

to the passers by. This is not probable. The date is supplied by the age of the writer, and the usual salutation is represented by the request for the prayers of the orthodox, which shows that *ὀρθών* is required in order to correspond to the ordinary phraseology of epitaphs: "Let every orthodox person who sees this prove his orthodoxy by praying for him that is buried here."¹

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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

VIII. THE GOSPEL OF REST (CHAP. IV.).

THE interest of an ordinary reader of our epistle is apt to flag at this point, in consequence of the obscurity overhanging the train of thought, and the aim of the whole passage relating to a "rest that remaineth." It helps to rescue the section from listless perusal to fix our attention on this one thought, that the Christian salvation is here presented under a third aspect as a rest, a sabbatism, a participation in the rest of God; the new view, like the two preceding, in which the great salvation was identified with lordship in the world to come and with deliverance from the power of the devil and the fear of death, being taken from the beginning of human history as narrated in the early chapters of Genesis.

One aim of the writer of the epistle in this part of his work was doubtless to enunciate this thought, and so to identify the gospel of Christ with the Old Testament gospel of rest. But his aim is not purely didactic, but

¹ The interpretation of Geraios suggested in the second of these papers must be abandoned, and the more obvious interpretation as member of *Gerousia* is to be preferred. The title occurs a third time in a Phrygian inscription at Hierapolis.

partly also, and even chiefly, parenetic. Doctrine rises out of and serves the purpose of exhortation. The obscurity of the passage springs from the interblending of the two aims, the theoretical and the practical; which makes it difficult to decide whether the object of the writer is to prove that a rest really remains over for Christians, or to exhort them to be careful not to lose a rest, whose availability for them is regarded as beyond dispute. In the latter case one is apt to think it might have been better to have omitted vers. 2-10 and to have passed at once to ver. 12, where comes in the solemn statement concerning the word of God. As in the previous chapter he had asserted without proof, "whose house are we," why could our author not here also have contented himself with asserting, "which rest is ours, if we lose it not by unbelief, as did Israel of old," and adding, "let us therefore, one and all of us, be on our guard against such a calamity"? Would his exhortation not have gained in strength by being put in this brief, authoritative form, instead of being made to rest on an intricate process of reasoning?

As proof offered naturally implies doubt of the thing proved, it is a ready inference that the Hebrew Christians required to be assured that they had not come too late for participation in the rest promised to their fathers. Evidence of this has been found in the word $\delta\omicron\kappa\eta$ (ver. 1) rendered not "seem," as in the Authorized Version, but "think": "lest any of you imagine he hath failed of it by coming too late in the day."¹ The exhortation to fear however does not suit such a state of mind. It is more likely that the writer was led to argue the point, that the promised rest was still left over, simply because there were Old Testament materials available for the purpose. He chose to present the truth as mediated through Old Testament texts

¹ So a number of the older commentators, and most recently Rendall, who says the rendering "seem" conveys no meaning to his mind.

fitted to stimulate both hope and fear: hope of gaining the rest, fear of losing it.

In so far as the section, vers. 1-10, has a didactic drift, its object is to confirm the hope; in so far as it is hortatory, its leading purpose is to enforce the warning, "let us fear."

The parenetic interest predominates at the commencement, vers. 1, 2, which may be thus paraphrased: "Now with reference to this rest I have been speaking of (iii. 18, 19), let us fear lest we miss it. For it is in our power to gain it, seeing the promise still remains over unfulfilled or but partially fulfilled. Let us fear, I say; for if we have a share in the promise, we have also in the threat of forfeiture: it too stands over. We certainly have a share in the promise; we have been evangelized, not merely in general, but with the specific gospel of rest. But those who first heard this gospel of rest failed through unbelief. So may we: therefore let us fear." When we thus view the connexion of thought in these two verses, we have no difficulty in understanding the omission of the pronoun (*ἡμεῖς*) in the first clause of ver. 2, which might surprise one. As in the previous chapter (ver. 6) the writer had said, "whose house are *we*," so we expect him here to say "*we* not less than they have received the good tidings of rest." But his point at this stage is not that *we* have been evangelized—that is, that the ancient gospel of rest concerns us as well as our forefathers,—but that we have been *evangelized*, and therefore are concerned in the threatening as well as in the promise.

To be noted is the freedom with which, as in the case of the word "apostle" (iii. 1), the writer uses the term *εὐηγγελισμένοι*, which might have been supposed to have borne in his time a stereotyped meaning. Any promise of God, any announcement of good tidings, is for him a gospel. Doubtless all God's promises are associated in his mind with the great final salvation, nevertheless they are formally distinct

from the historical Christian gospel. The gospel he has in view is not that which "began to be spoken by the Lord," but that spoken by the psalmist when he said, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." Only when this is lost sight of can it create surprise that the statement in the text runs, "We have had a gospel preached unto us as well as they," instead of, "They had a gospel preached unto them as well as we."

Not less noteworthy is the way in which the abortive result of the preaching of the gospel of rest to the fathers is accounted for. "The word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it." The remarkable point is the idea of *mixing*, instead of which one might have expected the introduction of some simple commonplace word such as "received": "The word did not profit, not being received in faith." Had this form of language been employed, we should probably have been spared the trouble of deciding between various readings. The penalty of originality in speaker or writer is misconception by reporters, copyists, and printers. Uncertain how the idea of mixing was to be taken the copyists would try their hand at conjectural emendation, changing *συγκεκερασμένος* into *συγκεκερασμένους*, or *vice versâ*. In this way corruption may have crept in very early, and it is quite possible that none of the extant readings is the true one.¹ Of the two most important variants given above, the second, according to which the participle has the accusative plural ending, and is in agreement with *ἐκείνους*, is the best attested, but it does not give the most probable sense: "The word did not profit them, because they were not mixed by faith with the (true) hearers." On this reading

¹ Bleek conjectures that instead of *ἀκούσασι* may have stood originally *ἀκούσ-μασι*. Among the various readings are several varieties of spelling and form in the participle *συγκεκερασμένος*, of no importance to the sense, but showing an unusual amount of uncertainty as to the original text.

the word "mixed" receives the intelligible sense of "associated with," but it is open to the serious objection that the writer has assumed in the previous chapter that there were no true hearers, or so few that they might be left out of account (iii. 16). Assuming that the other reading is to be preferred, according to which the participle is in agreement with λόγος, it is difficult to decide how the mixing is to be conceived of. Is the word mixed with faith in the hearer, or by faith with the hearer? and what natural analogy is suggested in either case? Obviously this reading points to a more intimate and vital union than that of association suggested by the other; such a union as takes place when food is assimilated by digestion and made part of the bodily organization. But how the matter presented itself to the writer's mind we can only conjecture. The one thing certain is, that he deemed faith indispensable to profitable hearing: a truth, happily, taught with equal clearness in the text, whatever reading we adopt.

At ver. 3 the didactic interest comes to the front. The new thought grafted into ver. 1 by the parenthetical clause, "a promise being still left," now becomes the leading affirmation. The assertion of ver. 2, "we have been evangelized," is repeated, with the emphasis this time on the "we"; for though the pronoun is not used, οἱ πιστεύσαντες stands in its stead. "We do enter into rest, *we believers in Christ.*" More is meant than that the rest belongs only to such as believe. It is a statement of historical fact, similar to "whose house are we"—Christians. Only there is this difference between the two affirmations, that whereas in the earlier it is claimed for Christians that they are God's house principally, if not exclusively, here the more modest claim is advanced in their behalf that they share in, are not excluded from, the rest. The writer indeed believes that the promise in its high ideal sense concerns Christians chiefly, if not alone; that thought is the tacit assumption

underlying his argument. But the position formally maintained is not, We Christians have a monopoly of the rest, but, We have a share in it, it belongs to us also. A rest is left over for the New Testament people of God.

The sequel as far as ver. 10 contains the proof of this thesis. The salient points are these two: *First*, God spoke of a rest to Israel by Moses, though He Himself rested from His works when the creation of the world was finished; therefore the *creation-rest* does not exhaust the idea and promise of rest. *Second*, the rest of Israel in Canaan under Joshua did not realize the Divine idea of rest, any more than did the personal rest of God at the creation, for we find the rest spoken of again in the Psalter as still remaining to be entered upon, which implies that the *Canaan-rest* was an inadequate fulfilment: "For if Joshua had given them rest"—*i.e.* given rest adequately, perfectly—"then would He (God or the Holy Spirit) not afterward have spoken of another day." The former of these two points contains the substance of what is said in vers. 3-5, the latter gives the gist of vers. 7, 8; whereupon follows the inference in ver. 9, a rest is left over. A third step in the argument by which the inference is justified is passed over in silence. It is, that neither in the psalmist's day nor at any subsequent period in Israel's history had the promise of rest been adequately fulfilled, any more than at the creation or in the days of Joshua. Had the writer chosen he might have shown this in detail, pointing out that even Solomon's reign did not bring complete rest; the Solomonic rest containing within its bosom the seeds of future disturbance, division, and warfare, and proving to be but a halcyon period, followed by wintry storms, bringing desolation and ruin on a once happy land. As for the rest after the return from Babylon, the only other point in Jewish history at which the promise could find a place whereon to set its foot, he would have no difficulty in showing what

a poor, imperfect, disappointing fulfilment it brought. Who that reads the sad, chequered tale of Ezra and Nehemiah would say that it realizes all the meaning of the twice-spoken oracle of Jeremiah: "Therefore fear thou not, O My servant Jacob; neither be dismayed, O Israel: for, lo, I will save thee from afar, and thy seed from the land of their captivity; and Jacob shall return, and shall be in rest, and none shall make him afraid."¹

Our author takes the oracle in the Psalter as the final word of the Old Testament on the subject of rest, and therefore as a word which concerns the New Testament people of God. God spake of rest through David, implying that up till that time the long promised rest had not come, at least, in satisfying measure. Therefore a rest remains for Christians. Is the inference cogent? Because a certain promised good had not come up to a certain date, must it come now? Let us review the situation. The ancient Scriptures speak of a Divine rest which God enjoyed at the beginning of the world's history, and in which man seemed destined to share. But man's portion in this rest has never yet come in any satisfying degree. It came not at the creation, for after that came all too soon the fall; it came not at the entrance into Canaan, for the people of Israel had to take possession sword in hand, and long after their settlement they continued exposed to annoyance from the Canaanitish tribes; it came not from Joshua till David, for even in his late time the Holy Spirit still spoke of another day. Extending our view, we observe that it came not under Solomon, for after him came Rehoboam and the revolt of the ten tribes; it came not with the return of the tribes from Babylon, for envious neighbours kept them in a continual state of anxiety and fear, and they rebuilt their temple and the city walls in troublous times.

¹ Jer. xxx. 10, xlvi. 27. The idea of rest is in these texts, but it is not rendered by *καταπαύω* in the Septuagint.

Is not the natural inference from all this that the rest will never come, all actual rests being but imperfect approximations to the ideal? So reasons unbelief, which treats the *summum bonum* in every form as a mere ideal, a beautiful dream, a pleasure of hope, like that of the maniac, to whom

“Mercy gave, to charm the sense of woe,
Ideal bliss that truth could never know.”

Far otherwise thought the writer of our epistle. He believed that all Divine promises, that the promise of rest in particular, shall be fulfilled with ideal completeness. “Some must enter in”; and as none have yet entered in perfectly, this bliss must be reserved for those on whom the ends of the world are come, even those who believe in Jesus. “There remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God.”

A *sabbatism* our author calls the rest, so at the conclusion of his argument introducing a new name for it, after using another all through. It is one of the significant thought-suggesting words which abound in the epistle. It is not, we may be sure, employed merely for literary reasons, as if to vary the phraseology and avoid too frequent repetition of the word *κατάπαυσις*. Neither is it enough to say that the term was suggested by the fact that God rested on the seventh day. It embodies an idea. It felicitously connects the end of the world with the beginning, the consummation of all things with the primal state of the creation. It denotes the *ideal* rest, and so teaches by implication that Christians, not only have an interest in the gospel of rest, but for the first time enter into a rest which is worthy of the name, a rest corresponding to and fully realizing the Divine idea. This final name for the rest thus supplements the defect of the preceding argument, which understates the case for Christians. It further hints, though only hints, the nature of the ideal rest. It teaches that it is not merely

a rest which God gives, but the rest which God Himself enjoys. It is God's own rest for God's own true people, an ideal rest for an ideal community, embracing all believers, all believing Israelites of all ages, and many more; for God's rest began long before there was an Israel, and the gospel in the early chapters of Genesis is a gospel for *man*, as the writer of our epistle well knows, though he does not plainly say it. Into this sabbatic rest cessation from work enters as an essential element; for it is written that God "rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made." That this is the thought which our author chiefly associates with the term *σαββατισμός* appears from ver. 10, which may be thus paraphrased: "One who enters into rest ceases, like God, from work, and therefore may be said to enjoy a sabbatism." But this yields only a negative idea of the rest, and the *summum bonum* can hardly be a pure negation. The rabbinical conception of the Sabbath was purely negative. The rabbis made a fetish of abstinence from whatever bore the semblance of work, however insignificant in amount, and whatever its nature and intention. Christ discarded this rabbinized Sabbath, and put in its place a humanized Sabbath, making man's good the law of observance, declaring that it was always lawful to do well, and justifying beneficent activity by representing Divine activity as incessant, and Divine rest therefore as only relative, a change in the manifested form of an eternal energy. We do not know how far our author was acquainted with the sabbatic controversies of the gospels, but we cannot doubt on which side his sympathies would be. It has been suggested that he coined a name for the rest that remains, containing an allusion to the seventh day rest, that he might wean the Hebrews from its external observance by pointing out its spiritual end.¹ This view rests on no positive evidence, but it is far more credible than that the

¹ So Calvin.

bliss of the future world meant for him the eternal prolongation of a rabbinical Sabbath, as it meant for the Talmudist who wrote: "The Israelites said, Lord of all the world, show us a type of the world to come. God answered them, That type is the Sabbath." He took his ideas of the perfect rest, not from the degenerate traditions of the rabbis, but from the book of Origins. That being the fountain of his inspiration, it is probable that he conceived of the ideal rest, not as cessation from work absolutely, but only from the weariness and pain which often accompany it. There was work for man in paradise. God placed him in the garden of Eden to work it¹ and to keep it; and the whole description of the curse implies that it is the sorrow of labour, and not labour itself, that is the unblessed element. The *ἔργα* which pass away when the ideal rest comes are the *κόποι*—the irksome toil and worry—of which John speaks in the book of Revelation: "They shall rest from their labours," and "pain shall be no more."²

We have seen that our author borrows three distinct conceptions of the great salvation from the primitive history of man. It is reasonable to suppose that they were all connected together in his mind, and formed one picture of the highest good. They suggest the idea of paradise restored: the Divine ideal of man and the world and their mutual relations realized in perpetuity; man made veritably lord of creation, delivered from the fear of death, nay, death itself for ever left behind, and no longer subject to servile tasks, but occupied only with work worthy of a king and a son of God, and compatible with perfect repose and undisturbed enjoyment. It is an apocalyptic vision: fruition lies in the beyond. The dominion and deathless-

¹ *ἐργάζεσθαι* in Septuagint.

² Rev. xiv. 13, xxi. 4. Very significant for the sense of *κόπος* are the texts Luke xi. 7, xviii. 5; Gal. vi. 17. Worry, annoyance, enter into its meaning in all three places.

ness and sabbatism are reserved for the world to come, objects of hope for those who believe.

The perfect rest will come, and a people of God will enter into it, of these things our author is well assured ; but he fears lest the Hebrew Christians should forfeit their share in the felicity of that people : therefore he ends his discourse on the gospel of rest as he began, with solemn admonition. " Let us fear lest we enter not in," he said at the beginning ; " let us give diligence to enter in," he says now at the close. Then to enforce the exhortation he appends two words of a practical character, one fitted to inspire awe, the other to cheer Christians of desponding temper.

The former of these passages (vers. 12, 13) describes the attributes of the Divine word, the general import of the statement being that the word of God, like God Himself, is not to be trifled with ; the word referred to being, in the first place, the word of threatening which doomed unbelieving, disobedient Israelites to perish in the wilderness, and, by implication, every word of God. The account given of the Divine word is impressive, almost appalling. It is endowed in succession with the qualities of the lightning, which moves with incredible swiftness like a living spirit, and hath force enough to shiver to atoms the forest trees ; of a two-edged sword, whose keen, glancing blade cuts clean through everything, flesh, bone, sinew ; of the sun in the firmament, from whose great piercing eye, as he circles round the globe, nothing on earth is hid. " Living is the word of God and energetic, and more cutting than every two-edged sword, penetrating even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning and judging the affections and thoughts of the heart. And there is not a creature invisible before it, but all things are bare and exposed to the eyes of Him with whom we have to reckon."

The description falls into four parts. First, " living and forceful is the word." I have suggested a comparison to

the lightning as interpretative of the epithet "living." Possibly the allusion is to a seed, in which life and force lie dormant together, capable of development under fitting conditions. The blade of grain is the witness both of the life and of the power latent in the seed from which it springs. Or perhaps the thought intended is that the word of threatening, though spoken long ago, is not dead, but living still, instinct with the eternal life and energy of God who spake it, a word for to-day, as well as for bygone ages.

There is no difficulty in determining to what the Divine word is likened in the next member of the sentence, for it is expressly compared to a sword. The only difficulty lies in the construction and interpretation of the words descriptive of its achievements in this capacity. Does the word divide soul from spirit, or both soul and spirit, not only soul, but even spirit? And what are we to make of the mention of joints and marrow, after soul and spirit? Have we here a mingling of metaphor and literal truth, and an accumulation of phrase in order to heighten the impression? or is it meant that "joints and marrow" are the subject of a distinct action of the word? Believing that we have to do here with rhetoric and poetry, rather than with dogmatic theology, I prefer a free, broad interpretation of the words to that which finds in them a contribution to biblical psychology and a support for the doctrine of the trichotomy of human nature, which, with all respect for its patrons, savours in my opinion of pedantry. The simple meaning of the passage is this: The word of God divides the soul, yea, the very spirit of man, even to its joints and marrow. It is a strong, poetical way of saying that the word penetrates into the inmost recesses of our spiritual being, to the thoughts, emotions, and hidden motives, whence outward actions flow, as easily and as surely as a sword of steel cuts through the joints and marrows of the physical frame. Thus understood, the second part of the description

leads naturally up to the third, which speaks of the critical function of the word, in virtue of which it is "the candle of the Lord searching all the inward parts."

In the concluding part of the eloquent panegyric on the word, it is spoken of in a way which suggests the idea, not of a candle, but of the sun, which beholdeth all things; and in the final clause, it is said of God Himself, that all things are naked and exposed to His eyes. The word which I have rendered *exposed* is one of uncertain meaning, and untranslatable except by periphrasis. When a Greek writer used it he had a picture in his mind which charged it with a significance and force no English word can reproduce; but what the picture was it is not easy to determine. The most probable opinion is that *τραχηλίζω*, not found in classical Greek authors, was a coinage of the wrestling school, to express the act of a wrestler who overmastered his antagonist by seizing him by the neck. Hence the participle *τετραχηλισμένος* might come to mean one overpowered, as by calamity, or by passion. The verb and its compound *ἐκτραχηλίζω* occur frequently in Philo, in this tropical sense. In the Epistle to the Hebrews the meaning must be more specific, involving a reference to the effect of the grip of the wrestler on the head of his antagonist, which might be either to force it downwards, or to throw it backwards, according as he was seized behind or before. In the one case, we should render "downcast,"¹ in the other, "exposed"; the one epithet suggesting the desire of the guilty one to hide his face from the searching eye of God, the other implying that no one, however desirous, can so hide himself from the Divine gaze.²

¹ So Rendall, whose note on the passage is well worth consulting.

² The reference to Philo reminds me that another word in this eulogy on the word of God recalls him to the thoughts of one familiar with his writings. I refer to the epithet *τομώτερος*, which sounds like an echo of Philo's doctrine concerning the cutting or dividing function of the Logos in the universe, set forth at length in the book *Quis div. rer. heres*. Indeed one bent on establishing a

In the closing sentences of the chapter the writer winds up the long exhortation to steadfastness by an inspiring allusion to the sympathy of the great High Priest, who has passed out of this time-world, through the veil of the visible heavens, into the celestial world; taking care that his last word shall be of a cheering character, and also so managing that the conclusion of this hortatory section shall form a suitable introduction to the next part of his discourse. On this account vers. 14-16 might have been reserved for consideration in a future paper, but I prefer to notice them here, following the traditional division of the chapters. How truly they form a part of the exhortation which began at chap. iii. 1 appears from the repetition of phrases. "Consider the High Priest of our confession," the writer had said there; "having a High Priest, let us hold fast our confession," he says here. But it is to be noted that he does not simply repeat himself. The movement of his thought is like that of the flowing tide, which falls back upon itself, yet in each successive wave advances to a point beyond that reached by any previous one. Here for the third time Christ is desig-

close connexion between our author and Philo might find a copious supply of plausible material in this part of the epistle. Besides these two words, there are the epithet "great high priest," and the attribute of sinlessness, applied here to Christ, and to the Logos by Philo, and in the next chapter the unusual word *μετροπαθεῖν*, also occurring in Philo. Then does not the expression *ὁ λόγος τοῦ Θεοῦ* seem like an allusion to the mystic personified Logos of whom one reads everywhere in Philo? and is not this fervent eulogy on the word almost like an extract from the praises of the Logos unweariedly sung by the philosophic Jew of Alexandria? The resemblance in style is certainly striking, yet I concur in the judgment of Principal Drummond, that "there is nothing to prove conscious borrowing, and it is probable that the resemblances are due to the general condition of religious culture among the Jews" (*Philo Judæus*, vol. i., "Introduction," p. 12). In any case, whatever is to be said of the style, it is certain that our epistle is independent of Philo in thought and spirit. The word of God here is not Philo's Logos, nor is his cutting function the same. Philo calls the Logos the "cutter" (*ὁ τομεύς*), as cutting chaos into distinct things, and so creating a kosmos. The cutting function of the word in our epistle is wholly ethical. The originality of the epistle in thought is all the more remarkable if the writer was acquainted with Philo's writings, so that there is no cause for jealous denial of such acquaintance. It is a mere question of fact.

nated a High Priest, and attributes are ascribed to Him as such which are to form the theme of the next great division of the epistle, wherein the priestly office of Christ is elaborately discussed. The writer re-invites the attention of his readers to the High Priest of their confession, and in doing so uses words every one of which contains an assertion which he means to prove or illustrate, and which being proved will serve the great end of the whole epistle, the instruction and confirmation of the ignorant and tempted.

The first important word is the epithet "great" prefixed to the title High Priest. It is introduced to make the priestly office of Christ assume due importance in the minds of the Hebrews. It serves the same purpose as if the title High Priest had been written in large capitals, and asserts by implication, not merely the *reality* of Christ's priestly office, but the superiority of Christ as the High Priest of humanity over all the high priests of Israel, Aaron not excepted. As an author writing a treatise on an important theme, writes the title of the theme in letters fitted to attract notice, so the writer of our epistle places at the head of the ensuing portion this title, JESUS THE SON OF GOD THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST, insinuating thereby that He of whom he speaks is the greatest of all priests, the only real priest, the very Ideal of priesthood realized.

The expression "passed through the heavens" is also very suggestive. It hints at the right construction to be put upon Christ's departure from the earth. There is an obvious allusion to the entering of the high priest of Israel within the veil on the great day of atonement; and the idea suggested is, that the ascension of Christ was the passing of the great High Priest through the veil into the celestial sanctuary, as our representative and in our interest.

The name given to the great High Priest, "Jesus the Son of God," contributes to the argument. Jesus is the

historical person, the tempted Man ; and this part of the name lays the foundation for what is to be said in the following sentence concerning His power to sympathise. The title " Son of God," on the other hand, justifies what has been already said of the High Priest of our confession. If our High Priest be the Son of God, he may well be called the *Great*, and moreover there can be no doubt whither He has gone. Whither but to His native abode, His Father's house ?

Having thus by brief, pregnant phrase hinted the thoughts he means to prove, our author proceeds to address to his readers an exhortation, which is repeated at the close of the long discussion on the priesthood of Christ to which these sentences are the prelude.¹ In doing so he gives prominence to that feature of Christ's priestly character of which alone he has as yet spoken explicitly : His power to sympathise, acquired and guaranteed by His experience of temptation.² He presents Christ to view as the Sympathetic One in golden words which may be regarded as an inscription on the breastplate of the High Priest of humanity : " We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities ; but one that hath been tempted in all points like ourselves, without sin."

It is noteworthy that the doctrine of Christ's sympathy is here stated in a defensive, apologetic manner, " We have not a High Priest who cannot be touched," as if there were some one maintaining the contrary. This defensive attitude may be conceived of as assumed over against two possible objections to the reality of Christ's sympathy, one drawn from His dignity as the Son of God, the other from His sinlessness. Both objections are dealt with in the only way open to one who addresses weak faith ; *viz.* not by elaborate or philosophical argument, but by strong assertion.

¹ Chap. x. 19-23.

² Chap. ii. 17, 18.

As the psalmist said to the desponding, "Wait, I say, on the Lord," and as Jesus said to disciples doubting the utility of prayer, "I say unto you, Ask, and ye shall receive," so our author says to dispirited Christians, "We have *not* a High Priest who *cannot* be touched with sympathy"—this part of his assertion disposing of doubt engendered by Christ's dignity—"but one who has been tempted in all respects as we are, apart from sin"—this part of the assertion meeting doubt based on Christ's sinlessness. How this can be is a question theologians may discuss, but which our author passes over in silence.¹

To this strong assertion of Christ's power to sympathise is fitly appended the final exhortation: "Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and grace for seasonable succour." Specially noteworthy are the words *προσερχώμεθα μετὰ παρρησίας*, *Let us approach confidently*. They have more than practical import: they are of theoretic significance; they strike the doctrinal keynote of the epistle: Christianity the religion of free access. In the opening paper I said that this great thought first finds distinct, clear utterance in chap. vi. 20, where Christ is called our *forerunner*. But it is hinted, though not so plainly, here, it being implied that the priesthood of Christ, in virtue of His sympathy, and of other properties remaining to be mentioned, for the first time makes free, fearless, close approach to God possible. There is a latent contrast between Christianity and Leviticalism, as in a corresponding passage in Paul's epistles there is an expressed contrast between Christianity and Mosaism. "Having therefore," writes the apostle, "such a hope, we use great boldness (of speech, *παρρησίᾳ*), and are not as Moses, who put a veil upon his face";² the contrast

¹ The sinlessness of Christ here asserted means, in the first place, that He never yielded to temptation, but that implies as its source absolute sinlessness.

² 2 Cor. iii. 12, 13.

being between the free, frank, unreserved speech of the minister of a religion of life, righteousness, and good hope, and the mystery observed by the minister of a religion of condemnation, death, and despair. The one cannot be too plain spoken, because he has good news to tell; the other has to practise reserve, to keep up respect for a rude, imperfect *cultus* which cannot afford to have the whole truth told. Paul's contrast relates to a diversity in the attitude assumed by the ministers of the two religions towards *men*. That latent in the text before us, on the other hand, relates to diversity of attitude towards *God*: the Christian has courage to draw near to God, while the votary of the old religion lacks courage. But the reason of the contrast is the same in both cases; *viz.* because Christianity is the religion of good hope. "Having such hope (as is inspired by the nature of Christianity), we are outspoken," says Paul; "having the better hope based on the priesthood of Christ, we draw nigh to God confidently," says the author of our epistle.

The contrast is none the less real that the expression "to draw near" was applied to acts of worship under the Levitical system. Every act of worship in any religion whatever may be called an approach to Deity. Nevertheless religions may be wide apart as the poles in respect to the measure in which they draw near to God. In one religion the approach may be ceremonial only, while the spirit stands afar off in fear. In another, the approach may be spiritual, with mind and heart, in intelligence, trust, and love, and with the confidence which these inspire. Such an approach alone is real, and deserves to be called a drawing near to God. Such an approach was first made possible by Christ, and on this account it is that the religion which bears His name is the perfect, final, perennial religion.

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