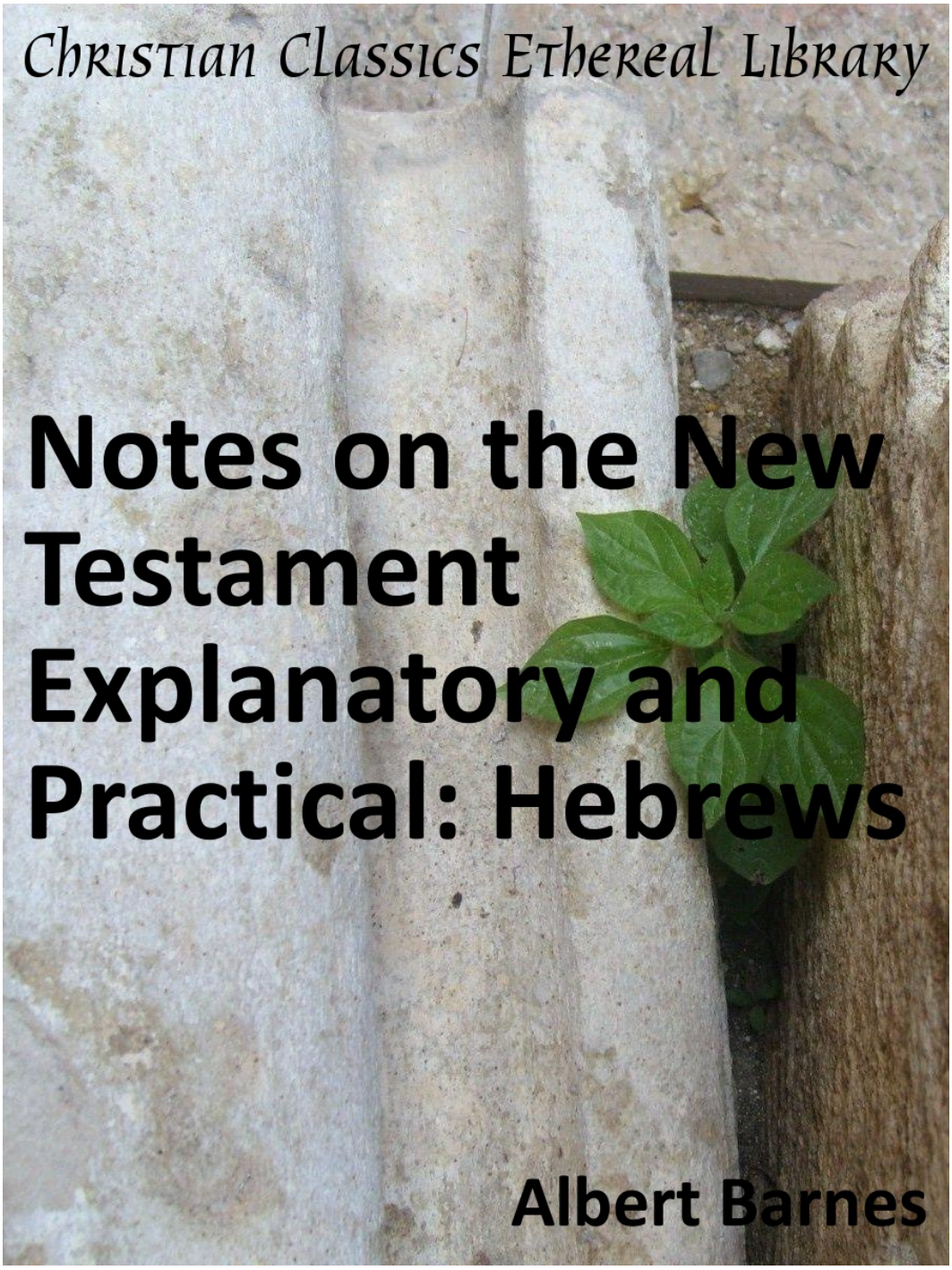

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Notes on the New Testament Explanatory and Practical: Hebrews
Albert Barnes

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Notes on the New Testament Explanatory and Practical: Hebrews

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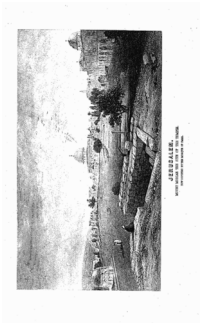
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NOTES
ON THE
NEW TESTAMENT
EXPLANATORY AND PRACTICAL
BY
ALBERT BARNES

ENLARGED TYPE EDITION

EDITED BY
ROBERT FREW, D.D.

WITH NUMEROUS ADDITIONAL NOTES AND A SERIES OF ENGRAVINGS

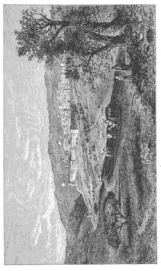
HEBREWS

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1951

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Lithoprinters
ANN ARBOR, MICHIGAN, U.S.A.
1951

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JERUSALEM.
Remains of an Ancient Arch near the south-west angle of the Modern Wall.



JERUSALEM.
The Pool of Bethesda, according to tradition.

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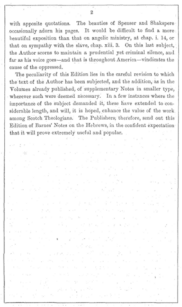
PUBLISHERS' PREFACE.

The Epistle to the Hebrews forms a most important part of the New Testament. It exhibits the connection between the Old and New Dispensations of Religion, throws a flood of light on the Old Testament Scriptures, and illustrates the Harmony of the Scheme of Redemption, in the midst of changing ages and economies. It contains the most sublime descriptions of the dignity and glory of Christ's person, the excellence of his sacrifice, and the superiority of his gospel; intermingled with hortatory matter, wherever the grand argument can admit of a pause, full of solemnity and pathos.

The Author's Commentary will be regarded by many as even superior, either to that on Romans or Corinthians. Indeed, it may be fairly questioned if there be any English Commentary on the Hebrews which combines, to so great an extent, the advantages both of a critical and practical expositor. Two classes of readers, therefore, seldom both pleased with the same work, will, it is believed, here find equal satisfaction. The critic may have his difficulties resolved, and the Christian his heart improved. In the "Introduction," various important questions, which have long interested the learned, but which in many commentaries are either passed in silence, or dismissed with a word, are here ably handled, if not in every case satisfactorily solved. The points alluded to are those regarding the Pauline origin of the Epistle, the parties to whom it was addressed, the language in which it was written, with its date, occasion, scope, and character. At the same time the critical and doctrinal difficulties throughout the Epistle are fairly met, and treated with ability, scholarship, and candour. In this department of his labours, the Author is fully up to the modern mark, and never leaves the reader to complain that a judgment has been formed in ignorance of what the more recent authorities have alleged, while his independence is everywhere manifest. His criticisms and doctrinal discussions are frequently relieved by the most beautiful and pertinent illustrations. The poets furnish him

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with appeals quotations. The beauties of Spenser and Shakspere occasionally adorn his pages. It would be difficult to find a more beautiful exposition than that on angelic ministry, at chap. i. 14, or that on sympathy with the slave, chap. xiii. 3. On this last subject, the Author seems to maintain a prudential yet criminal silence, and far as his voice goes—and that is throughout America—vindicates the cause of the oppressed.

The peculiarity of this Edition lies in the careful revision to which the text of the Author has been subjected, and the additions, as in the Volumes already published, of supplementary Notes in smaller type, wherever such were deemed necessary. In a few instances where the importance of the subject demanded it, these have extended to considerable length, and will, it is hoped, enhance the value of the work among Scotch Theologians. The Publishers, therefore, send out this Edition of Barnes' Notes on the Hebrews, in the confident expectation that it will prove extremely useful and popular.



INTRODUCTION.

§ 1. *Preliminary Remarks.*

It need not be said that this epistle has given rise to much discussion among writers on the New Testament. Indeed there is probably no part of the Bible in regard to which so many conflicting views have been entertained. The name of the author, the time and place where the epistle was written, the character of the Jews to whom it was addressed, the design with which it was written, and the persons to whom it was addressed, all have given rise to great difference of opinion. Among the cases of this are the following:—The name of the author is not mentioned. The church to which it was sent, if sent to any particular church, is not designated. There are no internal marks of time by which we can determine, as in the writings of Paul, by which we can determine the time when it was written.

It is not the design of these Notes to go into an extended examination of these questions. Those who are disposed to pursue these inquiries, and to examine the questions which have been started in regard to the epistle, can find them discussed in the Introductions to the New Testament, as in those to Michaelis' *Introduction*, in the *Prolegomena* of Kuinoel, in Hug's *Introduction*, and particularly in Professor Stuart's incalculable *Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews*. No other work on this portion of the New Testament is so complete as his, and in the Introduction he has left nothing to be desired on the questions which he discusses.

Controversies early arose in the church on a great variety of questions pertaining to this epistle, which are not yet fully settled. Most of those questions, however, pertain to the literature of the epistle, and however they may be decided, are not such as to affect the respect which a Christian ought to have for the epistle, or the authority with which it is to be received by whom it was written; and in what language, and at what time it was composed—questions which, in whatever way they may be settled, do not affect its canonical authority, and should not shake the confidence of Christians in it as a part of divine revelation. The only inquiry on these points which it is important to make is, Was the epistle written by an inspired man? Has it a place in the canon of Scripture; are of such a kind as to allow Christians to read it as a part of the oracles of God? May we sit down to it feeling that we are conversing with God, and that we are instructed by a book which is a result of revealed truth? Other questions are interesting in their places, and the solution of them is worth all which it has cost; but they need not embarrass us here, nor claim our attention as preliminary to the exposition of the epistle. All that will be attempted, therefore, in this Introduction, will be briefly to examine the few questions which will enable us to find clear that this epistle has of right a place in the volume of revealed truth, and is of authority to regulate the faith and practice of mankind.



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§ 2. *To whom was the Epistle written?*

It purports to have been written to the "Hebrews." This is not found, indeed, in the body of the epistle, though it occurs in the subscription at the end. It differs from all the other epistles of Paul in this respect, and from most of the others in the New Testament. In all of the other epistles of Paul, the author's name is found in the beginning, where the epistle commenced. This, however, commences in the form of an essay on Scripture; nor is there anywhere in the epistle any direct intimation to what church it was sent. The subscription at the end is of no authority, as it cannot be supposed that the author himself would affix it to the epistle, and as it is known that many of these subscriptions are false. See the remarks at the commencement of the Epistle to the Romans. Several questions present themselves here which may briefly be considered.

(1.) *What is the evidence that it was written to the Hebrews?* To reply to this we may observe,—(1) That the inscription at the commencement, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews," though not affixed by the author, may be allowed to express the current sense of the church in answering to the question to whom it was sent, and may be of some value in judging. These inscriptions at the commencement of the epistles have hitherto in general escaped the suspicion of spuriousness, to which the subscriptions at the close are justly exposed (Michaelis). They should not in any case be called in question, unless there is good reason for doing it either from the epistle itself, or from other sources. (2) This inscription is found in all our present Greek manuscripts, and in nearly all the ancient versions. It is found in the Peshito, the old Syriac version, which was made in the first or in the early part of the second century. It is the title given to the epistle by the Fathers of the second century, and onward (Stuart). (3) The testimony of the church in all ages has been that it was written to the Hebrews in Scripture and uniform. With one accord they declare this, and this should be regarded as proof of great value. Unless there is some good reason to depart from such evidence, it should be considered as decisive. In this case there is no good reason for calling it in question, but every reason for receiving it. See Stuart, vol. i. p. 3, 4. (4) No one has ever, to anyone who has doubted it. (5) The internal evidence is of the highest character that it was written to Hebrew converts. It treats of Hebrew institutions. It explains their nature. It makes no allusion to Gentile readers or converts. It all along supposes that those to whom it was sent were familiar with the Jewish rites. It is addressed to those who were with the functions of the priestly office, and with the whole structure of the Jewish religion. No other persons than those who had been Jews are addressed or supposed to be capable. There is no attempt to explain the nature or design of any of the rites. They were supposed to be well known. At the same time it is equally clear that they were not familiar with the Christian religion—who are addressed. The writer addresses them as Christians, not as those who were to be converted to Christianity; he explains to them the Christian system, not the Jewish; he labours to lead them away from Judaism; he endeavours to guard them from apostasy, as if there were danger that they would relapse again into the system from which they were converted. These considerations seem to be decisive; and in the view of all



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who have written on the epistle, as well as of the Christian world at large, they settle the question. It has never been held that the epistle was directed to Gentiles; and in all the opinions and questions which have been started on this subject, it has been admitted that, whenever they resided, the persons to whom the epistle was addressed were originally Hebrews who had been converted to the Christian faith. (1) *To what particular church of the Hebrews was it written?* Very different opinions have been held on this question. The celebrated Storr held that it was written to the Hebrew part of the churches in Galatia, and that the Epistle to the Galatians was addressed to the Gentile part of those churches. Others have supposed that it was addressed to the Hebrew churches in Macedonia, and particularly to the church of Thessalonica. Bolton maintains that it was addressed to the Jewish Christians who fled from Palestine in a time of persecution, about the year 65, and who were scattered through Asia Minor. Michael Weber supposed that it was addressed to the church at Jerusalem; Schulthess, that it was written to the church at Antioch; and Wetstein supposes that it was written to the church at Rome. Most of these opinions are mere conjectures, and all of them depend on circumstances which furnish only slight evidence of probability. Those who are disposed to examine them, and to see them confuted, may consult Stuart's Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, pp. 31-36. The only opinion worthy of notice is that the epistle was addressed to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine. The reasons for this opinion, briefly, are the following: (1) The testimony of the ancients, which is uniform and strong, that the epistle was not only written to Hebrew Christians, but to those who were in Palestine. Lardner affirms this to be the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Eusebius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, and Theophylact; and adds that this was the general opinion of the ancients (Works, vol. vi, pp. 93, 94, ed. Lond. 1829, 8vo). Stuart has examined the testimonies which Lardner adduces in this supposition. That inscription, though not appended by the hand of the author, was early affixed to it. It is found not only in the Greek manuscripts, but in all the early versions, as the Syriac and the Italic; and was doubtless affixed at a very early period, and by whomsoever it was done, it certainly expresses the opinion of the early church. If the epistle, as it now is, would be made out this point, and unless there is good evidence to the contrary, this ought to be allowed to determine the question. That inscription is, "The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews." But who are the Hebrews—the Ebionites? Professor Stuart has endeavored to show that this was a term which the Jewish Christians in Palestine did not apply to themselves to distinguish them from foreign Jews, who were called *Hellenists*. Comp. my Notes on Acts vi. 1. Bertholdt declares that there is not a single example which can be found in early times of Jewish Christians out of Palestine being called Hebrews. See a Dissertation on the Greek Language in Palestine, and on the Hebrews, by Dr. Thomas Burgess, in the Classical Journal, vol. xxiv, pp. 341, 342. Comp. also Robinson's *Lex.* on the word Ἑβραῖος. If this be so, and if the inscription be of any authority, then it goes far to settle the question. (2) The internal evidence is in favor of this opinion. The passages in vi. 1-8; x. 26-31; xii. 25, Phil. iii. 18, 19, to the first of which it is certainly akin (it is used in the same sense), and in both the object of which it is probable. There can be no doubt, it seems to me, that an ancient writer acquainted with the usual



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sense of the word *Hebrew*, would understand an inscription of this kind—"written to the Hebrews"—as designed for the inhabitants of Palestine, and not for the Jews of other countries. (3) There are some passages in the epistle itself which seem to indicate that it was written to those who were of the Hebrew race, in contradistinction to those who had been converted from the Gentile to the Christianity. As those passages are not conclusive, and as their force has been called in question, and with much propriety, by Professor Stuart (pp. 32-34), I shall merely refer to them. They can be examined at leisure by those who are so disposed, and though they do not prove that the epistle was addressed to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine, yet they can be fairly adduced to show that it was addressed to those who were Hebrews, as attached to those on this supposition. They are the following: chap. i. 1; ii. 3; ii. 1-4; v. 12; iv. 4-6; x. 30-39, 32-34; xiii. 13, 14. The argument of Lardner is, that these would be more applicable to their condition than to others; a position which I think cannot be doubted. Some of them are indeed applicable to Jews in other lands, but taken in connection with regard to some of them it cannot be certainly demonstrated that the state of things referred to existed in Judea; but taken together they would be more applicable *by far* to them than to the circumstances of any others of which we have knowledge; and this may be allowed to have some weight at least in favor of the opinion. (4) The general drift of the argument and the theme of the epistle corresponds with the supposition that it was written to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine. The passages referred to in the previous remarks (3) might be adduced here as proof. But there is other proof. It might have been otherwise. There might be such strong internal proof that it was written to Hebrews in Judea, or to those who had fled from Judea, as to make all the evidence derived from an inscription like that prefixed to this epistle, and all the evidence derived from tradition. But it is not so here. All the circumstances referred to in the epistle; the general strain of remark; the argument; the allusions, are just such as would be likely to be found in an epistle addressed to the Hebrew Christians in Palestine, and they would not be likely to occur in an epistle addressed to any other place or people. They are such as the following: (a) The familiar acquaintance with the Jewish institutions supposed by the writer to exist among those to whom it was sent—a familiarity hardly to be expected *even of Jews who lived in other countries*. (b) The fact that the persons addressed had been exposed to their former state, of apostatizing from Christianity, and of embracing again the Jewish rites and ceremonies—a danger that would exist nowhere else in so great a degree as in Judea. Comp. chap. ii. 1-3; iii. 7-15, 21; iv. 1; vi. 1-6; x. 25-35. (c) The nature of the discussion in the epistle—not unfolding the nature of the Christian institutions, but showing the evils of drinks, which occupied so much of the attention of the apostles and early Christians in other places—but a discussion relating to the whole structure of the Jewish religion preparatory to the Christian, and showing the nature and use of the temple, &c. These great themes would be more likely to arise in Judea than elsewhere, and it was important to discuss them fully, as it is done in this epistle. In other places they would be of less interest, and would excite less difficulty. (d) The allusion to local places and events; to facts in their history; and to the circumstances of public worship, which would be better understood there than elsewhere. There are no allusions—or if there



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are they are very brief and infrequent—to heathen customs, games, races and the like, which would be likely to occur in an epistle addressed to the Gentiles. Those to whom the epistle was sent, are presumed to have an intimate and minute knowledge of the Hebrew history, and such a knowledge as could be hardly supposed elsewhere. Comp. chap. xi, particularly ver. 32-38. Thus it is implied that they so well understood the subjects relating to the Jewish wars, that it was not necessary to refer to them more than is done particularly. See chap. ix. 5. Of what other persons could this be so appropriately said as of the dwellers in Palestine? (e) The circumstances of trial and persecution so often referred to in the epistle, agree well with the known condition of the church in Palestine. That it was subjected to great trials, and that it was in danger of apostatizing from the faith, is apparent; and it is probable that there were more vexatious and grievous exactions, that there was more spite and malice; that there were more of the trials arising from the separation of families and the loss of property attending a profession of Christianity in Palestine than anywhere else in the early Christian church. These circumstances, however, do not furnish any proof of the demonstration—so far to settle the question. They seem to me so strong as to preclude any reasonable doubt, and are such as the mind can repose on with a great degree of confidence in regard to the original destination of the epistle.

(III.) *Was it addressed to a particular church in Palestine, or to the Hebrew Christians there generally?*

Whether it was addressed to the churches in general in Palestine, or to some particular church there, it is now impossible to determine. Prof. Stuart inclines to the opinion that it was addressed to the church in Cæsarea. The assistants in general supposed it was addressed to the church in Jerusalem. Others have supposed that it was addressed to the church in Joppa, or was directed to some particular church. But the means of determining this question are put beyond our reach, and it is of little importance to settle the question. From the allusions to the temple, the priesthood, the sacrifices, and the whole train of peculiar institutions there, it would seem probable that it was addressed to the church in Jerusalem, as that was the place of the temple, and the centre of religious influence; and as there was a large and flourishing church in that city, this opinion would seem to have great probability; but it is impossible now to determine it. If we suppose that the author sent the epistle, in the first instance, to some local church, near the central seat of the Jewish religion, and that it was designed, by the use of the epistle, to direct the particular communications to the last verse—we shall make a supposition which, so far as can now be ascertained, will accord with the truth in the case.

§ 3. *The Author of the Epistle.*

To those who are familiar with the investigations which have taken place in regard to this epistle, it need not be said that the question of its authorship has given rise to much discussion. The design of these Notes does not permit me to enter into that discussion. It has been, in modern times, a favorite investigation pursued at length, and to see the objections to the Pauline origin examined to a most satisfactory manner, can find it done in the Introduction to the Epistle to the Hebrews, by Prof. Stuart, pp. 77-209. All that my purpose requires it to state, in a very brief manner, the evidence on which it is ascribed to the apostle Paul. That evidence is, briefly, the following:—



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and had spent the early part of his life at Jerusalem in the careful study of the Old Testament, in the examination of the prevalent opinions, and in the attentive observance of the rites of religion. The other apostles had been fishermen of Galilee, unlearned men, who had not enjoyed the opportunities with few of the opportunities which Paul had had for becoming acquainted with the institutions of the temple service. This consideration is fatal, in my view, to the claim which has been set up for Clement as the author of the epistle. It is wholly incredible that a foreigner should be so familiar with the Jewish institutions as the writer of this epistle is, and that Paul the apostle manifestly was. (2) There is the same preference for Christianity over Judaism in this epistle which is shown by Paul in his other epistles, and exhibited in the same form. Among those points are the following: *The gospel is superior to the law.* Comp. Gal. iii. 19; with Heb. i. 1, 2; ii. 2-4; viii. 6-13; x. 1; xi. 39, 40. *The gospel holds out superior motives and encouragements to piety.* Comp. Gal. iii. 23; iv. 5, 9; Rom. viii. 15-17; Gal. iv. 6; v. 18; 1 Cor. vi. 19; Gal. v. 16; with Heb. ix. 14; x. 22. *The gospel is the real and permanent dispensation of mercy.* Comp. Gal. iii. 24; 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9; Rom. iii. 25; iv. 16, 23; Eph. i. 7; Rom. v. 1, 2; Gal. ii. 16; and the same views in Heb. xii. 18-24; ix. 9; x. 4, 11; xi. 39-40; viii. 10; ix. 24. *The Christian religion was designed for all men.* Comp. Gal. iii. 28; Rom. iii. 29; x. 12; 1 Cor. xii. 13; Col. iii. 11; and for similar views compare Heb. viii. 6-8, 11; xii. 17-19; x. 1-34. *The person of the Redeemer is presented in the same light by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews and by Paul.* See Phil. ii. 6-11; Col. i. 15-20; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Eph. iii. 9; 1 Cor. viii. 6; Col. i. 16; Heb. i. 2; Rom. xi. 36; Heb. ii. 10; Rom. v. 12-21; Heb. ii. 14, 15; ii. 4; x. 13. *The death of Christ is the propitiatory sacrifice for sin.* See 1 Tim. i. 15; 1 Cor. xv. 3; Rom. viii. 32; iii. 24; Gal. i. 4; ii. 20; 1 Cor. v. 7; Eph. i. 7; Col. i. 14; 1 Tim. ii. 6; 1 Cor. vi. 20; vii. 23; Rom. v. 10-21; ii. 10, 18; viii. 3; 1 Tim. i. 1, 2. For similar views, see Heb. ii. 9, 14, 15; ix. 14, 15, 26-28; x. 10-14; xiii. 12. *The general arrangement of this epistle and of the acknowledged epistles of Paul are the same.* It resembles particularly the epistles to the Romans and the Galatians, where we have first a doctrinal and then a practical part. The same is true also to some extent of the epistles to the Ephesians, Colossians, and Philippians. The epistle to the Hebrews, as appears from chap. xiii. 22, and from x. 19, is in principally doctrinal; the remainder is mainly practical. *The manner of appealing to, and applying the Jewish Scriptures, is the same* in this epistle as in those of Paul. The following examples, selected from the diligent comparison between them, will show this with sufficient clearness. The general remark to be made in view of this comparison is, that the Epistle to the Hebrews is just such an one as Paul might be expected to write, that it agrees with what we know to have been his early training, his views, his manner of life, his opinions, and his habits in writing; that it accords



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better with his views than with those of any other known writer of antiquity; and that, in fact, the difficulties attending the subject are all removed, when placed, and the general object which he had in view. Its satisfactory are those views to my mind, that they seem to have all the form of demonstration which can be had in regard to any anonymous publication, and it is a matter of wonder that so much doubt has been entertained in reference to the authorship of this epistle.

It is difficult to account for the fact that the name of the author was omitted. It is found in every other epistle of Paul, and in general it is appended to his other epistles in the New Testament. It is omitted, however, in the three epistles of John, for reasons which are now unknown. And there is no difficulty in accounting for the omission in the case of Hebrews, if the simple fact is, that it is anonymous; and whoever was the author, the same difficulty will exist in accounting for it. If this fact will prove that Paul was not the author, it would prove the same thing in regard to any other person, and would thus be ultimately conclusive evidence that it *had* no author. But this is not necessary to the argument, and I shall not dwell upon it here. The most probable opinion, as it seems to me, is this. The name of Paul was odious in the dress. He was regarded by the nation as an apostate from their religion, and everywhere they showed peculiar malignity against him. See the Acts of the Apostles. The fact that he was so regarded by Jews might effectually influence even those who had been converted from Judaism to Christianity. They lived in Palestine. They were near the scene of his labors, and were familiar with the prejudices which existed, and the evidence that they broke off from those observances at once on their conversion to Christianity. Paul was abroad. It might have been reported that he was preaching against the temple and its sacrifices, and even the Jewish Christians in Palestine might have supposed that he was carrying matters too far. He was accustomed to do it in his own name, and it was his habit to announce his name at the outset, for it might have aroused prejudices which a wise man would wish to allay. But if he could present an argument, somewhat in the form of an essay, showing that he believed that the Jewish institutions were appointed by God, and that he was not an apostate and an infidel, he might be willing to withhold his name. He could thus meet many of the prevailing views of the Christians in Palestine, and which would be adapted to strengthen them in the faith of the gospel, and to explain to them the reasons why he had left the Jewish rites. He could do this without difficulty, and they would be prepared to have that Paul was the author without prejudice or alarm. Accordingly he thus conducts the argument, and at the close gives them such intimations that they would understand who wrote it without much difficulty. If this was the matter, it was an instance of true wisdom, and a manifestation of that kindness of heart which was so characteristic of the apostle. I have no doubt that this was the true motive. It would be seen known who wrote the epistle; and accordingly we have seen the authorship was never a matter of dispute in the Eastern churches.

§ 4. *The Time when the Epistle was written.*

In regard to the time when this epistle was written, and the place where, critics have been better agreed than on most of the questions which have been started in regard to it. Still was of opinion that it was written by Paul in



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the year 63, in some part of Italy, soon after he had been released from imprisonment at Rome. Wieseler was of the same opinion. Tillemont also places this epistle in the year 63, and supposes that it was written while Paul was at Rome, or at least in Italy, and soon after he was released from imprisonment. Lardner supposes that it was written in the beginning of the year 63, and soon after the apostle was released from his confinement. This also is the opinion of Calmet. The circumstances in the epistle which will enable us to form an opinion on the question about the time when it was written are these:

(1) It was written while the temple was still standing, and before Jerusalem was destroyed. This is evident from the whole structure of the epistle. There is no allusion to the destruction of the temple, which would have been a most striking one if they had been aware of it. But it would have been a contributed much to the object in view, and would have furnished an irrefragable argument that the institutions of the Jews were threaded to be superseded by another and a more perfect system. Moreover, there are allusions to the sacrifices and to the services of the temple as being performed. See Heb. ix. 6-9. But the allusions would have been unsuitable in the form of which the epistle was written before that event.

(2) It was evidently written before the civil wars and commotions in Judea, which terminated in the destruction of the city and nation. This is clear, because there are no allusions to such disorders or troubles in Palestine, and there is no intimation that they were distressing the civil freedom to a state of anarchy, as they were A. D. 64. Paul was imprisoned A.D. 61, and evidently the epistle was written before that time.

(3) They were not suffering the evils of violent persecution. They had indeed endured persecution (chap. x. 32-34), but it was not then raging. Several deaths (Acts vii., xii.), but there was no violent and bloody persecution then raging in which they were called to defend their religion at the expense of blood and life, chap. x. 32, 34. But this persecution under Nero began in the year 64, and though it began at Rome, and was confined to a comparatively few in the city, yet it was known that it was soon to spread abroad, and it is to be presumed that if such a persecution was raging at the place where the epistle was written there would have been some allusion to this fact. It may be set down, therefore, that it was written before the year 64.

(4) It is equally true that the epistle was written during the latter part of the persecution of the Christians by the Hebrews. Many of those to whom they were illuminated, they endured a great fight of afflictions, and when they were made a gazing-stock, both by reproaches and afflictions, and took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, or were plundered by their oppressors (chap. x. 32-34); he speaks of them as having been so long converted that they ought to be teachers of others (chap. v. 12). From this it is evident that it is to be inferred that they were not recent converts, but that the church there had been established for a considerable period. It may be added, that it was after the writer had been imprisoned — he appears in Cæsarea (see § 2) — when they had visited him there, i. e., Hebrews who were converted to Christianity, and that the time when the epistle was written Epaphras, Philippians, and Colossians, he had hopes of deliverance. Timothy was evidently with him. But now he was absent, chap. xiii. 23. In the epistle he



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of that word—denoting both a *covenant* and a *testament*, or will. The Hebrew word—בְּרִית *berith*—has no such double signification. It means *covenant* only, and is never used in the sense of the word *will*, or testament. The proper translation of that word would be συνθήκη—*synthēkē*—but the translators of the Septuagint sedlessly used the former, διαθήκη—*diathēkē*—which, in the time of the apostles, meant *testament* only. The mistake had been done by a translator. It must have been by the original author, for it is incorporated into the argument. (d) In chap. x. 5–9, the author proves that Christ came to make an atonement for sin, and that in order to this it was necessary that he should have a human body. He shows not only that this was predicted, but that it was actually done. He quotes Psa. xl. 6–8, (Heb. x. 5–9,) "A body hast thou prepared for me." But the Hebrew here is, "Mine ears hast thou opened." This passage would have been much less pertinent than the other form—"a body hast thou prepared me;" and indeed it is not easy to see how it would bear at all on the object in view. See xx. 21. The Septuagint, however, has the reading, "a body hast thou prepared for me," a fact which demonstrates, whatever difficulties there may be about the principle on which he makes the quotation, that the epistle was written in Greek. It may be added, that it has in no respects the appearance of a translation. It is not stiff, forced, or constrained in style, as translations usually are. It flows freely, and has all the characteristics of an original writing, and has all the appearance of being an original composition. So clear have these considerations appeared, that the great body of critics now concur in the opinion that the epistle was originally written in Greek.

§ 6. *The Design and general Argument of the Epistle.*

The general purpose of this epistle is, to preserve those to whom it was sent from the danger of apostasy. Their danger on this subject did not arise so much from persecution, as from the circumstances which were fitted to attract them back to the splendid rites of the Jewish religion. The former, though it existed, was still startling. The morning and evening sacrifice was still offered. The splendid rites of that imposing religion were yet observed. The authority of the law was undisputed. Moses was a lawgiver, sent from God, and no one doubted that the Jewish form of religion had been established by God. To the Jews, as to no other people, the ancient form of religion had been founded amidst remarkable manifestations of the Deity—in flames, and smoke, and thunder; it had been communicated by the ministration of angels; it had on its side and in its favour all the recollections and sanction of a remote antiquity. It commended itself by the pomp of its rites, by the splendour of its temple worship, by the fact that the Jewish form of religion had little or nothing of this to commend it. It was of recent origin. It was founded by the Man of Nazareth, who had been trained up in the lowly walks of life, who had enjoyed none, and who had despised the ordinary advantages of education. It was not, and had not been, attended by splendid temple service; it had none of the pomp and pageantry, the music and the magnificence of the ancient religion. It had no splendid array of priests in gorgeous vestments, and it had not been imparted by the authority of such. Fishermen were its ministers; and by the body of the nation it was



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was regarded as a schism, or heresy, that enlisted in its favour only the most humble and obscure of the nation.

In these circumstances, how natural was it for the enemies of the gospel in Judea to contrast the two forms of religion, and how keenly would Christians there feel it! All that was said of the authority and the divine origin of the Jewish religion they knew and admitted; all that was said of its splendour and its imposing rites they could not deny. All that they had ever known of their own religion they were constrained to concede also. Their danger was not that which arises from persecution. It was that of being affected by considerations like these, of relapsing again into the religion of their fathers, and of apostatizing from the gospel; and it was a danger which beset no other part of the Christian church.

To meet and counteract this danger was the design of this epistle. Accordingly the writer contrasts the two religions in all the great points on which the minds of Christians in Judea would be likely to be affected, and shows the superiority of the Christian religion over the Jewish in every respect. He commences with the fact that God had spoken in a former dispensation, and addressed their fathers. He begins by showing that the author of the Christian religion was superior in rank to any and all who had ever delivered the word of God to man. He was superior to the prophets, and even to the angels. He was over all things, and all things were subject to him. These points he establishes in chapters i. and ii. In chapters iii. and iv. he shows that Jesus, chap. i., 5. He was superior to Moses, the great Jewish lawgiver, whom they venerated so much, and on whom they so much prided themselves, chap. iii. Having shown that the Great Founder of the Christian religion was superior to the prophets, to Moses, and to the angels, the writer proceeds to show that the priesthood of the Christian religion was also far, far more exalted than that of the Jews, and of whom the Jewish high-priest was but a type and emblem. He shows that all the rites of the ancient religion, splendid as they were, were also but types, and were to vanish away—for they had had their fulfilment in the sacrifice of the Christian faith. He shows that the Jewish high-priest entered into the material sanctuary made with comparatively earthly hands; that the Jewish high-priest did—for he went back to Melchisedec, who lived long before Aaron; and that he had far superior dignity, from the fact that he had entered into the Holy of Holies in heaven. The Jewish high-priest entered once a year into the most holy place in the earthly temple; but Christ entered into the true Holy of Holies, the Most Holy place—of which that was but the type and emblem—into heaven. In short, whatever there was of dignity and honour in the Jewish faith had more than its counterpart in the Christian religion; and while the Christian religion was permanent, that was fading. The rites of the Jewish system, magnificent as they were, were but shadows, and the Christian was the substance and shadows of things to come. They had their fulfilment in Christianity. That had an Author more exalted in rank by far than the author of the Jewish religion; it had a High-priest more elevated and enduring; it had rites which bring us more near to God. It was the substance of what in the temple service was typical and shadowy. The great object of the writer of this epistle endeavours to preserve them from apostasy. Why should they go back? Why should they return to a less perfect system? Why go back from the substance to the shadow? Why turn away from the true sacrifice



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to the type and emblem? Why linger around the earthly tabernacle, and contemplate the high-priest there, while they had a more perfect and glorious High-priest, who had entered into the heavens? And why should they turn away from the only perfect sacrifice—the great offering made for transgressors—and look to the blood of bulls and goats, and the ashes of a heifer? And why forsake the perfect system—the system that was to endure for ever—for that which was soon to vanish away? The author of this epistle is very careful to assure them that if they thus apostatized, there could be no hope for them. If they now rejected the sacrifice of the Son of God, there was no other sacrifice for sin. The Jew had no such sacrifice in his religion. It was designed to show all bloody offerings. It was not to be repeated. If that was rejected, there was no other. The Jewish rites were soon to pass away; and even if they were not, they could not cleanse the consciences from sin. Wounded, then, though they might be—recalled, offended, estranged—they should not apostatize. They should not turn away from their God; they should not neglect him who spake to them from heaven, for its dignity, rank, and authority he far surpassed all who in former times had made known the will of God to men.

This epistle, therefore, occupies a most important place in the volume of inspiration. It is the only part of the New Testament which gives us the most full explanation which we have of the meaning of the Jewish institutions. In the Epistle to the Romans we have a system of religious doctrine, and particularly a defence of the great doctrine of justification by faith. Important doctrines are discussed in the other epistles, but there was something wanting to show the nature of the Jewish rites, and their relation to, and their connection with the Christian scheme; something which would show us how the one was preparatory to the other; and, I may add, something that would restrain the conjectures in endeavouring to show how the one was designed to introduce the other. The one was a system of types and shadows. And the other is the full development of the great truths which they typified, emblems and analogies. This has been attended abundantly in the experience of the Christian church, from the time of Origen to the present. Systems of divinity, commentaries, and sermons have been filled with the most fanciful views of sacred imagination, and with a host of false types; everything pertaining to the tabernacle, to its different hidden meanings in every ceremony, and to suggest every pin and hook and instrument of the tabernacle as designed to inculcate some truth, and to shadow forth some fact or doctrine of the Christian religion. This has been done, doubtless, in many cases in a way that is, to foster from the imagination and fond it by severe rules, and to restrain the vagaries of honest but credulous devotion. Such a book we have in the Epistle to the Hebrews. The ancient system is there explained by one who had been brought up in the midst of it, and who understood it perfectly, and who was able to show how it was designed to introduce the Christian economy; by one who was under the influence of divine inspiration, and who could not err. The Bible would have been incomplete without this book; and when I think of the relation between the Jewish and the Christian economy, when I would see the full grace in heaven, and ask for that which gives completeness to the whole, I turn instinctively to the Epistle to the Hebrews. When I wish also that which shall give me the most elevated



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view of the Great Author of Christianity and of his work, and the most clear conceptions of the sacrifice which he made for sin, and when I look for consolations that shall be most effectual in restraining the soul from apostasy, and for consolations to enable it to bear trials with patience and with hope, my mind comes to this book, and I feel that the book of revelation, and the hopes of man, would be incomplete without it.

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THE EPISTLE OF

PAUL THE APOSTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

CHAPTER I.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

The design of the apostle is to commend the Christian religion to those who were addressed in it in such a manner as to prevent their apostasy from it. This is done, principally, by showing its superiority to the Mosaic system. The great danger of Christians in Palestine was of the influence of the Jewish religion, the imposing nature of its rites, the public sentiment in its favour, the fact of its early origin, and the belief, which, to the Hebrew, would all tend to that. To counteract this, the writer of this chapter, and the next, urges the claims of a higher choice on their attention, and that if that was rejected no other such claim could be presented. In this chapter, he does this by showing the superiority of the Author of Christianity to prophets and to angels, on which the Jews had a vain and exalted idea for the pretended regard. The drift of this chapter, therefore, is to show the dignity and exalted nature of the Author of the Christian religion, as the Son of God. The chapter comprises the following points:—

I. The commencement of the fact that God, who had formerly spoken by the prophets, had in this last dispensation spoken by his own Son, vs. 1, 2.

II. The statement respecting his rank and dignity. He was (1) the heir of all things, or the Lord of all the worlds. (2) The brightness of the divine glory and the proper expression of his nature; he he upheld all things, vs. 3.

(3) He has a more exalted and valuable inheritance than the angels, in proportion as his name is more exalted than theirs, vs. 4.

IV. Proofs that what he have ascribed to him belongs to him, particularly that he is superior in his nature to the angels, vss. 5–14.

(1) The angels have never been addressed with the title of Son, vs. 5.

(2) He is ordered to be worshipped by the angels, which would not have been required merely as the messengers of God, vs. 6, 7.

(3) He is addressed as God, and his throne is said to be for ever and ever, vss. 8, 9.

(4) He is immutable. He is declared to have laid the foundations of heaven and earth, and though they would perish, he would remain the same, vss. 10–12.

(5) None of the angels had been addressed in a manner implying that he employed in a subordinate sense as ministering to the heirs of salvation, vss. 13, 14.

From this train of reasoning the apostle deduces the practical truth that we ought to give diligent heed to what had been spoken. The Great Author of the Christian system had a peculiar claims to be heard, and there was peculiar danger in disregarding his message. The argument is designed to impress those to whom the epistle was addressed with the high claims of the Christian religion, and to show them that it was superior in his respect to any other system.

The chapter needs many notes. The commencement of this epistle differs from all the other epistles of Paul. He does not announce himself as the author, nor mention his own name, and the name of the church or of the individual to whom he writes. In regard to the

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CHAPTER I.

GOD, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in

a Ps.104.4.

times past unto the fathers by the prophets,

2 Hath in these last days spoken

a Da.10.21.

prophets, and the manner of that given by his Son. The word used here, therefore, is not found in the New Testament. ¶ *And in divers manners*—*πολυτρόπως*. In many ways. It was not by the same mode that God had employed various ways to communicating his will. At one time it was by the prophets, at another by visions, by dreams, at another by voices, &c. In regard to the various methods which God employed to communicate his will to mankind, see Intro. to Isaiah, § 5. ¶ *In time past*—*παλαι*. Formerly; in ancient times. The notion of the writer is, that God had now spoken by his Son. He had addressed man in one uniform manner—by his Son. He had not spoken in visions—it was a direct communication from him. The word used here, therefore, is not found in the New Testament. ¶ *To these past*. Formerly; in ancient times. The series of prophets, from the time of Moses, with Joshua (Acts iii.), and terminated with Malachi—a period of more than three thousand five hundred years. From Malachi to the time of Christ, a period of four hundred divine communications, and the whole period of written revelation, from the time that the first sacred volume was recorded from Moses to Malachi, was about a thousand years. ¶ *By the prophets*. See Intro. to Isaiah, § 5. Note on Acts xi. 27. ¶ *By the prophets*. The word *prophet* is used in a variety of senses in the Scriptures. It means not only those who predict future events, but those who are inspired to speak on any religious subject. See Notes on Rom. xii. 6; 1 Cor. xiv. 1. It is used here in that large sense, as denoting all those who were God's messengers and communications to the Jews in former times.

3 *Hath in these last days.* In this the final dispensation, or in this the dispensation under the Messiah, in which the world will be wound up. Phrases similar to this occur frequently in the Scriptures, as in the sense that the world was soon coming to an end,

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44 HEBREWS. [A.D. 64.

12 And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

13 But to which of the angels said he at any time, [o]Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

o Ps.110.1.

frame of the universe will be destroyed. See 2 Pet. iii. 10-13; Mat. xxiv. 35. ¶ *But thou remainest.* Thou shalt not die or cease to be. What a sublime thought! The idea is, that though the heavens and earth should suddenly disappear, or though they should gradually wear out and become extinct, yet there is one infinite Being who remains unaffected and unchanged. Nothing can reach or disturb him. All these changes will take place under his direction, and by his command. See Rev. xx. 11. Let us not be alarmed, then, at any revolution or change which may occur. Let us not fear though we should see the heavens rolled up as a scroll, and the stars falling from their places. God, the Creator and Redeemer, presides over all. He is unchanged. He ever lives; and though the universe should pass away, it will be only at his bidding, and under his direction. ¶ *And they all shall wax old.* Shall grow or become old. The word wax is an old Saxon word, meaning to grow, to increase, or to become. The heavens here are compared with a garment, meaning that as that grows old and decays, so it will be with the heavens and the earth. The language is evidently figurative; and yet who can tell how much literal truth there may be couched under it? Is it absurd to suppose that that sun, which daily sends forth so many countless millions of beams of light over the universe, may in a course of ages become diminished in its splendour, and shine with feeble lustre? Can there be constant exhaustion, a constant burning like that, and yet no tendency to decay at some far distant period? Not unless the material for its splendour shall be supplied from the boundless resources of the Great Source of Light—God; and when he shall choose to withhold it, even that glorious sun must be dimmed of its splendour, and shine with enfeebled beams, or go out altogether.

12. *And as a vesture.* A garment;—literally something thrown around—περιβόλαιον—and denoting properly the outer garment, the cloak or mantle. See Notes on Mat. v. 40. ¶ *Shalt thou fold them up.* That is, the heavens. They are represented in the Scriptures as an *expanse*, or something spread out (Heb. in Gen. i. 7); as a *curtain*, or *tent* (Isa. xl. 22); and as a *scroll* that might be spread out or rolled up like a book or volume, Isa. xxxiv. 4; Rev. vi. 14. Here they are represented as a garment or mantle that might be folded up—language borrowed from folding up and laying aside garments that are no longer fit for use. ¶ *And they shall be changed.* That is, they will be exchanged for others, or will give place to the new heavens and the new earth, 2 Pet. iii. 13. The meaning is, that the present form of the heavens and the earth is not to be permanent, but is to be succeeded by others, or to pass away, but that the Creator is to remain the same. ¶ *Thou art the same.* Thou wilt not change. ¶ *And thy years shall not fail.* Thou wilt exist for ever unchanged. What could more clearly prove that he of whom this is spoken is immutable? Yet it is indubitably spoken of the Messiah, and must demonstrate that he is divine. These attributes cannot be conferred on a creature; and nothing can be clearer than that he who penned the epistle believed that the Son of God was divine.

13. *But to which of the angels.* The apostle adduces one other proof of the exaltation of the Son of God above the angels. He asks where there is an instance in which God has addressed any one of the angels, and asked him to sit at his right hand until he should subdue his enemies under him? Yet that high honour had been conferred on the Son

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14 Are they not all [p]ministering spirits, [q]sent forth to minister for them who shall be [r]heirs of salvation?

p Ps.103.21; Da.7.10. q Ge.19.15,16; Ps.34.7. r Ro.8.17.

of God; and he was therefore far exalted above them. ¶ *Sit on my right hand.* See Notes on ver. 3. This passage is taken from Ps. cx. 1—a Psalm that is repeatedly quoted in this epistle as referring to the Messiah, and this very passage is applied by the Saviour to himself, in Mat. xxii. 43, 44, and by Peter it is applied to him in Acts ii. 34, 35. There can be no doubt, therefore, of its applicability to the Messiah. ¶ *Until I make thine enemies thy footstool.* Until I reduce them to entire subjection. A footstool is what is placed under the feet when we sit on a chair, and the phrase here means that an enemy is entirely subdued. Comp. Notes on 1 Cor. xv. 25. The phrase *to make an enemy a footstool*, is borrowed from the custom of ancient warriors, who stood on the necks of vanquished kings on the occasion of celebrating a triumph over them as a token of their complete prostration and subjection. See Notes on Is. x. 6. The enemies here referred to are the foes of God and of his religion, and the meaning is, that the Messiah is to be exalted *until* all those foes are subdued. Then he will give up the kingdom to the Father. See Notes on 1 Cor. xv. 24-28. The exaltation of the Redeemer, to which the apostle refers here, is to the *mediatorial* throne. In this he is exalted far above the angels. His foes are to be subdued to him, but angels are to be employed as mere instruments in that great work.

14. *Are they not all.* There is not one of them that is elevated to the high rank of the Redeemer. Even the most exalted angel is employed in the comparatively humble office of a ministering spirit appointed to assist the heirs of salvation. ¶ *Ministering spirits.* A *ministering spirit* is one that is employed to execute the will of God. The proper meaning of the word here—λειτουργικά (whence our word *liturgy*)—is, *pertaining to public service*, or *the service of the people* (λαός); and is applied particularly to those who were engaged in the public service of the temple. They were those who rendered aid to others; who were helpers, or servants. Such is the meaning as used here. They are employed to render *aid or assistance* to others—to wit, to Christians. ¶ *Sent forth.* Appointed by God for this. They are *sent;* are under his control; are in a subordinate capacity. Thus Gabriel was *sent* forth to convey an important message to Daniel, Dan. ix. 21-23. ¶ *To minister.* For the aid or succour of such. They come to render them assistance—and, if employed in this humble office, how much inferior to the dignity of the Son of God—the Creator and Ruler of the worlds! ¶ *Who shall be heirs of salvation.* To the saints; to Christians. They are called "*heirs* of salvation" because they are adopted into the family of God, and are treated as his sons. See Notes on Rom. viii. 14-17. The main point here is, that the angels are employed in a much more humble capacity than the Son of God; and, therefore, that he himself sustains a far more elevated rank. But while the apostle has proved that, he has incidentally stated an exceedingly interesting and important doctrine, that the angels are employed to further the salvation of the people of God, and to assist them in their journey to heaven. In this doctrine there is nothing absurd. It is no more improbable that angels should be employed to aid man, than that one man should aid another; certainly not as improbable as that the Son of God should come down "not to be ministered unto but to minister" (Mat. xx. 28), and that he performed on earth the office of a servant, Jn. xiii. 1-15. Indeed, it is a great principle of the divine administration that one class of God's creatures are to minister to others; that one is to aid another—to assist him in trouble, to provide for him when poor, and to counsel him in perplexity. We

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are constantly deriving benefit from others, and are dependent on their counsel and help. Thus God has appointed parents to aid their children; neighbours to aid their neighbours; the rich to aid the poor; and all over the world the principle is seen, that one is to derive benefit from the assistance rendered by others. Why may not the angels be employed in such a service? They are pure, benevolent, powerful; and as man was ruined in the fall by the temptation offered by one of an angelic, though fallen nature, why should not others of angelic, unfallen holiness come to assist in repairing the evils which their fallen, guilty brethren have inflicted on the race? There seems to be a beautiful propriety in bringing *aid* from another race, as *ruin* came from another race; and that as those endowed with angelic might, though with fiendish malignity, ruined man, those with angelic might, but heavenly benevolence, should assist in his recovery and salvation. Farther, it is, from the necessity of the case, a great principle, that the weak shall be aided by the strong; the ignorant by the enlightened; the impure by the pure; the tempted by those who have not fallen by temptation. All over the world we see this principle in operation; it constitutes the beauty of the moral arrangements on the earth; and why shall not this be extended to the inhabitants of other abodes? Why shall not angels, with their superior intelligence, benevolence, and power, come in to perfect this system, and show how much it is adapted to glorify God?—In regard to the *ways* in which angels become ministering spirits to the heirs of salvation, the Scriptures have not fully informed us, but facts are mentioned which will furnish some light on the inquiry. What they do *now* may be learned from the Scripture account of what they *have* done—as it seems to be a fair principle of interpretation that they are engaged in substantially the same employment in which they have ever been. The following methods of angelic interposition in behalf of man are noted in the Scriptures: (1) They feel a deep interest in man. Thus the Saviour says, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repenteth," Luke xv. 10. Thus also he says, when speaking of the "little ones" that compose his church, "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven," Mat. xviii. 10. (2) They feel a special interest in all that relates to the redemption of man. Thus Peter says of the things pertaining to redemption, "which things the angels desire to look into," 1 Pet. i. 12. In accordance with this they are represented as praising God over the fields of Bethlehem, where the shepherds were to whom it was announced that a Saviour was born (Luke ii. 13); an angel announced to Mary that she would be the mother of the Messiah (Luke i. 26); an angel declared to the shepherds that he was born (Luke ii. 10); the angels came and ministered to him in his temptation (Mat. iv. 11); an angel strengthened him in the garden of Gethsemane (Luke xxii. 43); angels were present in the sepulchre where the Lord Jesus had been laid, to announce his resurrection to his disciples (Jn. xx. 12); and they reappeared to his disciples on Mount Olivet to assure them that he would return and receive his people to himself, Acts i. 10. (3) They appear for the defence and protection of the people of God. Thus it is said (Ps. xxxiv. 7), "The angel of the Lord encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them." Thus two angels came to hasten Lot from the cities of the plain, and to rescue him from the impending destruction, Gen. xix. 1, 15. Thus an angel opened the prison doors of the apostles, and delivered them when they had been confined by the Jews, Acts v. 19. Thus the angel of the Lord delivered Peter from prison when he had been confined by Herod, Acts xii. 7, 8. (4) Angels are sent to give us strength to resist temptation. Aid was thus furnished to the Redeemer in the garden of Gethsemane, when there "appeared an angel from heaven strengthening him," Luke xxii.

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140 HEBREWS. [A.D. 64.

16 For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.
17 Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the unchangeability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath:
[Gen. 22. 16. 2 Chron. 20. 7. Psalm 105. 9.]

are to reconcile. (1) That when he was called by God from Haran, and left his father's house, and country, he verily was made to him, by necessity—five years old, Gen. xii. 1–5. (2) That during the whole time of his wandering which he was a sojourner in a strange land, before the harvest in Canaan, the promise of the land was made known to him, Gen. xvii. 1–16. (3) It was only when he was about to sacrifice his son, that he had possession in the belief of the truth of the promise against all the natural improbabilities of its accomplishment, that he received the pledge of the promise, Gen. xxii. 1–18. (4) Even from Gen. xvi. ver. 1–5. (5) The birth of that son was a pledge that the whole of the promise of the land of promise would be granted, and, in that pledge, Abraham may be said to have received the promise, Heb. xi. 13. not actually as the numerous posterity of which he was to be the fountain-head, but as the land in which they were to descend from, the fulfilment of the promise. But he saw the certainty that the promise would be fulfilled in time by the Messiah in the distance (Jo. viii. 56), and the numerous blessings which were to flow from him to mankind. This was a remarkable instance of faith, and one well fitted to the purpose which the apostle had in view, to give encouragement to the Christians to whom he wrote, to persevere in the exercise of faith in the full assurance of apostasy. If Abraham persevered when appearances were so much against him, how much more ought we, who have been promised, that Christians should persevere under the clearer light and the more certain and absolute promises of the gospel.

16. *For men verily swear by the greater.* That is, they appeal to God. They never swear by one who is inferior to themselves. The object of the apostle in this declaration is to show that, in the case of Abraham, God has not been done by God. He could not, indeed, swear by one greater than himself, but he did what was equivalent—he certain as an oath taken by men was when they solemnly appealed to God. ¶ *And an oath for confirmation.* An oath is that which establishes anything. ¶ *To them an end of all strife.* That is, it settles the matter. It is necessary, to have a matter at issue, an oath binds them to adhere to the terms of the agreement. Among the Arabians a pagan bird chosen for by a serious oath to adhere to the conditions of agreement, and this was held sacred in all strife. They rest satisfied when a solemn oath has been taken, and they feel that the matter in dispute will be compelled with. On this case refer to cases where a man was accused of wrong before a court, and where he took a solemn oath that the charge was false, and where that oath was admitted to be sufficient to put an end to the controversy. The principle is, that there is a solemn appeal between man and man, an appeal is made to an oath, and that is allowed to settle it. The apostle supposes, therefore, that, as far as the case would admit of, the same thing was done by God, when he by himself made his promise firm.

17. *Wherein God.* On account of which, or because it was the case that God was willing to appeal to it in order to secure his people of salvation. ¶ *More abundantly.* Greatly, in the most abundant manner, or to make the case as sure as possible. It does not mean absolutely, that it was the case of Abraham, but that he



A.D. 64.] CHAPTER VI. 141

18 That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong con-
[Titus 1.]

solation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:
[Or Titus.]

was willing to give the most ample assurance possible. Covetable rendered "desirous." ¶ *Unto the heirs.* ¶ The term of promise. Those to whom the promise of life pertained; that is, the true children of Abraham—first promise made to Abraham—first embracing the heirs of salvation now. ¶ *The immutability of his counsel.* His fixed purpose. He meant to show, in the most unquestionable way, that he would not change. The place of God never changes, and all the hope which we have in his promises rests on the fact that his purposes are immutable. If he changed his plans, and purposed to do one thing to-day, and will one thing to-day and another thing to-morrow, who could confide in him? Where would be the ground of salvation? To see would know what to expect; and no one could be sure of heaven. It is the ploughs and sows because he believes that the laws of nature are settled and that the seed will germinate and grow. Sailors sail because the needle points in one direction; we plant an apple-tree because we expect to gather from apples, a peach because it will produce peaches, a pear because it will produce pears. So we suppose that God will do what he has purposed to—unless—who would know what to plant? Who then would plant anything? So in relation to the promises of God. Who could, who would know what to do? If God should change his plans by caprice, or whim, or for any fickle and reckless another for the same faith to-morrow; or if he should change his plans in any way, where the parties to-morrow, what security would we have of salvation? How could we have confidence that what God has so resolutely ensured, and that this is confirmed by a solemn oath? Nothing could be more fixed than such an immutability of purpose; and all the hope which man can have

of heaven is in the fact that He is unchanging. ¶ *Confirmed it by an oath.* That is, God has done what is done by men. He could not, indeed, swear by one greater than himself, but he did what was equivalent—he certain as an oath taken by men was when they solemnly appealed to God. He could not, indeed, swear by one greater than himself, but he did what was equivalent—he certain as an oath taken by men was when they solemnly appealed to God. ¶ *That by two immutable things.* The existence and veracity, which was at any time the most solemn form of an oath. ¶ *Might have a strong consolation.* Be tugged to the hope of heaven. ¶ *And an oath for confirmation.* An oath takes to confirm or establish anything. ¶ *To them an end of all strife.* That is, it settles the matter. It is necessary, to have a matter at issue, an oath binds them to adhere to the terms of the agreement. Among the Arabians a pagan bird chosen for by a serious oath to adhere to the conditions of agreement, and this was held sacred in all strife. They rest satisfied when a solemn oath has been taken, and they feel that the matter in dispute will be compelled with. On this case refer to cases where a man was accused of wrong before a court, and where he took a solemn oath that the charge was false, and where that oath was admitted to be sufficient to put an end to the controversy. The principle is, that there is a solemn appeal between man and man, an appeal is made to an oath, and that is allowed to settle it. The apostle supposes, therefore, that, as far as the case would admit of, the same thing was done by God, when he by himself made his promise firm.

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142 HEBREWS. [A.D. 64.

19 Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast, and which entereth into that *within the veil;
[Lev 16.]

20 Whither* the forerunner is for us entered, *even* Jesus, made an high priest for ever after *the order of Melchisedec.
[* Or, for us.]

soul, there would be two kinds of security. ¶ *Which hope we have.* The supposition that the promise was disregarded—if such a supposition may be made—still there would be the security of the oath—and that the security of the same kind. It seems to me, therefore, that the apostle refers to the *promise* and to the *oath* as the two things which are the grounds of security for the salvation of his people. Those things were both unchangeable. The promise and the oath are once passed, what is promised is certain. ¶ *In which it was impossible for God to lie.* It would be contrary to his nature; it is not for a moment to be supposed, Titus i. 2. Heb. vi. 18. ¶ *That we might have a strong consolation.* Be tugged to the hope of heaven. ¶ *And an oath for confirmation.* An oath takes to confirm or establish anything. ¶ *To them an end of all strife.* That is, it settles the matter. It is necessary, to have a matter at issue, an oath binds them to adhere to the terms of the agreement. Among the Arabians a pagan bird chosen for by a serious oath to adhere to the conditions of agreement, and this was held sacred in all strife. They rest satisfied when a solemn oath has been taken, and they feel that the matter in dispute will be compelled with. On this case refer to cases where a man was accused of wrong before a court, and where he took a solemn oath that the charge was false, and where that oath was admitted to be sufficient to put an end to the controversy. The principle is, that there is a solemn appeal between man and man, an appeal is made to an oath, and that is allowed to settle it. The apostle supposes, therefore, that, as far as the case would admit of, the same thing was done by God, when he by himself made his promise firm.

19 Which hope as here *or an expectation of the end.* Hope accomplishes the end, the same thing which an anchor does for a ship. It makes it safe, and secure. It is the anchor of a ship when the waves beat and the wind blows, and as long as the anchor holds the ship is safe. So hope and the matters appendent so far go. So with the soul of the Christian, his hope is an anchor to his soul, his mind is safe as long as his hope of heaven is firm. If that gives way, he is lost. Hope is the anchor of the heaven written, hope is often compared with an anchor. So Socrates "Hope is the anchor of a poor man's poultry, is like trusting to a weak anchor." Again: "A ship ought not to trust to one anchor, nor life to one hope." ¶ *Both sure and stedfast.* That is, it is firm in the soul, and in the vessel is secure. ¶ *And which entereth into that within the veil.* The allusion to the anchor here is dropped, and the apostle speaks simply of hope. ¶ *That within the veil.* The veil in the temple, divided the holy from the most holy place. See Notes on Heb. ix. 3. ¶ *That within the veil*—the most holy place—was regarded as God's peculiar abode, when he dwelt in the midst of his people in the temple. That holy place was emblematic of heaven; and the idea here is, that the hope of the Christian goes into heaven itself, takes hold on the throne of God; is made firm by the promise and oath of God. The hope of future bliss, heaven, or glory is in this life—for such a hope is not to be realized here—is the hope of immortal blessedness and purity in the world beyond.

20 *Whither.* To which most holy place—heaven. ¶ *The forerunner.* The word here used means another



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170 HEBREWS. [A.D. 64.

CHAPTER VIII.

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 of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens;

a Ps 1 10.

be honoured, and the purity and dignity of the priesthood, which the system so much resembles the true dignity of our nature and the honour it finds in the life that is, or fills the life to come.

(10) Here, then, we have now such a priesthood as the gospel of the name of the gospel are entitled as we form a foundation; and since the priesthood is changed, it is evident that we can desire it to be, let us yield our hearts entirely to the Saviour, and not be satisfied unless we have the privilege, if we will, of drawing near to God with boldness. We are poor, and sinful, and diseased; neither notice nor mercy, yet we may come and ask for all that we need, and that with the assurance that all be ready, with the assurance that all is ready. We may go feeling that the great atonement has been made for sin, and that the righteousness of God now needed, that the last bloody offering which God required has been presented, and that the only offering now is the sacrifice of a contrite and a grateful heart. All that was needful for the sinner to do, in order to make a way of salvation has been done; all that remains is for man to forsake his sins, and return back to a God who waits to be gracious.

CHAPTER VIII.

ANALYSIS OF THE CHAPTER.

The apostle now enters upon the argument which has been promised in the previous chapters respecting the priesthood of Christ. The apostle had demonstrated that he was to be a priest, and that he was to be, in the highest sense, a priest after the order of Melchisedec. As a consequence, he had proved that this involved a change of the law appointing the priesthood, and that in respect to the priesthood of Christ, as in other respects, the priesthood of Christ far surpassed the Jewish. This thought he pursues in this chapter, showing particularly that in the Saviour we have a high priest who is seated on the throne of God and his people. In the presentation of this, he (1) states the sum or principal thing—the fact that we have such an one under discussion—that the priesthood of Christ was real and permanent, while that of the Jewish priesthood was typical, and was destined in its own nature to be temporary, ver. 1–5. (2) He proves that the reason of this was, in his being removed to heaven to perform the functions of his office there, while, if he were still on the earth, he could not have officiated as priest, that duty being by the law of Moses confined to another order, and to another tribe, ver. 4, 5. (3) Christ had obtained a more exalted ministry than that of the Jewish priests, because he was the Mediator in a better covenant, founded on better promises, ver. 6–12. That new covenant was predicted by Jeremiah, and its superiority—(a) It was established on better promises, ver. 6. (b) It was written on the heart, and not on tables of external observances, but it pertained to the soul, and the law of that covenant was to be written there, ver. 10. It was connected with the diffusion of the knowledge of the Lord among all people, ver. 11. (c) It was to be eternal, ver. 12. (d) Under that the evidence of forgiveness might be made more clear, and the way in which sins are pardoned be much better understood, ver. 12. (4) The conclusion, which involved the consequences, also, which is stated in ver. 13, that the old covenant was of necessity about to vanish away.

1. *Now of the things which we have spoken.* Or, "of the things of which



A.D. 64.] CHAPTER VIII. 171

2 A minister of the sanctuary,

a ver. 6 Gen. 2 2 & 12 5 & 39 43.

and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man.

we are speaking" (Stuart); or, as we should say, "the subject." The apostle does not recommend a mere things that had been spoken, but may refer to all that he was saying, taking the whole subject into consideration. ¶ This is the sum. The word rendered "sum" (κεφάλαιον) means properly the head, and is sometimes so rendered. Then it means what is first said. One translation of the word is, therefore, "the principal thing in a discourse or argument," or, "the principal matter," or, "the sum." This is the meaning of this interpretation. But another exposition has been proposed, adopted by Chrysostom, Theophylact, and others among the moderns, and found also in Suidas. Theodoret, Theophylact, and Suidas, explain the word thus: "It is that which regards the word considered—καθ' ἕκαστον—as meaning the most important point. The reason for this interpretation is, that the apostle had not yet spoken the principal doctrine of what he had said, but enters on a new topic relating to the priesthood of Christ, as a confirmation of what he had demonstrated, he enters on a more important point, that the priesthood of Christ is performed in heaven, and that it is more excellent than the Levitical priesthood. All which went before was type and shadow; this was that which the former represented and prefigured." In the former chapters the apostle had shown that he who sustained this office was really a man, and that he was a priest, that they were bad and dying, and that the office in their hands was temporary; he now comes to consider that line of Christ was permanent and abiding. He now comes to consider the nature of the office, and the sacrifice which was offered, the substance of which all in the former dispensation was a shadow. ¶ We have such an high priest. That is settled, proved, indisputable. The Christian system is not destitute of that which was regarded as the glory of the Jewish dispensation—the office of a high-priest. ¶ *He is set on the right hand of the throne of God.* This is the place of honour and glory before God. The right hand was regarded as the place of honour, and to be seated at the right hand of God, the meaning is, that he is exalted to the highest honour. See the notes at Acts 2 33. Of course the language is figurative—as God has no hands. The idea of sitting down implies an important meaning, that he is now to God; that he is high in his favour, and that he occupies one of the most elevated situations in heaven. See Phil. 2 9; Eph. 1 21, 22.

2 *A minister of the sanctuary.* Margin, "a ministrant of the holy things." The Greek may either mean *the sanctuary*—denoting the holy of holies; or the things. The word sanctuary, or holy place, is frequently used in the plural to denote a holy place; and the plural form, which is here used—τὰ ἅγια—*ta hagia*—is used to denote the holy place of tabernacle; the full form of the same being τοῦ ἁγίου—*tou hagiou*—*tabernacle*, or *tou hagiou*—*hagion hagiōn* (Jahn's Archæ, § 320), or, as it is here rendered, *the true tabernacle*. The apostle seems to explain as to substance of the word *holy place*, and not of the word *tabernacle*, which he proceeds to explain in the following verse. The word tabernacle in heaven, of which that among men was a type, is called *true*, as the word tabernacle—σκηνή—means properly a booth, hut, or tent, and was applied to the temple after it was erected to hold as the place for the worship of God. That tabernacle, as



172 HEBREWS. [A.D. 64.

3 For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

a Ps 4 5, 51 19, 50 14.

4 For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing there are priests that offer gifts according to the law:

the temple was afterward, was regarded as a type of that in heaven. But on the subject of the tabernacle in heaven, as the dwelling place of God, of which tabernacle was the emblem or symbol. It is called the "true" tabernacle, as the dwelling or building of God, of which the one made by Moses was but the emblem. It is also called the "true" one, as it was not made by man, but is unchanging and eternal. ¶ Which *the Lord pitched, and not man.* This is a phrase well adapted to express the setting up of a tent. When it is said that "the Lord pitched" the tabernacle, or that it was the permanent dwelling in heaven—the meaning is, that heaven has been fitted up by God, and that he has done whatever is necessary to constitute that an appropriate abode for the divine majesty has been done by him. To that glorious dwelling the Redeemer has gone, and there he is to perform the office of high-priest in behalf of man. In what way he does this is the subject of the remainder of this chapter, and to chap. x.

3 *For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices.* This is a general statement about the functions of the priesthood, and the nature and duty of the office; it constituted the essence, that some gift or sacrifice should be offered. This was applicable in regard to the Jewish high-priest, and this is involved in the nature of the office in every case. A priest is one who offers sacrifice, in reality in behalf of others. The priesthood implies this, and it is implied that there is need that some offering or atonement should be made for sin; and that, as a matter of course, a priest is one who should be authorized to do it. If this idea that a priest must offer sacrifice be correct, then it follows that the same period should not be given to anyone who is not appointed to offer sacrifice. It is not, therefore, the mere act of consecration to the office of priest, for it is no part of their work to offer sacrifice—the great sacrifice for sin having been once offered by the Lord Jesus, and the priests under the Old Testament and even in the New Testament are perfectly uniform and consistent on this point. The same reason has been given to the ministers of the gospel there. They are called priests, and ministers, and elders, and overseers, &c., but never priests. We should they be so called in the Christian sense? The priesthood of Christ is applied in Christian ministers, has been derived from the papists. They hold that the priest has power to consecrate the real body and blood of Christ in the mass, and, holding this, the same priest is given to the minister who does it consciously. It is not, indeed, the literal sacrifice of the body and blood on which it is based is absurd and false—but while that doctrine is held, the same reason exists for calling what show of consistency or propriety can the name be given to a Protestant minister? ¶ *It is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.* That the Lord Jesus was a priest, is evident from the fact that he is declared to be a priest, and since it is essential to the office that he should offer sacrifice, it follows that it is indispensable that he should bring a sacrifice to God. He could not be a priest unless he had something to offer on which that office is held, unless he did it. What the offering was which he brought, and the nature of his sacrifice, more fully in chap. ix. 11–14, 25, 26.

4 *For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest.* He could not perform that office. The design of this is to show a reason why he was removed to heaven. The reason was, that on earth there were those who were not



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