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## III.

## THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

## Chapter x: 19 to End.

BY W. T. WHITLEY, M. A., LL.D., PRESTON, ENGLAND.

The last part of this epistle consists of advice pressed upon the readers, to remain true to their principles and not be tempted to slacken and drop back into Judaism. We can afford to compress this greatly in view of our altered circumstances. It will then be possible to compare the general teaching of the epistle with Paul on the one hand, and with the other New Testament authors on the other; to note how the epistle made its way into general circulation, and how it did little to stem a tide of sacerdotalism overwhelming the churches of the third and fourth centuries; and was hardly used in the sixteenth century. This will show how its argument is the very thing needed at the present day to induce a return to Christ as the one Atoning Priest, and what message it has for those who are invited to live a higher life.

“PERSEVERE IN FOLLOWING JESUS.”

“Since we now may enter the temple as priests, and since Jesus ministers there as our High Priest, let us use our privilege of approach, let us be true to the pledge we took in baptism, let us in the approaching crisis maintain our public worship. For if we deliberately abandon Christ, a sin far worse than rejecting Moses, no further sacrifice can be made for such sin, and only punishment can be expected from an outraged God.

“You suffered badly in the past, and did not flinch from avowing yourselves friends of other sufferers. Surely this boldness will not fail you now, when Messiah

is so near, when your fidelity is so nearly crowned with salvation. Only so can you be confident in the certainty of what we wish for, or know that the world as yet unseen has real existence.

“Remember how the saints of old thus looked beyond the visible: Abel had some glimpse of what sacrifice meant, Enoch trusted in the unseen God and went straight to Him, Noah anticipated future judgment and escaped it, Abraham quitted real present prosperity trusting God’s promise of better elsewhere, Sarah against all experience looked for a son and became the mother of a great nation. Yet recollect that in their lifetime these never received what they expected; they trusted God in life and in death, treating as real what they did not yet enjoy.

“Remember too Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac, the only child, the child of promise; Joseph’s confidence in the inheritance of Canaan; the readiness of Moses to abandon Pharaoh’s court, to seek the invisible God, to trust that the angel of death would pass over the blood-marked houses, to march down into the bed of the sea. Remember the heroes strung to action in the face of apparent failure, or those who faced torture and death expecting God to deliver them. In no case did these men receive here all that they expected, and indeed they await our joining them that at the Second Advent all hopes may be at once fulfilled.

“Shall we then cause grief by giving up the race? Rather fling aside the cumbering robe of Jewish ceremonial with all sin that impedes our course, and steadily run, gazing for inspiration on the victorious Jesus. Compare with Him when you flinch from the battle with sin, or from suffering. He as the true Son of God was chastened to the end; you start back at the first stroke. Think like Him of helping others. Strengthen the weak, reclaim the falling, purge the church of any who are earthly and faithless like Esau.

“The Old Covenant was made for earthly men who needed impressing with outward signs; the New for those who have faith in the reality of heaven. The Old barred men off from God and terrified even Moses; the New invites men near. Jesus is pleading with you in these last hours before He shakes into ruin the old state of things; ere it is too late, take up your heavenly priesthood which shall abide in the new age.

“Keep up brotherly ties, entertain strangers, help prisoners, maintain purity and contentment. Avoid all novel teachings. Are you invited to some sacrificial meal? Christ was slain on the cross as a Sin-offering, after which no sacrificial meal is allowed. Our only altar is the cross; He was thrust outside Judaism. Let us quit it too, and take up our heavenly priesthood, offering praise, kindness, liberality, the only sacrifices that God now accepts.

“Be loyal to the memory of your first leaders and to those who now watch over you; pray for us here, for I hope soon to be restored to you and shall come with Timothy, who is freed already.

“May God who raised from the dead our great Sacrifice to be our chief Pastor, complete His work in us by making us ready to do His will; all that is acceptable to Him can be only through Jesus Christ, to whom be eternal glory. Amen.”

COMPLEMENTARY TO PAUL.

It is natural first for many reasons to compare this teaching in the whole epistle with that of Paul. The most obvious point is that the field occupied is quite different. When Paul wrote to the Thessalonian Gentiles, his themes were of the Resurrection and the Second Coming; such points are here declared to be too elementary for mature Christians. And so throughout the whole range of Paul's letters, the topics that there bulk largely

are here mostly ignored; only at one or two points is it even possible to draw a contrast, generally there is no material for comparison. But three questions were vital in any circle of Christians; Who is Jesus? What did He do for us? How are we saved? To every circle Paul's answers are consistent, even if expressed with greater and greater clearness: He is the Son of God, come down from heaven, who died on the cross for our sins and to excite repentance, who rose again to send forth the Holy Spirit for our salvation; by entrusting ourselves to Him we are instantly pardoned and may appropriate daily grace. But to the circle addressed in this letter the answer is entirely different: He is the Son of God who on earth shared our lot and offered one sacrifice for our sins, in virtue of which He exercises an eternal priesthood of sympathy and help in heaven; our salvation hinges on steadily following in His steps and continuing His work by minor acts of help to others. There is no contradiction here, but scarcely any likeness.

Indeed when we look to details rather than to the whole scope, there is striking independence in the use of the few theological terms common to both. The Old Testament terms are used here much in their old sense. For instance, Faith is defined and illustrated at length by Old Testament examples; it is coupled with virtues such as boldness, confidence, patience, hope; it is contrasted with disappointment and shrinking back. Its advantage is placed not so much at the initial stage as in the later stages of the Christian life. And the quotation from Habakkuk is used in its original sense. Now Paul hardly thought of faith generally, only of faith on Jesus Christ; he associated it with an attribution of righteousness; he contrasted it with an effort after inherent righteousness; in a word he greatly specialized the term, and read into the words of Habakkuk a decidedly new meaning.

Or take the term Sanctify. Here, as generally in the

Bible, it is a ceremonial word, whose root idea is, to set apart from ordinary things and ordinary purposes for God. It is enriched to some extent, but it remains on the whole external and ritual, at deepest signifying, to put in right relation with God. Now when Paul wants to express this idea, he discards the term sanctify, and chooses another, from a legal vocabulary; his term Justify, though not absolutely equivalent, yet means broadly what sanctify means here; while into sanctify Paul reads a deep ethical meaning, taking note of the fact that he who is put into right relation with God will by degrees acquire the character of God.

When Paul discussed the Law, he thought chiefly of its moral side; here only the sacerdotal section is dealt with. When the ex-Pharisee Paul had anything to do with a high-priest, it was with an unjust judge whom he branded as a whited wall; in these pages the actual high-priest is ignored, and the ancient ideal in Aaron is considered. In most of his epistles Paul has a hard grip on the realities of life, and deals with flesh-and-blood adversaries; this teaching is highly ideal, and the advice is decidedly impersonal. When Paul quotes the Scriptures, he cites the Law and argues like a pupil of Gamaliel; here the psalms and prophets are dwelt upon and expounded with striking novelty. Of course, a writer who knew Timothy, probably knew also Paul according to the flesh, but when he wrote like this he was no learner in the school of Paul; if he shows that he had read a few of Paul's letters, he was original enough to strike out a line completely independent.

#### KINSHIP WITH OTHER AUTHORS.

When we turn to other letters which survive to us, we find two from the brothers, James and Jude, dealing distinctly with Jews, two from Peter and three from John dealing with a wide and different circle, including

Asia. Apparently a comparison with James and Jude should be the more promising.

Yet James looks on a far more primitive state of Christianity, when those who held to the old Way and those who saw in Jesus the Hope of Israel could still meet in the same synagogue. He still deals with elementary doctrine such as the necessity for a good life, he objects to the rush to teach, he urges a simple patient life on the lines advised in the Sermon on the Mount. At first sight there appears little in common. But when we recognize that our epistle subordinates advice to doctrine about Jesus, which is markedly absent in James, we can yet see a continuity. Both have the same conception of faith, and draw illustrations from the same people, Abraham and Rahab. Advice to immature Christians not to teach is quite harmonious with advice to them a generation later to rise up and teach. The silence of James about that temple where he himself worshiped daily, readily develops in twenty years into a formal exposition that its system is obsolete. The general sense that the Judge is at the door becomes urgent in the last call, while yet you hear "To-day." The invitation to intercessory prayer and to efforts for the conversion of others, leads to the remark that these alike are duties for every Christian priest. In brief, the theology of this epistle is that of James, highly enriched and supplemented, whereas that of James could never have developed into that of Paul. Even the short note of Jude has its point of contact, in the interest shown as to the angels.

And when we turn to Peter, we find the central point of this epistle approached when he not only quotes and says that all Christians are now the true "holy priesthood," but explains that we are to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. This phrase even implies what he does not explicitly assert, **that Jesus is Priest**; he rather dwells on the sacrifice, and repeats that He is the Shepherd of souls, while he evinces

an interest in the doings of Christ after death. And besides other coincidences both of thought and word, we find Peter alarmed at the prospect of Christians relapsing into their former state.

The epistles of John have hardly any points of contact for comparison. But in the Revelation there are some suggestive phrases such as, He made us to be priests; and much of the imagery is drawn from the temple, with its altar, its sanctuary where the martyrs officiate, its golden altar where arises the incense of the saints' prayers, its outer court which may be frequented by the unconverted, the ark of the covenant. Yet there is the most emphatic repudiation of an actual sacrificial system, for in the new Jerusalem there is no temple.

The result of this comparison is to show that the epistle to the Hebrews stands alone in seizing and developing one great line of thought, although congruous allusions are found in the writings of James, Peter and John. It may be summarily added that the appeal to prophecy is found also in Matthew; that although similarity of language with Luke has been asserted, Plummer has shown there are only five trifling words in both authors besides what are found in Paul or in the Septuagint; that in allegorical method and in ideal philosophy there are traces of the influence of Plato, possibly filtered through Philo of Alexandria.

#### READERS AND WRITER.

The enquiry, "Who wrote and who received the letter?" is fascinating, but unprofitable. At most, we can hope to say who stood in need of it, and who were capable of writing it.

The title "Hebrews" was of course given by some editor; it is very doubtful whether he guessed right. The word means strictly, Jews who lived in Palestine; but these largely spoke Aramaic, whereas this letter is in



Greek, and always was. Doubtless there were semi-Greek towns like Cesarea; but apart from the editorial title, nothing would suggest such a community. If the title be neglected, we can see that the letter would appeal to any Jews whose knowledge of the temple service was literary, who knew not the actual temple in Jerusalem, but the rules in Leviticus for the tabernacle. Where can we imagine a circle of Jews, all speaking Greek, turned Christian, and not in touch with Jerusalem? None of the churches founded by Paul can possibly suit, and we know very little about others. But from his epistle to the Romans we find that an exceptional state of things prevailed in Rome; instead of one church organized for the whole city, there were several little groups connected with Prisca and Aquila, Aristobulus, Narcissus, Asyncretus, Philologus. At a later stage when Paul wrote to the Philippians from Rome he found the Jewish group almost a distinct faction, still priding itself on being the Circumcision. When he called Timothy to his side again in Rome, he had to do with some people who were ever learning, but were never able to arrive at knowledge of the truth, which indeed they withstood, being reprobate concerning the faith; and except for a few people previously unknown, he was deserted by all but Luke, all others flinching from his side at the trial. Apparently then the Jewish Christians converted at Pentecost by Peter had, at the later date, clustered round Prisca and Aquila, but in their absence had drifted into opposition to Paul and his school; to such a group this letter might come with great appropriateness. And a Gentile editor might easily style the recipients "Hebrews" if an Englishman calls Kentuckians "Yankees." But while we thus see a possible destination, we must remember that such a company might easily arise in towns not known to us.

To ascertain a possible writer, we had better study the movements of Timothy as disclosed in Paul's last letter,

and in his previous letters during his first captivity. When he wrote to the Colossians, Timothy was with him; when he expected acquittal, he intended to send Timothy to Philippi. But this epistle shows Timothy only just freed. Therefore this epistle does not belong to the time of the first captivity. When Paul was actually going to Macedonia, he left Timothy at Ephesus as his temporary deputy to set things right; but the task was too hard, and Tychicus was sent to replace him, while he was summoned to Paul's side at Rome. Now there is nothing to show that this journey was ever completed, or was even begun; the Ephesians were annoyed at Jews and Christians alike, and though Tychicus of Asia might be safe there, the circumcised Timothy was not. Quite possibly he was arrested there, but released owing to his unimportance when once Paul was dead.

Now when Paul last wrote to him at Ephesus he bade him convey greetings to Prisca and Aquila; is it possible that one or both of these wrote this anonymous letter? She was apparently a Roman, he a Jew of Pontus. Exiled from their home in Rome, they settled for a while at Corinth and Ephesus, where they employed Paul in their workshop. They were the pioneers at Ephesus, and were well enough educated to teach even the learned Apollos.

If then we limit ourselves to places and people mentioned in the New Testament, all conditions seem met by Prisca and Aquila writing about 69 A. D. to the little circle of Jews in Rome that once met in their house. But the letter may be due to people and circumstances of whom we have no knowledge.

#### RECEPTION OF THE EPISTLE.

When we look to see how the letter was received in different quarters, we find a curious hesitation in attending to it. It was soon known at Rome, where Clement and Hermas used it, without formally referring to it;

fifty or sixty years later Justin showed acquaintance with it. But when, about 200 A. D., Hippolytus or some one else drew up a formal list of books useful for public reading in Italy, known to us as the Muratorian Canon, this book was utterly ignored, and did not even receive condemnation. Across at Carthage about the same time, Tertullian knew and approved it, because of its apparent sternness to apostates, but startles us by attributing it to Barnabas as if this authorship were well known, though no one else alludes to this. It is most significant that he expressly distinguished it from writings of authority among Christians; and his disciple, Cyprian, ignored it.

In Asia we find that Marcion, the first to publish a collection of Christian literature, made no use of this; though indeed his doctrinal leanings would induce him to pass it over. Irenæus of Lyons, who largely represents the traditions of Asia, also neglected it. But Pinytus of Crete, a little earlier, showed acquaintance with it.

In Syria it met no recognition. The "Teaching of the Twelve Apostles," apparently a manual for Jewish-Christian churches, did not use it. When Tatian returned from Rome and gave the Syrian churches some books in their own tongue, this was not among them; nor did it receive recognition till the fifth century under Greek influence.

In Egypt, the home of allegory, the epistle was known to the Sicilian Jew, Pantæus, who regarded it as Paul's work. His successors faithfully repeated this opinion, but departed from it; for Clement conjectured that Paul wrote in Hebrew, while Luke made the Greek version; Origen went further and thought that Luke or Clement of Rome was the author, on the basis of thoughts originated by Paul.

The authority of these Egyptian scholars induced the Eastern Greek churches to use the epistle on the understanding that it was Paul's. Further east, and in the West, there was no such understanding, and no such practice till the fifth century. The Arian Goths do not

seem to have had the letter in their version, it was hardly used in Gaul, Italy and Africa until after earnest debates in which Augustine advocated it, and then it only came in as an appendix to Paul's epistles. Pope Innocent advised its use, but Jerome's opinion that it was not Paul's caused Latin copyists to vary greatly in the place they gave it, even if they included it at all; not until the standard edition by Alcuin in 800 was its status sure. A few Greek copies of Paul's letters made even later still omitted it. But it never was classed with the seven Catholic epistles, with some of which it has real affinity.

In other words, it never was regarded as canonical scripture except on the assumption that it was Paul's work, or on papal authority.

#### RISE OF SACERDOTALISM.

If outwardly not very much attention was paid to the epistle in early days, still less was its great teaching appreciated. The question soon arose, How is the church related to the Jewish nation, the New Covenant to the Old? To this many answered, especially Marcion, that the whole of the old system was bad, so that the Old Testament was worthless for the Christian. A natural reaction was to assert that there was perfect continuity, that the surviving Jews might be neglected, and that the church was grafted on to the old stock; this made the Old Testament authoritative. The answer of this epistle was that the Jewish system had been full of intentional forecasts of the truth, derived indeed from a glimpse of the eternal truth; thus everything sacerdotal had prepared for Christ being recognized as the sole Priest; and that now the real thing had come, the anticipations were obsolete.

This lesson was never understood, and the sacerdotal language of the Old Testament was adopted in a muddled figurative sense by Clement of Rome, who in one place

called Christ the High Priest, in another implied that church officers were priests, and that other Christians were laymen. When we scan the letters of Ignatius and Polycarp in the second century, we find a solitary reference to a literal pagan high priest of Asia, and a few merely figurative allusions to priests and sacrifices. These set forth that all Christians are in the precinct of the altar, that all are priests under Christ the High Priest, that a man going to death is an offering to God; while vehement opposition is shown to the Jews and their ritual system. This antagonism was continued by Aristides, and by Justin debating with a Jew; but Justin used some highly ambiguous language about the bread and wine of communion as a sacrifice. The same confusion of thought is to be traced in Tertullian.

Indeed in these early writers we see the three great influences destined to transform the simple Christian service into a highly sacerdotal one, despite the plain warnings of this epistle: Pagan surroundings, Jewish precedent, thoughtless rhetoric.

Notice first the general usage of the whole pagan world with its system of priests, altars, sacrifices. At Rome were ancient fanes of gods such as Jupiter and Vesta, with pontiffs and vestal virgins. At Athens was the Parthenon with its idol of Pallas Athene. At Ephesus was the splendid temple to Diana with its hideous image and its troop of priests. No town but had, like Lystra, at least one temple where priests were ready to sacrifice oxen to their god. And the emperors encouraged a new set of temples to their predecessors or themselves; and they enlisted the chief men of each province to form a new Imperial Priesthood, meeting annually at large towns like Lyons. To every Greek or Roman, religion implied a temple with an altar where a priest slew a sacrifice. As soon as Christianity became important enough to challenge serious refutation, a philosopher made it one count in his indictment that there were no

temples and no sacrifices. When Origen replied to Celsus about 250, he granted the fact, and defended it; but when a century later it became fashionable to profess the religion patronized by the emperor, the pagan customs were sure to press for naturalization.

For this the way had been prepared by a movement within Christian bounds, a recrudescence of the Jewish feelings brought about by unintelligent adoption of all the Jewish sacred books. Before the second century closed, appeared the Clementine Homilies, a religious novel written deliberately to propagate the Jewish-Christian views, especially insinuating that Christianity was absolutely continuous with the old system. Certainly an exact restoration was not openly advocated, but salvation was ascribed to the due performance of rites or the abstinence from certain viands, and a single head of the church on earth was put forward, to the first of whom even the apostles used to report. At the time the movement was generally condemned, but it was only premature, and presently won its way. Of this we can take three instances.

Thus, the scriptural doctrine of one only sacrifice for sin, long remained unimpeached in words, but its foundations were sapped. Origen actually misused this very epistle to assert that martyrdom was a continuation of the crucifixion, and was a sacrifice offered by the blameless priest. Tertullian went further, and spoke not only of martyrdom, but of holiness in general, or in particular of fasting, virginity, marital continence, as being able to expiate for sin. Cyprian expanded the hints and ascribed atoning power to penitence, tears, almsgiving, intercession. Then came in the other tributary of evil, the lax use of figurative language. Rhetoricians had talked about the water of baptism as though it were the blood of Christ, about the bread and wine as though they were the body and blood of Christ. Cyprian improved on this and spoke of the blood of Christ being offered in sacri-

fice at the Lord's Supper. So the emphasis in the communion service was shifted; once it had been a thanksgiving to God for redemption, a Eucharist; or a Communion with God and with one another; or a Memorial of the one sacrifice; now it became a repetition of that sacrifice.

Or again, it was long borne in mind that all Christians were priests; the fact was emphasized in the arrangements of public worship, when those who were not yet baptized were not permitted to join in the priestly thanksgiving service, wherein all Christians took part. But again a trick of language worked harm, and in the west the term *Sacerdos* was applied to the officers of the church, a term which in pagan circles meant a sacrificing priest. And although the New Testament never used the corresponding term *Hiereus* for a Christian minister, the Greeks employed it. Before long Tertullian found it necessary to protest that all laymen were priests—but the protest was futile—while in the same breath he admitted that there was a priestly order distinguished from the mass of the Christian people. And in a code of ecclesiastical laws reflecting the customs of perhaps 250 A. D., we have bishops spoken of as priests ministering at the altar. And so the general priesthood of all believers fell rapidly into the background and was practically denied, while the clergy styled themselves Sacrificing Priests.

Or once more, when Christians first began erecting buildings for worship, they did not copy temples, whether Jewish or pagan, but put up plain assembly-rooms with reading desk, chair, wooden table, these they called Houses of Prayer, or the Lord's Places. They were jeered at as having neither temple nor altar, and they gloried in the fact. But in a few centuries opinion changed, the building was divided up on the analogy of the Jewish temple, with an outer compartment for the mere laity, but for the priests an inner part containing the holy table. Nor did the declension stop there. In the east the furniture of the altar came to include an ark, a seven-branched

candlestick, a censer, a table of shewbread; and the whole of these articles were hidden from the laity by a screen, as if once again the veil were hung to cut off all but priests from direct access to God. In the west the table was replaced by a stone altar, while images of wood, stone and metal were introduced into worship.

In all these respects we see that the doctrine of this epistle was utterly neglected. In place of the one High Priest and the priesthood of all believers depending on Him, arose hundreds of men claiming the title but excluding their brethren. In place of the one and only atoning sacrifice arose a daily repetition of it by the priest, and a series of supplementary meritorious sacrifices by the laymen. In place of the heavenly temple were built earthly temples replete with symbolical furniture. These innovations fitted together admirably and fatally, bringing back a general Jewish legalism that almost extinguished the gospel.

On one side this system was attacked in the spirit of Paul by Martin Luther, and the reformation ensuing left many churches free from the error of justification by works. But most of them clung to a modified sacerdotalism, and into some of them have crept back the whole series of errors as to sacrifice and priests, illustrated by the form of their buildings, the plan of their services, the attire of their leaders.

#### PERTINENCE TO-DAY.

The author of the epistle would indeed be startled to see the position to-day. The sort of people for whom he wrote expressly, the class which then seemed so important, the Christian Jews, has simply disappeared; trying to bridge the gulf between Jews and Christians they fell in, rejected by both. Then on the one hand the Jews at large have dropped their temple and their sacrifices, and do not seem to regret them; they only take note of their



priests as certifying to the purity of their meat, as giving the closing benediction at worship, and as limited to virgin wives. But on the other hand, Gentile Christians have appropriated the relics discarded by the Jews, and have decked themselves out therewith. So the argument of the epistle is as keen and pertinent to-day as ever it was. What better proof can be needed of its inspiration, or of its right to stand among the sacred books of our faith?

How comes it that a book, apparently so adapted to one particular occasion and one limited class of readers, is yet so up-to-date? The answer is important. The human heart craves a priest, a mediator between God and man; conscience cries out for a sacrifice which shall atone for sin. When the Priesthood of Christ, and the worth of His sacrifice are depreciated, they will invent something additional to satisfy the craving. But the ground is nearly cut from under the feet of these modern sacerdotalists by attention to the doctrine of this epistle, and by reliance on Christ as our atoning Priest.

One piece of symbolism deserves close attention, the arrangement of the tabernacle. As prescribed in Exodus, there were three portions; the court open to all priests for cleansing and sacrifice; the outer room of the building screened by a veil, open only to a priest on a special duty; the inner room screened by a second veil, open to the High Priest alone.

When now in this epistle we look for any mention of the court with its laver and altar, or of the veil that parted it from the outer room, we find frequent reminders that the one sacrifice has been offered, so that the altar has been abolished, and only the laver remains for use. The first veil is nowhere treated as existing, but the outer room, once hidden from most priests, seems now thrown open to them all, and they are urged to draw nigh and enter into the Holy Place. With this is contrasted the Holy of Holies, and attention is drawn to the fact that even yet the way into the inmost room is not open. With-

in that Holy of Holies is Jesus, the High Priest, and still the second veil hangs between Him and us. This separation is not permanent. He is our forerunner, and some day He will reappear, a consummation to be earnestly desired, since it will complete our salvation and will be to usher us with the earlier saints into the immediate presence of God. Meantime we are promoted from the disused altar, to the candlestick, the table, the golden altar of incense.

To interpret this symbolism. With making atonement we have nothing to do; Christ has done that and thereby has consecrated a new order of priesthood to serve Him. Our side of this is to take up our rights and consecrate ourselves once for all, then to cleanse ourselves daily for His service in heart and soul. Our service includes letting our light shine before men that they may see our good works and glorify God, bringing gifts and offerings, presenting prayer and praise. But while we are in the flesh we can see neither God nor even His Mediator Jesus Christ; our salvation is incomplete and our service is not of the highest type; we may hope for better things, but cannot in the flesh enjoy them. Meanwhile we are tempted and often sin, we need mercy, grace and help, He lives separated from sinners and apart from sin. Into that loftiest state we may be promoted when He appears.

Thus we have two doctrines which are to-day of the utmost importance—one, that all Christians alike are priests; the other, that our priesthood is inferior to His not only by lacking atoning power, but also in its being exercised subject to the disabilities of the flesh. These deserve stating anew in language freed somewhat from tabernacle symbolism, when it will be seen that they do not depend solely on this epistle, but might be elicited also from the writings of Paul, Peter and John.

Every Christian has privileges not open directly to the mass of mankind. A life of good deeds is acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. The time, thought and money

that we devote to His service will be recognized and rewarded by Him. Prayer in the name of Jesus will be heard and answered. Such privileges are also duties, required from us. But men who know the claims and offers of Christ, yet neglect them and venture to rely on their works or gifts or life, and who plead on any basis other than that of His love shown through Christ, are intruding where they have no right. There is another series of duties owed by Christians toward fellow-men; to urge repentance, explain the way of salvation, assure of forgiveness to those who trust Christ, enlist others into His service. Such obligations are implied in the promise, "Whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained." Church officers have no interest more than others in this promise. Every Christian equally has direct access to God, every Christian equally has service to render to men.

While thus we all have been raised to a higher platform than before Christ died, nevertheless it is not yet the highest we may reach. We are on earth, He is in heaven; and this distinction maintains a difference which can only disappear when He calls quick and dead alike to share in the higher life where sin is abolished and temptation ceases. Meantime we are still hampered with a sinful nature with which we have always to reckon, and are often betrayed into actual sins both of neglect and of deed and of thought, for which we must seek daily pardon. We are enjoined not to be satisfied with this halfway stage, and rather to anticipate the final stage and seek to reach up towards it; but we have not yet attained to it, and cannot in this life.