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THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

VI. THE WAY OF SALVATION (CHAP. II. 11-18).

THIS section contains a further elucidation of the way or method of salvation in its bearing on the personal experiences of the Saviour. It may be analysed into these three parts: First, the statement of a principle on which the argument proceeds (ver. 11); second, illustrations of the principle by citations from the Old Testament (vers. 12, 13); third, applications of the principle to particular facts in the history of Jesus (vers. 14-18).

The writer at this point seems at first sight to be making a new start, looking forward rather than backward, and with the priesthood of Christ, of which express mention is made in ver. 17, specially in his eye. Further reflection however satisfies us that, as the "for" at the commencement of ver. 11 suggests, he looks backward as well as forward, and that the new truth therein enunciated has its root in the statement contained in ver. 10. The assertion that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one may be conceived of as answering two questions naturally arising out of ver. 10, to which it furnishes no explicit answer. First, Christ is called the Captain or Leader of salvation: how does He contribute to salvation? Is He simply the first of a series who pass through suffering to glory? or does He influence all the sons whom God brings to glory so as to contribute very materially to the great end in view, their reaching the promised land? Second, what is the condition of His influence? what is the nexus between Him

and them, the Leader and the led, that enables Him to exert over them this power? The answer to the former question is, Christ saves by *sanctifying*; the answer to the latter, that He and the sanctified are *one*. The answer in the first case is given indirectly by the substitution of one title for another, the "Leader of salvation" being replaced by the "Sanctifier"; the answer in the second case is given directly, and forms the doctrine of the text: the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one.

The new designation for Christ is presumably selected because it fits in both to that view of His function suggested by the title Leader, and to that implied in the title High Priest, introduced in the sequel. No good reason can be given for limiting the reference to the latter. The probability is that the writer meant to imply that Christ sanctifies both as a Captain and as a Priest, as the Moses and as the Aaron of the great salvation. It is probable that he introduces the title "the Sanctifier" to adjust the idea of salvation to the Saviour's priestly office, but it is reasonable to suppose that he does this without any breach in the continuity of thought.

These are simple observations, but they involve a very important question; *viz.* in what sense are the terms "sanctifier" and "sanctified" used in this place? and, generally, what conception of sanctification pervades the epistle? In the ordinary theological dialect "sanctification" bears an ethical meaning, denoting the gradual renewal of his nature experienced by a believing man. The usage can be justified by New Testament texts in Paul's epistles, and as I believe also in the Epistle to the Hebrews; but the notion of holiness thus reached is secondary and derivative. In the Old Testament holiness is a religious rather than an ethical idea, and belongs properly to the sphere of worship. The people of Israel were holy in the sense of being consecrated for the service of God, the consecration being effected by

sacrifice, which purged the worshippers from the defilement of sin. It was to be expected that the ritual or theocratic idea of holiness should reappear in the New Testament, especially in an epistle like that to the Hebrews, in which Christian truth is largely stated in terms suggested by Levitical analogies. Accordingly we do find the word "sanctify" employed in the epistle in the Old Testament sense, in connexion with the priestly office of Christ, as in chapter x. 10: "sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." In such texts sanctification has more affinity with "justification" in the Pauline system of thought, than with the sanctification of dogmatic theology. But it might also be anticipated that the conception of holiness would undergo transformation under Christian influences, passing from the ritual to the ethical sphere. The source of transforming power lay in the nature of the Christian service. The sacrifices of the new era are spiritual: thankfulness, beneficent deeds, pure conduct. A good life is the Christian's service to God. Thus while formally considered sanctification might continue to mean consecration to God's service, materially it came to mean the process by which a man was enabled to live soberly, righteously, godly. Traces of this transformed meaning are to be found throughout the New Testament. The Epistle to the Hebrews is no exception to this statement. The term "holiness" (*ἁγιασμός*) is used in an ethical sense twice in the twelfth chapter. In ver. 10 it is stated that God's end in subjecting His children to paternal discipline is to make them partakers of His own holiness; in ver. 14, Christians are exhorted to follow peace with all men and holiness—holiness being prescribed as a moral task, and as an end to be reached gradually. In the one case, God is the Sanctifier through the discipline of life; in the other, Christians are summoned to sanctify themselves by a process of moral effort. In another class of texts Christ appears as a foun-

tain of sanctifying influence. The word is not used, but the thing, help to godly living, is there. "Looking unto Jesus" the Leader in faith is commended as a source of moral strength and steadfastness (xii. 2). Even in His priestly character He is set forth as a source of moral inspiration. Through Him, the great High Priest, we receive "grace for seasonable succour" (iv. 16); from Him, the tempted one, emanates aid to the tempted (ii. 18). God's paternal discipline, our own self-effort, Christ's example, priestly influence, and sympathy, all contribute to the same end, persistency and progress in the Christian life. In connexion with the first, we may say God sanctifies; in connexion with the second, we may say we sanctify ourselves; why may we not, in connexion with the third, call Christ the Sanctifier?

It thus appears that sanctification is spoken of in the epistle both in a ritual and in an ethical sense, and that Christ is represented, in effect if not in express terms, as performing the part of a sanctifier, not merely by consecrating us once for all to God by the sacrifice of Himself, but likewise by being to us in various ways a source of gracious help. This double sense of the word sanctify is analogous to the double sense of the word "righteousness" in the Pauline literature. In stating his doctrine of salvation, Paul uses the word in an objective sense. The righteousness of God is an objective righteousness, given to us for Christ's sake. But in the Pauline apologetic, in which the apostle seeks to reconcile his doctrine with apparently conflicting interests, such as the claims of the law, the prerogatives of Israel, and the demands of morality, we find the word used in a subjective sense—to denote a righteousness within us. Repelling the insinuation that we may continue in sin that grace may abound, he strives to show how every believer in Christ becomes a servant of righteousness. Even so in the Epistle to the Hebrews we find sanctification

used in a double sense, a ritual and an ethical. But there is a failure in the parallelism between the two writers in this respect, that whereas in Paul what one might call the artificial or technical sense of righteousness appears in his doctrinal statement, and the ethical sense in his apologetic, in the author of our epistle the ritual sense of sanctification appears in those parts of his writing which are dominated by his apologetic aim, and the ethical chiefly in the practical or hortatory passages, where he is set free from the trammels of his apologetic argument.¹

If it be indeed true that Christ appears in the epistle as a sanctifier in a twofold sense,—in a specific sense as a priest, in a general as a fountain of grace, then it is natural to suppose that in introducing the title “the Sanctifier,” for the first time the writer would employ it in a comprehensive sense, covering the whole extent of Christ’s sanctifying influence. This comprehensive sense, as we have seen, suits the connexion of thought, the text standing midway between two views of Christ’s function as Saviour,—that suggested by the title Captain of salvation, on the one hand, and that suggested by the title High Priest, on the other—looking back to the one and forward to the other. I feel justified therefore in putting upon the designation “the Sanctifier” this pregnant construction, and shall now proceed to consider the affirmation in ver. 11, that the Sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one.²

This statement, as indicated at the outset, I regard as the enunciation of a principle; by which is meant that

¹ Another point will come up for comparison in due course. Paul discovers in the very heart of his system a nexus between objective and subjective righteousness. Does the system of thought in this epistle provide for the union of the two kinds of sanctification? or do they stand side by side, external to each other? Are religious and ethical interests reconciled by a principle inherent in the system?

² The present participle, *οἱ ἁγιαζόμενοι*, fits into the view that an ethical progressive sanctification is included, but it does not prove it, for the participles may be timeless designations of the parties.

the unity asserted is involved in the relation of Sanctifier to sanctified. Whether there be only one or many exemplifications of the relation is immaterial. Though only one Sanctifier were in view or possible, the proposition would still continue to be of the nature of a principle. The point is, that Christ, as Sanctifier, must be one with those whom He sanctifies, could not otherwise perform for them that function. Some, as if bent on reducing the significance of the statement to a minimum, take it as the mere assertion of a fact: that this Sanctifier, Jesus Christ, and those whom He sanctifies are all of one God, that is, are all the children of God, the purpose of the statement being to justify the use of the title "sons" in the previous verse, or to repeat the truth implied in it. But that title, as we have seen, rests on its own foundation, the lordship of men, and needs neither justification nor repetition. Viewed as the statement of a fact, the first member of verse 11 becomes almost purposeless and superfluous. Viewed as the statement of a principle, on the other hand, it becomes a very necessary and fruitful proposition. The relative terms Sanctifier and sanctified imply one very obvious and wide difference between the parties. The Sanctifier is holy, the sanctified when He takes them in hand are unholy. That being so, it needs to be said that, notwithstanding the separation between the parties, there is a unity between them surmounting the difference. And that can be said with truth, for otherwise the two parties could not stand in the relation of Sanctifier to sanctified; they could only stand permanently apart as holy and unholy. Unity is involved in the nature of the case. That is precisely what the writer means to say. He states the truth as an axiom, which he expects even his dull-minded readers to accept immediately as true; and he means to use it as a key to the cardinal facts of Christ's human experience.

Unity to some extent or in some sense is involved, that

is clear. But in what sense, to what extent? This is not plainly indicated. The expression is ἐξ ἑνὸς πάντες, "of or from one all." The style at this point becomes noticeably laconic; the sentence lacks a verb, and is worn down to the fewest words possible, after the manner of a proverb, "For the Sanctifier and the sanctified of one all." The commentators have been very much exercised over this elliptical utterance, and have made innumerable suggestions as to the noun to be supplied after "one." One seed, blood, mass, nature; or one Adam, Abraham, God. The consensus is in favour of the last. But it occurs to one to ask, Why, if he had a particular noun in his mind, did the writer not insert it, and so put an end to all doubt? Does it not look as if his purpose were to lay stress, not on descent from one God, one Divine Father, but rather on the result, the brotherhood or comradeship existing between the two parties? Is not his idea that Sanctifier and sanctified are all "of one piece, one whole,"¹ two parties welded into one, having everything in common except character? The expression ἐξ ἑνός does not necessarily imply that he is thinking of descent or origin. In the saying of our Lord, "Every one that is of the truth heareth My voice," the expression ἐκ τῆς ἀληθείας means true, in sympathy with truth; so here ἐξ ἑνός may mean "one," one as a family are one, having a common interest and a common lot. The use of the connecting particle τε (ὃ τε γὰρ ἀγιάζων) is in consonance with this view. It binds the two parties closely together as forming a single idea or category: Sanctifier and sanctified, all one.

We can now answer the question, To what extent one?

¹ Professor Davidson in a note, p. 66, says, "The words *all of one* might mean all of one piece, one whole." But he adds, "If this were the meaning, the point of unity would still lie in their common relation to God, and the unity, though wider than sonship, would embrace sonship as its chief element." He reasons, "One whole, *because sons*, the main point." I argue inversely, "sons, *therefore one whole*, one family with a common interest, the main point."

As far as possible; the more complete the unity of Sanctifier with the sanctified, the greater His power to sanctify. The nature of the relation is such as to crave unity in everything but the one ineffaceable distinction of character. From whatever point of view, the ritual or the ethical, we regard the Sanctifier's function, this becomes apparent on reflection. Conceive Christ first as Sanctifier in the ethical sense, as Captain or Leader of salvation; it is evident that in that capacity it behoved Him to be in all possible respects one with those He took in hand to sanctify. For in this case the sanctifying power of Jesus lies in His example, His character, His history as a man. He makes men believing in Him holy by reproducing in His own life the lost ideal of human character, and bringing that ideal to bear on their minds; by living a true, godly life amid the same conditions of trial as those by which they are surrounded, and helping them to be faithful by inspiration and sympathy. The more genuinely human He is, and the more closely the conditions of His human life resemble ours, the greater His influence over us. His power to sanctify depends on likeness in nature, position, and experience.

Conceive Christ next as Sanctifier in the ritual sense, as a priest, consecrating us for the service of God by the sacrifice of Himself; and the same need for a pervading, many-sided unity is apparent. The priest must be one with his clients in God's sight, their accepted representative; so that what He does is done in their name and avails for their benefit. He must be one with them in death, for it is by His death in sacrifice that He makes propitiation for their sins. He must be one with them in the possession of humanity, for unless He become partaker of human nature He cannot die. Finally, He must be one with them in experience of trial and temptation, for thereby is demonstrated the sympathy which wins trust, and unless the priest be trusted it is in vain that He transacts.

All these unities except the first are unfolded in the sequel of the second chapter, and are common to the two aspects of Christ's function as the Sanctifier. The first unity, that before God, is peculiar to the priestly office, and is reserved for mention at a later stage, when the priesthood of Christ becomes the subject of formal consideration.¹

Having enunciated this great principle of unity, the writer next proceeds to show that it has its root in Old Testament Scripture. The manner in which he does this is very lively and impressive. In abstract language the import is this: "The unity asserted implies a brotherly relation between Sanctifier and sanctified. But traces of such a brotherhood are discernible in the Old Testament, as in the following passages, where Messiah appears saying, 'I will declare Thy name unto My brethren'; 'I will put My trust in Him'; 'Behold, I and the children which God hath given Me.'" But the writer does not put the matter in this cold, colourless way. He introduces his quotations in an animated, rhetorical manner with the spirit-stirring sentiment, "for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren." Observing that the quoted passages are all of the nature of personal declarations or exclamations, observing also that they are all utterances of an impassioned character, he strives to reflect the spirit of the original texts in his own language. Therefore he says not, Messiah is represented as the brother of men, but He calls Himself their brother; and not content with that, he introduces another word to bring out the fact that Messiah does not barely admit or reluctantly acknowledge the brotherhood, but proclaims it with ardour and enthusiasm, rejoicing, glorying therein. "He is not *ashamed* to call them brethren. On the contrary, He calls them brethren with all His heart, with the fervour of love, with the eloquence of earnest conviction." The reference to shame points

¹ *Vide* chapter v. 1.

significantly to the one cardinal difference, sin, which constitutes the temptation to the Holy One to be ashamed.

The quotations so spiritedly introduced are well selected for the purpose in hand. In all brotherhood is expressed or clearly implied. In the first, the speaker, primarily the psalmist,¹ represents himself as a member of a congregation of worshippers whom he calls his brethren; in the second, the speaker, primarily the prophet Isaiah,² declares his purpose to trust God, implying that he is in a situation of trial in which trust is necessary; in the third, taken from the same place,³ he associates himself with the children God has given him, as of the same family and sharing the same prophetic vocation. The utterances put into the mouth of Messiah imply brotherhood in worship and in trying experience, and even the closer kind of brotherhood involved in family connexions and a common calling.

We now come to the applications of the principle enunciated in verse 11. They are three in number, together covering the whole earthly history of Christ, beginning with His birth, and ending with His death. Incarnation, sorrowful experience, death, such are the three grand exemplifications of the brotherly unity of the Sanctifier with the sanctified; not arranged however in this order, the second changing places with the third, because the incarnation is exhibited in subordination to the death as a means to an end: Christ took flesh that He might die. The applications are as obvious as they are important. If the principle has validity and value, it must and will prove true in those particulars. What we have to do therefore is not to justify these deductions, but to study the terms in which

¹ Ps. xxii. 23.

² Isa. viii. 17, as in Septuagint. The rendering in the English version is, "I will look for Him."

³ Isa. viii. 18.

they are expressed, which are in many respects curious and instructive.

First comes the incarnation (ver. 14). The sanctified are here referred to in terms borrowed from the last of the three quotations, "the children." The use of this designation is not only rhetorically graceful but logically apt, as suggesting the idea of an existence derived from birth. Children is an appropriate name for men as born of blood, and therefore possessing blood and flesh. These terms, "blood and flesh," in their turn are employed to denote human nature as mortal, as it exists under the conditions of this earthly life; for flesh and blood have no place in the eternal life. Of man's mortal nature, as thus designated, Christ is said to have taken part *παραπλησίως*, "likewise," similarly. The scope of the whole passage requires that this word be emphasised, so that the similarity may be as great as possible. Therefore not merely is participation in man's mortal flesh implied, but entrance into human nature by the same door as other men—by birth. We may not, with Irving and the Adoptianists, include sinfulness in the likeness, for the application of the principle of unity is necessarily limited by the personal holiness of the Sanctifier. The rule is, Like in all things, sin excepted.

The second application of the principle is to the death of Christ, which, as already indicated, is next mentioned because it supplies the *rationale* of the incarnation (vers. 14b, 15). As a mere corollary to the principle it would have been enough to have said, Because the brethren die, He too died. But the objection might be raised, Why should the sinless One die, if, as we have been taught, death be the penalty of sin? Therefore the application of the principle to the death of Christ is so stated as to bring out at the same time the service He thereby rendered to His brethren. This is done however in a very peculiar way, which has greatly perplexed commentators. The difficulty arises in

part from our trying to put too much theology into the passage, and to bring its teaching into line with other more familiar modes of exhibiting the significance of Christ's death. It must be recognised once for all that the writer has various ways of showing that it behoved Christ to die, and that he gladly avails himself of any way that tends to throw light on a subject ill-understood by his readers. This is one of the ways, and although from its isolation in the epistle it looks obscure and forbidding, the text yields a good, clear, intelligible sense, if we will be content not to find in it the whole mystery and theory of the atonement. For the materials of explanation we do not need to go outside the Bible: they are evidently to be found in the account of the fall in the third chapter of Genesis. According to that account death came into the world because Adam sinned, tempted by the serpent. The text before us is a free paraphrase of that account. The serpent is identified with the devil, death is represented as a source of slavish fear, embittering human life, because it is the penalty of sin; the power of death is ascribed to the devil, because he is the tempter to sin which brought death into the world, and the accuser of those who sin, so that they, having sin brought to mind, fear to die. Christ destroys the devil by destroying his power, and He destroys his power by freeing mortal men from the cruel bondage of the fear of death.

All this is plain enough. But the question now arises, How did Christ through death free from the fear of death? We, steeped in theology, would naturally reply, By offering Himself an atoning sacrifice for sin. But that is certainly not the writer's thought here. He reserves the great thought of Christ's priestly self-sacrifice for a more advanced stage in the development of his doctrine. What then is his thought? Simply this. Christ delivers from the fear of death by dying *as a sinless one*. Death and sin are connected very intimately in our minds, hence fear. But

lo, here is one who knows no sin dying. The bare fact breaks the association between sin and death. But more than that: He who dies is our brother, has entered into our mortal state in a fraternal spirit for the very purpose of lending us a helping hand. We may not fully know how His death avails to help us. But we know that the Sanctifier in a spirit of brotherhood became one with us, even in death; and the knowledge enables us to realize our unity with Him in death, and so emancipates us from fear. "Sinners may die, for the Sinless has died." The benefit thus derived from the death of the sinless One is but the other side of the great principle, Sanctifier and sanctified all one. For it has two sides, it applies both ways. The Sanctifier becomes one with the sanctified in brotherly love; the sanctified become one with the Sanctifier in privilege. They are mutually one in both directions in God's sight; they are mutually one in both directions for the spiritual instincts of the believer, even before he knows what the twofold validity for God means. In proportion as we realize the one aspect of the principle, the Sanctifier one with us, we are enabled to realize and get benefit from the other. While the Holy One stands apart from us in the isolation of His sinlessness, we, sinners, fear to die; when we see Him by our side, even in death, which we have been accustomed to regard as the penalty of sin, death ceases to appear as penalty, and becomes the gate of heaven.¹

¹ So in effect Professor Davidson, p. 70. Rendall, *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, 1888, renders the last clause of ver. 14, "that through *His* death He might bring to nought him that had the power of *that* death," limiting the devil's power to the death of Christ. He takes the article *τοῦ* before *θανάτου* as referring to a particular instance of death. But it is rather a case of the article prefixed to abstracts. *Ὁ θάνατος* is simply death as a familiar human experience. The omission of the article in ver. 15 makes no difference, it is still the abstract idea of death. The use of the article with abstracts, though usual, is not necessary. Having referred to this writer, I take occasion to remark that he must be added to the number of those who regard the reference of the crowning in ver. 9 to the state of exaltation as inadmissible. He however relegates it, not to the earthly, but to the pre-incarnate state.

Thus with consummate tact does the writer turn the one thing that divides Christ from ordinary men, and seems to disable Him for helping them, into a source of consolation. Sanctifier, that presupposes sinlessness; sanctified, that presupposes sin; and being sinners we fear to die. Yes; but the sinless One died, and we feeling our unity with Him cease to fear. He cannot be one with us in sin, but He is one with us in that which comes nearest to sin, and derives all its terror from sin.

Before passing to the third application of the principle, the writer throws in a truism to relieve the argument and make it more intelligible to persons to whom the train of thought is new and strange (ver. 16). Simply rendered, what the verse states is this: "For, as you know, it is not of angels that He taketh hold (to be their Helper), but He taketh hold of the seed of Abraham." The rendering of the Authorized Version (an inheritance from patristic times) is due apparently to inability to conceive of the writer penning so self-evident a truth as that Christ did not undertake to save angels. That inability again is due to failure to gauge the spiritual ignorance of his Hebrew readers. To the same cause it is due that some recent commentators have not been content to regard ver. 16 as the statement of a truism, but have laboured hard to assign to it an important place in the chain of argument. To me this text is one of the most significant indications of the dark condition of the Hebrew Christians in reference to the nature of Christianity. They were so little at home, it appears, in Christian truth, that nothing could be taken for granted, and they had to be coaxed like children to engage in the most elementary process of thought on the subject. Such coaxing I find here. The writer stops short in his argument, and says in effect: "Please to remember that Christ is not the Saviour of the angels of whom I have lately been speaking, but of men, and reflect on what

that implies, and it will help you to go along with me in this train of thought." But we observe that he does not say, Christ taketh hold of *men*, but, "of the seed of Abraham." We must beware of attaching too much importance to this, as if the reference implied that the Christian salvation concerned only the people of Israel. Here again the apologetic exigences and aim are our best guide. The writer is not enunciating a theological proposition, but having recourse to an oratorical device to bring home his teaching to the hearts of his readers. He means to say, "Christ took in hand to save, not angels, but yourselves, my Hebrew brethren." His argument up to this point has been stated in terms applicable to all mankind; to charge it with a warmer tone and an intenser interest he gives it now a homeward-bound turn. To infer from this, that he considered the gospel the affair of the Jews, is to sink to the rabbinical level in exposition. At the same time it may be noted, that the introduction of a reference to Israel at this point is convenient, as from this point onwards the writer is to speak of things in which persons belonging to the chosen people were specially interested.

The writer now resumes and completes his application of the principle enunciated in verse 11, giving prominence in the final instance to Christ's experience of temptation (vers. 17, 18). In doing so he takes occasion from the parenthetical remark about the subjects of Christ's saving work (ver. 16) to make a new start, and go over the ground again with variations. The thoughts contained in these closing sentences are similar to those expressed in verses 14, 15. Here, as there, it is inferred from the fact that the subjects of Christ's work are men, that He must have a human nature and experience likewise. Here also, as there, the ends served by the assumption of human nature and endurance of a human experience are set forth. But neither in stating the fact of the incarnation nor in ex-

plaining its end does the writer repeat himself. He varies not only the forms of expression, but also the aspects under which he presents the truth, so as to give to his unfolding of the doctrine variety, richness, and fulness. While before he said that because the children were partakers of blood and flesh Christ also took part of the same, here he says that for the same reason it behoved Christ in all things to be made like unto His brethren. And whereas in the former place he set it forth as the end of the incarnation to deprive the devil of his power over man through death, and to rob death itself of its terrors, in this concluding passage he represents the human experience of Jesus as serving these two ends: first, the fitting of Him to transact as a priest for men towards God; and second, the qualifying of Him for being a sympathetic friend in need to all the tempted.

To be noted specially are the terms in which the unity between the Sanctifier and the sanctified is stated here. It behoved Him to be *in all respects* (*κατὰ πάντα*) made like unto His brethren. Likeness is asserted without qualification, and yet there are limits arising out of the nature of the case. One limit of course is that there can be no likeness in moral character. This limit is implied in the very titles applied to the two parties, Sanctifier and sanctified, and it is expressly stated in the place where Christ is represented as "tempted in all respects similarly, apart from sin" (iv. 15). Another limit, nowhere referred to in words, but tacitly assumed is, that the likeness is in those respects only in which our life on earth is affected by the curse pronounced on man for sin. Overlooking this principle, we might fail to be impressed with the likeness of Jesus to other men in His experience; we might even be impressed with a sense of unlikeness. There are respects in which Christ's life was unlike the common life of men. He was a celibate; He died young, and had no experience

of the temptations of middle life, or the infirmities of old age; in outward lot He was the brother of the poor, and was well acquainted with their griefs, but of the joys and temptations of wealth He had no experience. But these features of difference do not fall under the category of the curse. Family ties date from before the fall. The doom pronounced on man was death immediate, and prolonged life is a mitigation of the curse. Wealth too is a mitigating feature, another evidence that the curse has not been executed in rigour, but has remained to a considerable extent an unrealized ideal, because counteracted by an underlying redemptive economy. It will be found that Christ's likeness to His brethren is closest just where the traces of the curse are most apparent: in so far as this life is (1) afflicted with poverty, (2) exposed to temptations to ungodliness, (3) subject to death under its more manifestly penal forms, as when it comes as a blight in early life, or as the judicial penalty of crime. Jesus was like His brethren in proportion as they need His sympathy and succour, like the poor, the tempted, the criminal.

This likeness had for its final cause that the Sanctifier might become an effective helper of those to whom He was thus made like.

“That He might be a merciful and trusty High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.” These weighty words form an important landmark in the epistle, as containing the first express mention of a topic which the writer has had in view from the outset, and on which he will have much to say in the sequel; viz. the Priesthood of Christ. He has now arrived at a point in his argument at which he can introduce the great thought with some chance of being understood; though how well aware he is of the difficulty likely to be felt by his readers in taking it in appears from the fact that, immediately after announcing the new theme, he invites them to consider

carefully the Apostle and High Priest of their confession (iii. 1). In effect he says: "Now this is a great and glorious but for you difficult topic: give your minds to it; come, study it with me, it will well repay your pains." Here he does little more than introduce the subject. The priestly function of Christ he describes in general terms as exercised towards God and as consisting in the expiation of sin. No mention as yet of the means of propitiation, "gifts and sacrifices" (v. 1); still less of the fact that Christ accomplishes the result by the sacrifice of *Himself*. He will take care not to introduce that master-thought till he can do so with effect. Here on the threshold of the subject he gives prominence rather to the moral qualities of a well equipped High Priest, mercifulness and trustworthiness; moved partly by a regard to the connexion of thought, and partly by a desire to present Christ as Priest in a winsome light. The stress laid on these attributes is one of the originalities of the epistle, whether we have regard to the legal requirements for the priestly office as specified in the Pentateuch, or to the view of Christ's atoning work presented by other New Testament writers. It is one of the writer's favourite themes.

Of the two attributes the former is the chief, for he who is merciful, compassionate, will be faithful. It is want of sympathy that makes officials perfunctory. Hence we might read "a merciful and therefore a faithful, trustworthy High Priest." So reading we see the close connexion between the experiences of Christ and His fitness for the priestly office. For all can understand how an experience of trial and temptation might help to make Christ compassionate, while it is not so easy to see why it behoved Him to suffer *all* He suffered in order to perform the essential duty of a Priest—that of atoning for sin. One might think that for the latter purpose it were enough to die; but to insure that a High Priest should be heart and soul interested in His

constituents, it behoved Him to be made in all respects like unto His brethren.

The other end served by Jesus being made in all things like His brethren is thus stated: "*For having Himself been tempted in that which He suffered, He is able to succour those who are being tempted.*" This rendering of verse 18 is one of several possible ones which it is not necessary to enumerate or discuss, as the general sense is plain; *viz.* that Christ having experienced temptation to be unfaithful to His vocation in connexion with the sufferings arising out of it, previously alluded to as a source of perfecting, is able to succour those who, like the Hebrew Christians, were tempted in similar ways to be unfaithful to their Christian calling. The words show us, not so much a different part of Christ's ministry as Priest, as a different aspect of it. In the previous verse His work is looked at in relation to sinners for whose sins He makes propitiation. In this verse, on the other hand, that work is looked at in relation to believers needing daily succour amid the temptations to which they are exposed. Both aspects are combined when, farther on, mercy and grace for seasonable succour are named as the things to be sought in our petitions at the throne of grace (iv. 16).

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