will prevent their stumbling: they will have neither

time nor energy to sin. Further, the perfect life of the eternal kingdom would be abundantly supplied them (see on ver. 5).

2 Pet. i. 12-21.

PERSONAL TESTIMONY TO THE TRUTH OF  
CHRISTIANITY—OF THE GOSPEL RE-  
VELATION AND OF PROPHECY.

12 Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in remembrance of these things, though ye know them, and  
13 be established in the present truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this tabernacle, to stir you up by putting  
14 you in remembrance ; knowing that shortly I must put off this my tabernacle, even as our Lord Jesus Christ hath  
15 shewed me. Moreover I will endeavour that ye may be able after my decease to have these things always in re-  
16 membrance. For we have not followed cunningly devised fables, when we made known unto you the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but were eyewitnesses of  
17 his majesty. For he received from God the Father honour and glory, when there came such a voice to him from the excellent glory, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am  
18 well pleased. And this voice which came from heaven we heard, when we were with him in the holy mount. We have also a more sure word of prophecy ; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in  
20 your hearts : knowing this first, that no prophecy of the  
21 scripture is of any private interpretation. For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man : but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

12. **though ye know them.** The readers are well-instructed Christians — can appreciate the deeper significance of their calling. Novices or



newly made converts would hardly have grasped the idea that they were becoming partakers of the Divine nature (ver. 4). **be established in the present truth.** R.V., "in the truth that is in you." He has not given a definition of the Christian salvation which was over their heads; they have already sounded its depths.

14. **as Christ.** This either refers to the incident in the Christophany to Peter in John xxi. 18, or the allusion is lost.

15. **always in remembrance.** The writer, unlike our Lord, is going to make provision that after his death they should be able to call "these things to remembrance." Dr. Bigg thinks that the Gospel of St. Mark is meant, but "these things," as in ver. 12, are the things that he has brought out in the first section regarding the nature of spiritual Christianity, and he more probably refers to Epistles or a treatise which he intends to compose.

16. **For we.** The writer is speaking as an Apostle, and reminds them of the original Gospel narrative. **eyewitnesses of his majesty.** They saw Him not in the way of ordinary life and common things, but as coming in a "majesty," as, for example, on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mark ix. 2-8).

17. **For he received.** R.V., "having received." The sentence, as in ii. 4, is never completed. Notice how the writer labours to express adequately the majesty of the Theophany. In it the Son received **honour and glory**: the voice came from **the excellent glory.** The language and the Christophany itself remind the reader of the visions of the Hebrew prophets, which always became focused in a definite voice. The mystery of the Divine life

in its contact with humanity is never lost sight of in these visions: at the same time the seer is not sent empty away. He hears a voice.

19. **we have also a more sure word.** This reading is preferable to that of the R.V. (see note, Bigg, 268). The Hebrew prophets would carry more weight than the apostolic testimony with teachers who were "denying the Lord that bought them." The Christian teacher can learn from this: it is often wiser to bring back modern minds to the faith by showing them how Nature leads up to Christ, rather than by direct doctrine regarding Him. **a light that shineth in a dark place.** R.V., "lamp" (from 2 Esd. xii. 42). This not very brilliant illumination, easily eclipsed when at the dawn the sun enters the room, expresses well the passing of the partial light of the prophets upon the dawning of the perfect life and truth of God, in Christ.

20. **no prophecy . . . private interpretation.** We are not told the precise prophecies which the writer had in mind: this saying applies to prophecy in general. Apparently the false teachers rejected the interpretation of Hebrew prophecy current in the Christian Church, the main points of which were that the prophets foretold a suffering Christ, and that He would appear again in glory. To reject this interpretation on grounds of private opinion was not admissible.

21. **For.** We are to hear the reason why prophecy is not of private interpretation. The reason lies in the nature of prophecy itself. **the prophecy came not . . .** R.V., "no prophecy ever came by the will of man: but men spake from God, being moved by the Holy Spirit." This version

omits the word "holy," as it is not in the best manuscripts. **being moved.** Being borne along as a ship by the wind. The wind here is the Holy Spirit. Why is this a reason for not treating a prophecy as of private interpretation? Two answers may be considered, not mutually exclusive — (1) because if it came from the Spirit it can only be interpreted by the Spirit, and the Spirit does not come to private people but to the Church; (2) because being Divine in origin, a mysterious communication to the souls of the prophets, it has the width and depth of the mind of God, and requires the greatest number of minds looking at it from many sides to interpret it truly.

### 2 Pet. ii. 1-22.

#### THE DANGER TO THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY FROM FALSE TEACHERS.

- 1 But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift
- 2 destruction. And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of.
- 3 And through covetousness shall they with feigned words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingereth not, and their damnation slumbereth not.
- 4 For if God spared not the angels that sinned, but cast them down to hell, and delivered them into chains of darkness,
- 5 to be reserved unto judgment; and spared not the old world, but saved Noah the eighth person, a preacher of righteousness, bringing in the flood upon the world of the
- 6 ungodly; and turning the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha

into ashes condemned them with an overthrow, making them an ensample unto those that after should live ungodly ;  
7 and delivered just Lot, vexed with the filthy conversation  
8 of the wicked : (for that righteous man dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from  
9 day to day with their unlawful deeds ;) the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve  
10 the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished : but chiefly them that walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise government. Presumptuous are they, selfwilled, they are not afraid to speak evil of dignities.  
11 Whereas angels, which are greater in power and might, bring not railing accusation against them before the Lord.  
12 But these, as natural brute beasts, made to be taken and destroyed, speak evil of the things that they understand  
13 not ; and shall utterly perish in their own corruption ; and shall receive the reward of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their own deceivings  
14 while they feast with you ; having eyes full of adultery, and that cannot cease from sin ; beguiling unstable souls : an heart they have exercised with covetous practices ; cursed  
15 children : which have forsaken the right way, and are gone astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Bosor, who loved the wages of unrighteousness ; but was rebuked for his iniquity : the dumb ass speaking with man's voice  
17 forbad the madness of the prophet. These are wells without water, clouds that are carried with a tempest ; to  
18 whom the mist of darkness is reserved for ever. For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, they allure through the lusts of the flesh, through much wantonness, those that were clean escaped from them who live in error.  
19 While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the servants of corruption : for of whom a man is overcome, of  
20 the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge

of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse  
 21 with them than the beginning. For it had been better  
 for them not to have known the way of righteousness,  
 than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy  
 22 commandment delivered unto them. But it is happened  
 unto them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned  
 to his own vomit again ; and the sow that was washed to  
 her wallowing in the mire.

1-9. The prototypes of the false teachers are described.

1. **false prophets.** The historical fact is merely a link between his warning against wrongly interpreted prophecy and the real false prophet of his day. **shall be false teachers.** From what follows the danger is not future but present. In ver. 10 the future tense is dropped, and the baseness of these teachers is described in the vivid present. **damnable heresies.** R.V., "destructive heresies." The Greek word for "heresy" has an interesting growth. At first it had no bad signification, being used merely of a school of thought as that of the Sadducees, Pharisees, or Nazarenes (Acts v. 17, xv. 5, xxiv. 5). But as the Christian ideas of faith and conduct solidified, views which did not agree with the main body were considered false, and "heresy" began to have an evil sound. **denying the Lord.** R.V., "the Master" — a name for Christ rarely used in the N.T. What this denial involves becomes clear later. It is partly a doubt regarding His power to impart the Divine nature in holiness of life : partly a denial of His coming again with greater glory.

2. **pernicious ways.** R.V., "lascivious doings"

(cf. 1 Pet. iv. 3). **the way of truth.** The writer speaks of Christianity several times as a Way (ii. 14, "the right way"; or ii. 21, "the way of righteousness"). Appeal is made here to the feeling of corporate honour, as in Jas. ii. 7, where also the covetousness of rich men and their cruelty is denounced.

3. **merchandise of you.** The false teachers were paid a stipend and were extortionate. From the Greek for "make merchandise" the famous word "Christ-traffic" was formed later. **whose judgment.** R.V., "sentence or doom."

4-7. *Three instances of doom* are given: one from the Book of Enoch, two from the O.T. These books are regarded as of equal authority.

4. *The doom of the False Angels.*—This is taken from two passages in Enoch (x. 4, liv. 4, 5), "Bind Azazel hand and foot and place him in darkness"; "These chain instruments for whom are they prepared? For the hosts of Azazel." The Book of Enoch was widely read in the first century. It regards the sin of man as due not to Adam but to the lust of the angels or watchers. "The wicked shepherds and fallen angels shall be cast into the abyss of fire (Tartarus), and the apostates into Gehenna." Therefore our writer dealing with the sin of lust does well to quote this terrible book of doom. **to be reserved unto judgment.** Read "to be kept unto trial." The final judgment is not pronounced.

5. *The second doom is the Deluge.*—This follows the account in Genesis, except that nothing is said there of Noah being the eighth person. Probably this addition comes to the writer from

the Apocalypse of Noah—another book of wonders with a wide circulation.

6, 7. *The third doom is on the Cities of the Plain.*—This doom is chosen for the same reason. It was caused by the same sin of lust. Noah and Lot appear as types of righteousness: Noah as a preacher; Lot as a good man vexed by the lasciviousness of his fellow-men.

9. **the Lord knoweth.** We should expect here the conclusion of the sentence which was begun in ver. 4, with the words "if God spared not," but it is left unfinished, as in i. 17. Instead of completing it the writer begins a new sentence, suggested by the mention of Lot, and gives a summary of the law of retribution and of forgiveness. **unto . . . to be punished.** R.V., "under punishment unto the day of judgment" or of trial.

10-22. Here follows the Great Denunciation of false Christian teachers—as men, 10-16; as teachers, 17-19.

10. **chiefly them.** The real object of the Epistle now becomes apparent. Teachers who are known to his readers are denounced in terms of prophetic wrath. **the lust of uncleanness.** He charges them here with the sins of the men who vexed righteous Lot. **despised government.** And here with the sins of the fallen angels whose rebellious temper was exactly expressed by Milton's Satan—"it is better to reign in hell than to serve in heaven." **speak evil of dignities.** Literally, "the glorious ones." This term could hardly be applied to the officials of the Roman government. Jude (ver. 8) applies it to the rulers of the Church, since he adds the rebellion of Korah as an example of speaking evil of dignities. Here,

however, it is better to interpret the glorious ones as the angels, and to suppose that the false teachers blasphemed them in their teaching.

11. **whereas the angels.** The writer is thinking of the court of heaven and of an incident given in the Book of Enoch (chap. ix.) :—The four great archangels—Michael, Uriel, Raphael, Gabriel—lay their complaint before the King, saying, “Thou knowest all things before they come to pass—What are we to do in regard to this?” The sentence of God is—“Bind Azazel hand and foot.” The argument is that if these great ones could complain about Azazel without railing, surely human teachers can cease bringing railing accusation against “the great ones.”

12. **but these.** The Great Denunciation begins. It is written in the vein of righteous indignation which we find in the Gospel accounts of the last days of our Lord in Jerusalem, in Jas. v., occasionally in St. Paul, and throughout the Revelation. **as natural brute beasts.** The A.V. here, as often, turns the Greek into rugged, forcible Anglo-Saxon, catching the spirit of the prophet better than the R.V. The latter reads—“as creatures without reason, made mere animals to be taken and destroyed,” *i.e.* wild animals whose only use is that they should be hunted and killed. **speak evil of the things.** Read “blaspheming in matters whereof they are ignorant.” **shall . . . corruption.** Read “in their destruction surely be destroyed”—a Hebrew idiom. Jude (ver. 10) softens the vehemence of this passage.

13. **and shall receive.** There is no fresh sentence here : the writer pours forth his scorn in one continuous flow of words. The R.V. reads



“suffering wrong as the hire of unrighteousness.” An emendation of the Greek text gives us—“paying a high price for the gain of unrighteousness.” **as they that.** Omit and read, “counting it pleasure.” Revelling and drunkenness in the daytime were considered worse than similar excess at night. **sporting themselves with their own deceivings.** R.V., “revelling in their love-feasts.” This is an important alteration. Jude (ver. 12) uses the word “love-feasts.” These were sacred meals, held in the afternoon or evening, taken together by the Christian brotherhood. Rich and poor met: formal prayers and benediction were said over the food: the kiss of charity concluded the meal (1 Pet. v. 14). After it hands were washed, lights were lit, and singing, prayer, and preaching followed (Acts xx. 7). The Agape was closely connected at first with the Eucharist. In the course of the second century, on account of abuses (Corinth, Ephesus), they were separated. The love-feast has affected the ritual of the Christian Church—the offertory, the washing of hands, the kiss of peace, or the benediction, and in some churches the distribution among the poor of bread which is blessed, but not consecrated. In this verse we have the head and front of their offending. These false teachers were turning the Eucharist into a heathenish feast. This danger threatened the Christian sacrament as early as St. Paul’s first letter to the Church at Corinth (xi. 17-34). Such a desecration of the sacred meal deserved all the righteous anger of this passage. It was a similar evil that roused the ancient prophets—Amos, Hosea—to pour the vials of their wrath on the sensualities of Baal worship. **while**

**they feast with you.** They had not left the Christian Church, though one would imagine this letter would hasten their departure.

14. **beguiling.** Enticing—as an angler entices with a bait (Jas. i. 14). **exercised in covetousness.** A striking phrase: as a gymnast trains himself steadily for his feats of skill, so these men exercised themselves in the art of over-reaching other people.

15. **the son of Bosor.** R.V., Beor (Num. xxii.). If “Bosor” is retained, it may be taken as a name of reproach—“son of flesh”—a carnal man. There is no full stop from the beginning of ver. 12 right up to the end of this verse (16): no pause in the succession of scathing epithets.

17. **These are.** He has exposed the immoral conduct and character of these Christians as men: he now declares their incapacity as teachers. **wells without water.** R.V., “springs without water.” St. James (iii. 11) says that teachers of Christianity should not be like fountains sending up bitter water with the sweet: here these false professors are regarded as dried-up springs. It presently is made clear that this dryness does not consist in the want of words but in the dearth of ideas. **clouds . . . tempest.** R.V., “mists driven by a storm.” Their words and thoughts are confused and formless like driven mist, the sign of the approaching storm. **mist of darkness.** R.V., “gloom of darkness.” This is the darker blackness of the actual storm. **for ever.** Omit with R.V.

18. **For.** It is in their teaching that all this confusion and emptiness reigns. **speaking.** They are eloquent, uttering great swelling (literally, swollen beyond their natural size) words. **through**

...lusts. By appealing to the sensual man. **them that were clean escaped.** R.V., "those who are just escaping." Such people would become an easier prey than well-established Christians. **from them that live.** The heathen amongst whom they had lived and who had educated them

19. **promising.** An instance of their sophistry. St. Paul uses the same striking contrast (Rom. viii. 21). It was really his doctrine of Christian freedom that these teachers were using and perverting (iii. 16), making it an excuse for sin. Yet the Apostle had guarded himself against misinterpretation by his great principle of the Christian life—"the law of the spirit of Christ Jesus." This law is really more rigorous than any other **servants**—slaves. They are accused here of a definitely immoral life.

20. **they,—i.e. Christians. escaped through the knowledge** (see on i. 8). **become worse** (see Heb. x. 26).

22. **true proverb** (Prov. xxvi. 11). **the sow . . . washed.** This is not biblical; the sarcasm bites more deeply from its popular character.

### 2 Pet. iii. 1-13.

#### THE DAY OF GOD POSTPONED BUT CERTAIN.

- 1 This second epistle, beloved, I now write unto you; in both which I stir up your pure minds by way of remembrance:
- 2 that ye may be mindful of the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour:
- 3 knowing this first, that there shall come in the last days scoffers, walking after their own lusts, and saying,

Where is the promise of his coming? for since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation. For this they willingly are ignorant of, that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water and in the water: whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished: but the heavens and the earth, which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men. But, beloved, be not ignorant of this one thing, that one day is with the Lord as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night; in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing then that all these things shall be dissolved, what manner of persons ought ye to be in all holy conversation and godliness, looking for and hasting unto the coming of the day of God, wherein the heavens being on fire shall be dissolved, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat? Nevertheless we, according to his promise, look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness.

1. **This second epistle.** R.V., "This is now the second epistle." The thunder dies away, and the writer proceeds to a quieter method of reasoning with his hearers. Four times in this part of the letter they are called "beloved" (vers. 1, 8, 14, 18). He knows that the danger of their falling a prey to a debased form of Christian worship and life is due to an unsettlement of their minds as to the end of the world, and the coming

of new heavens and earth. **second letter.** Readers must receive with caution the idea that the first letter is that which we have in the Canon as 1 Peter (see Introduction). **in both which I.** The object of both letters in the writer's judgment is the same. **stir up your pure minds.** R.V., "sincere minds." There is throughout this letter an appeal to sincerity of mind. "The knowledge of Jesus Christ" is the central root out of which the real Christian life and faith grows. **by way of remembrance.** R.V., "by putting you in remembrance." In both his letters he says he has reminded them of the words of the prophets (O.T.) and the commandments of the Lord and Saviour.

2. The change here from the A.V., **commandment of us the apostles of the Lord and Saviour** to "commandment of the Lord and Saviour through your apostles," must be carefully noticed. **prophets.** In i. 19 the prophetic anticipation of Christ is referred to as a surer testimony to those with whom he was reasoning, than the testimony of Christian teachers. Probably he also regards his reference to the Fallen Angels, Noah, Balaam—as prophetic Scripture and "commandments of our Lord." The only "word" of Christ mentioned is that by which the writer was told of his own speedy death (i. 14), but the "power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ" may be regarded as a "commandment." It entailed a definite kind of life and faith, such as is outlined with great care and force in i. 1-11.

3. The belief that they were living **in the last days** was shared by the author of Hebrews (i. 2), Jude (18), James (v. 3), and 1 Peter. It was important that the minds of Christians should be steadied by

the revelation of the near coming of Christ to judge the world, and bring a new heaven and a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The Apostle has been leading up to this subject. The promise of i. 4 and iii. 13 is the promise of the Advent: the "eternal kingdom" of i. 11, and the reference to trial and judgment in the second chapter, are connecting links. **walking after their own lusts.** The looseness of morality went hand in hand with the loosening of belief in a near judgment.

4. **Where is the promise of his coming?** This was a natural question when once the generation that had seen the Lord had passed away. **since the fathers.** The first generation of Christian Apostles and teachers. The writer himself is about to pass away (i. 13). **all things continue.** There is no cataclysm, nor end of the world; summer follows winter, and winter summer as of old: the stars do not fall from heaven.

5. **For this they willingly are ignorant of.** R.V. (and most important), "for this they wilfully forget." The doubters are answered by a direct negative. Things have not remained the same from the beginning. There is an instance of change, in the recreation of the world after the Deluge. This was a world distinct from the first one, and is kept existing until it will be destroyed not by water but by fire. The cataclysm will coincide with the judgment and destruction of godless men. The writer was much influenced by the Book of Enoch, which also colours the First Epistle of Peter. Enoch describing his vision of the Flood, "I saw how the heaven collapsed and was borne off and fell to the earth . . . and I

lifted up my voice to cry aloud and said—"the earth is destroyed." Some acquaintance with the Book of Enoch is necessary to our understanding the thoughts of the first Christians. "Enoch was known to most of the writers of the N.T., St. Paul, Hebrews, Acts, and even the Gospels" (Dr. Charles).

8-14. Contains the second answer to doubters.

8. **one day . . . a thousand years.** When they grow impatient at the long postponement of the "day of God," they are forgetting that time does not appear the same to God and man. A thousand years in the life of God is equal to a day in a man's life. The idea is taken from Ps. xc. 4, "For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday," and developed, in most misguided literalism, through Rev. xx. 2, 5, 7 into a great doctrine of a millennium or thousand years during which Christ would reign.

9. **the Lord is not slack.** God's character as well as His mind must not be reckoned human-wise. His delay is due not to the slackness of indifference but to the longsuffering of a Father who deals patiently with His children. This consideration is assumed and pressed home in the very beautiful phrase of ver. 15.

10. **the day of the Lord . . . as a thief.** The sequence of thought is broken here—the mention of repentance leads him to speak of a time when repentance would be no longer possible. "It will come—this day (see order of words in Greek), and that suddenly" (Matt. xxiv. 43). **in the which.** A vivid and fuller account of the destruction by fire for which he has just said the world was being kept. **with a great noise.**

The Greek word is used for the hissing of a snake, the whirr of birds' wings, the hurtling of an arrow. It may mean the combination of fearful sounds which would accompany the imagined collapse of the world. **the elements.** Either earth, air, water, fire—or the heavenly bodies—sun, moon, and stars, as in margin of R.V.

11. **in all holy conversation and godliness.** Better "in holy behaviours and pieties."

12. **hasting unto the coming.** R.V., "earnestly desiring the coming." The Greek word for the "coming"—Parousia—means more than the approach of the day: it signifies the actual arrival or presence of that wonder-working time. Hence in modern books the Parousia is spoken of instead of the older fashioned—Second Coming.

13. **but we look.** The true Christian teacher and believer, as distinguished from those false brethren, look for a new world arising out of the elemental chaos, habitable, and fit for the life of the righteous. The birth of a new world after the old Deluge just mentioned (ver. 6) would help a believer in it to conceive this other transformation as possible (Rev. xxi. 1). **wherein righteousness dwells.** Better, and nearer the pregnant force of the original, "wherein righteousness has its home."

2 Pet. iii. 14-18.

### CONCLUDING ADMONITION.

- 14 Wherefore, beloved, seeing that ye look for such things,  
 be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without  
 15 spot, and blameless. And account that the longsuffering  
 of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother



Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath  
 16 written unto you ; as also in all his epistles, speaking in  
 them of these things ; in which are some things hard to  
 be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable  
 wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own  
 17 destruction. Ye therefore, beloved, seeing ye know these  
 things before, beware lest ye also, being led away with  
 the error of the wicked, fall from your own stedfastness.  
 18 But grow in grace, and in the knowledge of our Lord and  
 Saviour Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and for  
 ever. Amen.

14. **such things**—*i.e.* the imminent day of God and its wonders. **in peace.** The Epistle opens with the same wish, but one would like to know whether the “*sæva indignatio*” of this communication brought peace nearer. It may have led to the expulsion of those brethren who were clearly making the Gospel a cloak for malice, or it may have led them to repent and so be allowed to retain membership. **without spot and blameless.** Living a life the exact contrary of that other one which was a “spot and blemish” on the fair face of the Christian ideal.

15. **the longsuffering of the Lord is salvation.** This, in one condensed but beautiful phrase, recalls believers to the patience of the saints. Their salvation—the attainment and full development of “the divine nature” (i. 4)—must take time, and God in His mercy gives that time. **even as our brother Paul.** Where does Paul write about the longsuffering of God being man’s salvation? Of the Epistles which we possess, Romans, and in particular, ix. 22, seem to give the best answer. It is quite possible, however,

that the special passage referred to may have been in one of his lost Epistles.

16. **in all.** The attitude of the great Apostle of the Gentiles to **these things**—disorderly conduct arising from a natural if mistaken view of the coming of the day of God—is the same in all his Epistles (see specially 1 Thess. and 1 Cor.). **some things hard to be understood.** The writer is now thinking of the Apostle's doctrine of Christian liberty. This certainly has proved hard: even in his lifetime he had to deal with perversions and misinterpretations of his theory (cf. Rom. iii. 31). **the other scriptures.** This, in his reference to O.T. prophecy and to the Books of Enoch, Esdras, etc., the writer has made plain. They have been treated as of private interpretation. Now he adds that the writings of his brother Paul might also fall a victim to the whims of private opinion. Notice also that this classification of the Epistles of Paul with "the other scriptures" marks a step in the making of the N.T., and the formation of the Canon of the Bible.

18. **grow.** The letter ends as it began with the prayer that its readers might grow in grace, and in what the writer regards as fundamental—"the knowledge of Christ." **to him.** The doxology is addressed to the Saviour. **for ever.** Better, "unto the eternal day"—a unique phrase in the N.T., and to be placed for grandeur beside another original word—the day of God (iii. 12).

## THE GENERAL EPISTLE OF JUDE.

*The Title.*—Read the Epistle of Judas.

Jude 1, 2.

### THE GREETING.

1 Jude, the servant of Jesus Christ, and brother of James,  
to them that are sanctified by God the Father, and pre-  
2 served in Jesus Christ, and called: mercy unto you, and  
peace, and love, be multiplied.

1. **Jude.** R.V., Judas. **a servant of Jesus Christ.** He first declares his religious position (Jas. i. 1; 2 Pet. i. 1). **brother of James.** Next he speaks of his family relationship. He might have claimed relationship directly with our Lord, but prefers the more modest title of His servant. James was the distinguished head of the Mother Church at Jerusalem (Acts xii. 17, xv. 13, xxi. 18; Gal. ii. 12). He and the other brethren of the Lord were well known in the churches (1 Cor. ix. 5). An Epistle from any of them would carry weight. He only wishes to remind them of his religious standing in regard to Christ. This one is addressed to the whole body of the Church. **sanctified by God.** R.V., "beloved in God." God is the resting-place of their faith and life, and they are in turn beloved by Him. Read "who in God the Father are

beloved.” **preserved.** R.V., “kept for.” This writer is also living “in the last time” (ver. 18), and his closing desire for his readers is that “they should be guarded and set before the Presence” (ver. 24). **and called.** Better “the called.” This and the previous beautiful designations are reminiscent of Rom. i. 6 (cf. for other Pauline words vers. 3, 19 ; see also 2 Pet. i. 10).

2. **and love.** Notice that the addition of this word makes it a warmer and even a more gracious salutation than we find in any of the other Epistles of the N.T.

### Jude 3, 4.

#### THE OBJECT OF THE LETTER.

- 3 Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write unto you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write unto you, and exhort you that ye should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints.
- 4 For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ.

3. **Beloved.** This is the favourite address of John (five times in 1 John),—used also by St. Paul, in the Hebrews, 2 Pet., and Jas. **when I gave.** R.V., “while I was giving,” *i.e.* at the very moment when I was thinking of writing another and larger work. **of the common salvation.** R.V., “of our.” This was to be the subject of the larger work. **it was needful.** R.V., “I was constrained.” There is no colon between “salvation” and these words. The writer is simply ex-

plaining why he is writing a short exhortation instead of a longer and more deliberate exposition of the salvation shared by him and them. **that ye should earnestly contend.** A crisis had arisen which demanded immediate action. That action is described in the strongest word that could be found—one which is not elsewhere used in the N.T.—“contend earnestly.” **the faith.** In this place, not trust or the inward perception of the things of God, but a body of doctrine, as in ver. 20, “your most holy faith.” **once delivered.** R.V., “once for all.” He looks back and sees that a certain form of doctrine and practice was set from the first days of the apostolic revelation. **to the saints.** This is St. Paul’s language, joined usually to the word “called”; it is his ideal of churchmanship. In view of the special danger which occasioned the letter, the word has a peculiar force here. Notice also that the language is that of one who is removed by lapse of time from the first preachers—original members of the Church—“the saints.”

4. **are crept in unawares.** R.V., “privily.” They have slipped through the gate of the Church without being detected; the writer has evidently just heard this. **of old ordained** (2 Pet. ii. 3). **to this condemnation.** Better “doom”—What doom? In the parallel passage in 2 Pet. it is stated to be their own destruction. But here it is the doom of simply living and acting as false brethren (vers. 17, 18). **turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness.** This is the point which the rest of the Epistle elaborates (vers. 10–13, 16, 18, 19), and which roused the writer’s communication with them at once. If the accept-

ance of God through this grace bred in their minds looseness of conduct, then Christianity, instead of being a common salvation, became a cause of common sin. **and denying our Lord.** One of the main features of the "faith once delivered" was that it entailed holiness of life. To make it a cloak of immorality is to deny Christ (see 2 Pet. ii. 1), not in name but in fact.

### Jude 5-16.

#### THE FALSE CHRISTIANS DESCRIBED AND DOOMED.

5 I will therefore put you in remembrance, though ye once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that  
6 believed not. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of  
7 the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal  
8 fire. Likewise also these filthy dreamers defile the flesh,  
9 despise dominion, and speak evil of dignities. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee.  
10 But these speak evil of those things which they know not : but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those  
11 things they corrupt themselves. Woe unto them ! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying  
12 of Core. These are spots in your feasts of charity, when they feast with you, feeding themselves without fear :

clouds they are without water, carried about of winds ;  
 trees whose fruit withereth, without fruit, twice dead,  
 13 plucked up by the roots ; raging waves of the sea,  
 foaming out their own shame ; wandering stars, to whom  
 14 is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. And  
 Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these,  
 saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of  
 15 his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince  
 all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds  
 which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard  
 speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.  
 16 These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their  
 own lusts ; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words,  
 having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.

5-7. Precedents for their doom are first given.

5. **I will . . . remembrance.** R.V., "I desire." He wishes to give them precedents for the condemnation which he is about to pronounce. **though ye once knew this.** R.V., "though ye know all things once for all" (a most important change in the reading). They had been instructed in the O.T. instances of the wrath of God falling on people false to their calling in the day of their first conversion, or as Jews and proselytes. He is only reminding them of a principle learned and settled once for all. **How that.** *The first precedent.*—The doom of the faithless Israelites (1 Cor. x. 5-9). This is not mentioned in the Petrine parallel.

6. **and angels.** *The second precedent.*—The Book of Enoch elaborated all the beliefs of the time regarding good and evil angels. Amongst other ideas, the planets, wandering stars, were said to have angels ; and when they fall their angels fall (see ver. 13 ; 2 Pet. ii. 4).

7. **Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities.** *The third precedent.*—Here the sin of immorality, with which the writer charged the false brethren, is distinctly mentioned and their doom described in awful language. **an example.** “A sample.” The three dooms are pronounced in terms of increasing terror—ver. 5, “destroyed”; ver. 6, “kept in everlasting bonds unto the great day”; ver. 7, “suffering the vengeance of eternal fire.” The writer knew how to contend for the principle that religion and morality cannot be separated, with examples most impressive to the imagination of his time.

8–16. Then the false teachers are described.

8. **Likewise . . . filthy dreamers.** R.V., “yet in like manner these also in their dreamings.” They are prophets with “mouths speaking great swelling words.” It is evident that in an age which loved apocalypses, and which had dealings with spirits, believing in magic and spiritualism, teachers would appear whose imagination ran riot. The beginning of the extravagance of Gnostic teaching may be referred to here. **defile the flesh.** It may be to the extent of the Sodomites (see Rom. i. 26). The worship carried on in many of the temples at Corinth and elsewhere was connected with nameless indignities to the body. Still, it is difficult to think that such men could have crept in unaware among the saints. **despise dominion.** R.V., “set at nought dominion”: after the manner of Korah (ver. 11), though it is more likely that the real cause of their rebellion was not pride, but anger at the discipline of the Christian community. **rail at dignities.** Greek, “glories.” Read “the glorious ones” (see



2 Pet. ii. 10). Here of the rulers of the Church, if we may interpret by the mention of Korah (ver. 11).

9. **Michael.** The story is taken from the Assumption of Moses, an Aramaic writing, composed early in the first century, which in a Latin MSS. is still extant. The story in it is that Satan accused Moses of being a murderer, since he had slain an Egyptian, and claimed his body. Michael contends with him, yet he does not dare to accuse the evil angel of blasphemy.

10. **But these speak evil.** Better "blaspheme." They do not imitate the Archangel. **those things which they know not.** "Whatsoever things they know not," to be taken in contrast with "what they understand naturally." The things that they know not are generally the world of spirit: the things they understand are fleshly delights (cf. 2 Pet. ii. 12). **as brute beasts.** "Created without reason."

11. **The way of Cain.** How does this apply? As a sinner who perished through his own anger (Wisd. x. 3). **Balaam.** Explained in ver. 16, "showing respect of persons for the sake of advantage." **Core.** R.V., "Korah," who despised the authorities of his church—Moses and Aaron (Num. xvi. 2, xi. 16). **gainsaying** is an Old English word for speaking a-gain-st a man. Wyclif has often "agenseyeen."

12. **spots.** R.V., "rocks." They are like hidden rocks which suddenly wreck the ships. **in your love-feasts** (see 2 Pet.). Without any reverence for these sacred meals, they treat them as banquets, and think only of securing for themselves the largest possible share of food and drink (ver. 16). **feeding themselves without fear.** Better "shepherding

themselves without fear." The word "shepherd-  
ing" is used in 1 Pet. v. 2. People who shepherd  
themselves are insubordinate and disorderly. They  
are in this respect followers both of Balaam and  
Korah. **clouds without water.** These are the  
terrible clouds of the sand-storm, which come up  
with the wind, empty of all moisture and pleasant  
rain: a fine simile for bombastic but empty teachers.  
**trees whose fruit withereth.** Better "trees in  
the gale." Late autumn has come and the trees  
are bare; they have no fruit. **twice dead.** Once  
in spring when they might have borne flowers: once  
in autumn when they might have had fruit: the  
gardener has uprooted them.

13. **raging waves.** Wild waves of the sea  
foaming up their shame: a great piece of imagery  
for verbose, ignorant, vicious religious teachers.  
**wandering stars** (see ver. 6 and Isa. xiv. 12).

14. Enoch saw the stars imprisoned in a place  
of fire. **and also.** R.V., "and to these also,"  
*i.e.* these men now in view. **Enoch.** This is a  
composite quotation from the Book of Enoch  
(lv. 8, xciii. 3), and the fact that it is quoted as  
authentic prophecy, indicates the place which that  
book took in forming the religious mind of that  
time. This is really a *fourth precedent* for the doom  
of these men (see vers. 5-7).

16. **murmurers, complainers.** He returns to  
the arraignment of these men; they were like  
Korah, discontented with their position in the  
Church. **walking after their own lusts.** This  
is the deepest stain of all in professing Christians.  
**having men's persons in admiration because  
of advantage.** R.V., "showing respect of persons  
for the sake of advantage" (cf. ver. 11). The

accusation of covetousness is made in 2 Pet. with much greater elaborateness.

### Jude 17-23.

## EXHORTATION TO THE READERS TO KEEP THEMSELVES IN THE LOVE OF GOD.

17 But, beloved, remember ye the words which were spoken  
 18 before of the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ ; how that  
 they told you there should be mockers in the last time,  
 19 who should walk after their own ungodly lusts. These be  
 they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the  
 20 Spirit. But ye, beloved, building up yourselves on your  
 21 most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep your-  
 selves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our  
 22 Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life. And of some have  
 23 compassion, making a difference : and others save with  
 fear, pulling them out of the fire ; hating even the garment  
 spotted by the flesh.

17. **spoken before of the apostles.** He is not himself an Apostle. Such warnings appear in 2 Tim. iii. 1-5 ; Acts xx. 29.

18. **how that they told you.** He uses exactly the same words as the writer of 2 Pet. iii. 3 (see *Introd.*).

19. **who separate themselves.** R.V., "that make separation" ; a rare word. This would follow from their other practice (ver. 12) of "shepherding themselves." The same condition of Church life is in the background of St. James' Epistle : a separation into unloving divisions, partly due to difference of wealth, partly due to the following of special teachers. "In early days before the Church was wealthy or educated, and before the tradition of her

discipline had established itself, a rich Christian, unless he was a very devout man, must have found himself in a very trying position. It was out of this state of things that Gnosticism arose. Gnosticism was the revolt of the well-to-do, half-educated, bourgeois class" (Bigg, 339). The language here again follows the Assumption of Moses, where a man of pride is depicted as saying to his neighbour, "Do not touch me: do not soil the place where I am." **sensual.** R.V. margin, "animal": a Pauline word (1 Cor. ii. 14, xv. 44); "could not be used by 1 Pet." (Bigg). **not having the Spirit.** Read "not having spirit," unspiritual. The false teachers may have misinterpreted these very distinctions made by St. Paul, and the writer likes to use them in their proper sense.

20. **building up yourselves.** This seems to be a little different from his previous wish that they should contend for the faith. Here it is the personal superstructure in their own character that is to be their concern. **praying in the Holy Spirit.** God gives Himself "the hearty desire to pray: depth answereth depth: the Spirit within seeking rest in the Spirit without."

21. **keep yourselves in the love of God.** With a fine intuition of the Christian's vocation the writer asks them not to shepherd themselves without fear—but to keep within range of the love of God (see ver. 1). **unto eternal life.** This as the end of their waiting should be taken closely with "keep yourselves."

22, 23. **And of some have compassion . . . fire.** R.V., "And on some have mercy, who are in doubt; and some save, snatching them out of the fire; and on some have mercy with fear." The Greek

text here is corrupt, but the R.V. gives the best sense. The Church, whose destiny it was to have these false brethren, would be full of doubters and people in mental difficulties. The noise and bombast of the false brethren, together with their wealth, would impress many. Doubters were to be treated with mercy, and discrimination: no high-handed policy of Church outing them is recommended. But the matter was to be grappled with, in the spirit of men who **hate the garment spotted by the flesh.**

#### Jude 24, 25.

#### THE ASCRIPTION.

24 Now unto him that is able to keep you from falling, and to  
 present you faultless before the presence of his glory with  
 25 exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory  
 and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever.  
 Amen.

The only serious alterations that need be made in the otherwise fine rendering of these verses in the A.V. are—(1) that instead of **the only wise God our Saviour**, we must read with R.V., “to the only God and Saviour through Jesus Christ our Lord”; and (2) insert after **power**, “before all time.” Both these alterations add to the completeness of this—one of the noblest ascriptions in the N.T. (cf. Rom. xvi. 25). **Amen.** This word was used often by our Lord,—“Verily, verily, I say unto you,”—to confirm His statements. “This use of ‘Amen’ is unfamiliar to the entire range of Jewish literature.” It is happy that so unique a

phrase, exactly as He said it, should have passed through the Doxologies to the liturgical use of the Church, though obviously, to be in agreement with His custom, it ought to come at the commencement not at the end of a prayer (see Dalman's *Words of Jesus*, 229). In Dr. Moffatt's *N.T.* it is translated with force—"Truly, I tell you truly."

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