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### The Diety of Christ According to the Epistle to the Hebrews

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T H E D E I T Y O F C H R I S T  
A C C O R D I N G T O  
T H E E P I S T L E T O T H E H E B R E W S

##

An essay presented to the Faculty of Concordia Seminary,  
St. Louis, Missouri, in completion of the requirements  
for the degree of Bachelor of Divinity,

by:

Thomas Coates,

Duluth, Minnesota,

April 12, 1935.

*Approved*

*T. Gardner*

*W. Arnold*

*May 20, 1935.*

## THE DEITY OF CHRIST ACCORDING TO THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

### Introduction

The Epistle to the Hebrews is one of the most unique and interesting books of the inspired canon of the New Testament, and certainly one of the richest in doctrinal content. Because it is such an outstanding book, both as to its theological import and as to its classical and masterly<sup>ful</sup> literary style, it is all the more strange that the authorship of the Epistle has remained shrouded in mystery. Among the names mentioned as the possible author have been those of Luke, Barnabas, Clement of Alexandria, Apollos, Silvanus, Aquila and Priscilla, and especially Paul. The Pauline authorship, however, is rendered quite improbable by the following considerations: 1. The style is totally different from that of Paul's epistles; the Epistle to Hebrews is difficult both linguistically and symbolically. 2. The Epistle to the Hebrews quotes the LXX, while Paul always quotes or translates directly from the original. 3. The comparison of Hebrews 2,3, where the writer says that the salvation spoken of by the Lord "was confirmed unto us by them that heard him", with Galatians 1,12,17, where Paul expressly states: "For I neither received it (the Gospel) of any man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ...Neither went I up to Jerusalem to them which were apostles before me; but I went into Arabia, and returned again unto Damascus."

Although it is unlikely, in view of the above mentioned considerations, that the Epistle was written by Paul, yet the author was certainly a member of Paul's inner circle, as is evident both from internal and external considerations with regard to the Letter. But the authorship of the Epistle is not of paramount importance for either the proper estimation or understanding thereof, and we may well share the sentiment to which Bruce gives expression: "We may therefore rest content that the name of the writer should remain unknown, and even find a

certain satisfaction in the reflection that anonymity is a not incongruous attribute of a writing which begins by virtually proclaiming God to be the only Speaker in Scripture and Jesus Christ to be the one Speaker of God's final revelation to man."

The title and the contents of the Epistle prove that the addressees were Jewish Christians, and the emphasis placed on the temple worship points to the fact that they were residents of Palestine, especially of Jerusalem. The letter constitutes a warning to the Jewish Christians to remain steadfast in their adherence to Christ, amid all the vicissitudes of life. They should not relapse into their former mode of worship, naturally meaningful and dear to them as it was, for Christ is the fulfilment of the Old Testament symbolism, and the new covenant is superior to the old. The Epistle was probably written from Italy about 66 A.D., with 68 as the terminus ad quem, since later than that the temple worship was no longer in practice.

The Epistle is a veritable compendium of Christology, and <sup>the</sup> Deity of Christ is ~~among~~ the predominant feature which the Epistle presents; indeed, this theme runs like a golden thread throughout the entire letter. The eternal Son, the incarnate Redeemer, the great High Priest, seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high is the exalted Subject to whom the entire book is dedicated. It would be difficult to find a more comprehensive or more convincing array of testimony to His Deity than that which this Epistle presents.

It is to this momentous and <sup>weighty</sup> (divinely solemn) topic of the Deity of Christ as presented in the Epistle to Hebrews that the present essay is devoted. In the treatment of this subject, we shall discuss the doctrinal portion of the Epistle in its entirety, but we shall not enter into a consideration of the hortatory sections, since these do not fall within the scope of this essay.

We submit that the Deity of Christ, as presented in this Epistle, is proved: I. By His preeminent position as the Mediator of Revelation; II. By His divine work of Atonement as the great High Priest.

## PART ONE

### THE DEITY OF CHRIST PROVED BY HIS PRELIMINARY POSITION AS THE MEDIATOR OF REVELATION

#### I. THE ETERNAL SON

Superior to the Prophets The profundity and sublimity of the exalted subject upon which the author intends to instruct his readers is evident from the very outset of the letter. The apostle does not begin with the customary epistolary introduction, but immediately plunges in medias res, opening his discourse with a majestically impressive and rhythmically rounded period, which comprehends all the main thoughts of the Epistle. "It is, so to speak, the portico of an august temple, its weighty clauses being a row of stately ornamental pillars supporting the roof. This temple front has an imposing aspect. It fills the mind with awe, and disposes one to enter the sacred edifice in religious silence" (Bruce, p.26).

With telling force the author begins by contrasting the revelation of God through the prophets of old with His new and more excellent revelation through His Son: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by (in) the prophets, Hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

The revelation which God imparted in former times (PALAI), namely, in the Old Testament era, was given "at sundry times and in divers manners," POLYKRONOS KAI POLYTROPOS. It was not given in complete form at one time, but piecemeal, to various individuals and at various times during the course of the Old Testament history. Moreover, God made known His Word to the fathers in various forms and modes of revelation. Hence, the fathers did not receive the revelation of God in its entirety, but their knowledge and understanding of the plan of God and of the coming of the Messiah progressed and became clearer in proportion to the extent and manner in which God revealed His will. As one commentator has very strikingly declared: "They were like men listening to a clock striking, always getting nearer the truth, but obliged to wait until the whole was heard."

Moreover, we are told that God spoke unto the fathers "by (or "in") the prophets," EN TOIS PROPHETAS. God did not speak to His people immediately, but through the medium of the prophets. The author very evidently does not here use the term "prophets" in the narrower sense of the word, but rather includes the whole body of Old Testament revelation. The inspired writers of the Old Testament Scriptures were God's mouthpiece and instruments, in and through whom God spoke unto the fathers.

Now, the olden revelation dare not be disparaged or belittled. It was indeed the revelation of God Himself; the Old Testament Scriptures are indeed the verbally inspired Word of the Lord; they have indeed formed a salutary and indispensable part of the all-wise economy of God. This much cannot and dare not be denied. But in comparison with the new revelation which God has granted through His Son, they are as the pale light of the moon when compared with the glorious and radiant brightness of the sun.

Therefore, after delineating the revelation of "time past," the author declares by way of contrast: "God...hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son." At once the <sup>clear</sup> superiority of the new revelation becomes evident. Whereas the Old Testament revelation was manifold and variegated in form and nature, the revelation which God has given to men "in these last days," EP' ESCHATWN TWN HEMERWN, namely, in the "ew Testament era, is a unit. For, instead of speaking unto us by the prophets, as He did of old, God has now spoken unto us by His Son, EN HYIWN. The Son is regarded as the only speaker of the new dispensation; the apostles who wrote the inspired books of the New Testament canon are really only witnesses, only echoes of His voice.

The appellation "Son," used here without the article (as BAR in Psalm 2,12), has the force of a proper name, signifying Jesus Christ, the Mediator of the New Testament, cp. Heb. 7,28.

The fact that the new revelation has been imparted through the Son serves to emphasize its transcendent superiority. To be sure, it is only the Son who can be the Mediator of a perfect, complete revelation. And in speaking through His Son, the Father has invested His Word with full authority. When the Son has spoken, no more remains to be said. "No man hath seen God at any time; the only-begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him," John 1, 18.

Having stated the fact that God's revelation in these last days has been given through His Son, the inspired writer goes on, in vv. 2 and 3, to present a detailed description of that Son. And this description, is so clear, so unmistakable, so positive, so comprehensive in its declaration of the Deity of Christ, that if we had no other information concerning His person and work then this, this description alone would suffice to convince us beyond all shadow of doubt that Jesus Christ is the true, almighty, eternal God.

It is first stated that God has appointed His Son to be "the heir of all things", NON ETHEKE KLERONOMON PANTWN. Indeed, the <sup>title</sup> designation, "Son", at once suggests the idea of "heir," for HYIOS and KLERONOMOS are kindred notions. Jesus Christ is Lord by right of heredity; indeed, the heirship of all things implies that all things exist for the heir. As Psalm 2 informs us, the lordship over the threefold kingdom of power, grace and glory has been bequeathed by the Father unto the Son as an eternal inheritance. [Proof positive, to be sure, for the Deity of Christ:]

And His Deity is further stressed by the second clause: "By whom also He made the worlds," DI' HOU KAI TOUS AIWNAS EPOISEN. The term AIWNAS literally means "ages" - and this brings out the eternal power of Jesus Christ all the more clearly: "He made the ages!" We are at once reminded, of course, of the parallel statements, John 1, 2: "All things were made by Him (the Word), and without Him was not anything made that was made," and Col. 1, 16: "By Him (the Son) were all

things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities or powers; all things were created by Him and for Him." He who has been appointed Heir of all things is the eternal Mediator of creation. The universe came into existence only through the creative activity of Jesus Christ. Can He be anything less than God?

The apostle continues in His description of the divine Christ by saying that He is "the brightness of His glory", APAUGASIA TES DOXES, and "the express image of His person", CHARAKTER TES HYPOSTASEWS AUTOU. We could scarcely conceive of a more striking portrayal of the relationship existing between Christ and His Father.

In calling the Son APAUGASIA, the writer signifies the brightness given forth by a shining object, which we might render as "effulgence" or "radiation" of the glory of God. It is this conception of the Son's relationship to God which called forth the Nicene Creed's designation of Christ as "Light of Light," PHOS EK PHOTOS. He indeed is "the true Light, which lighteth every man that cometh into the world," John 1,7. And because Christ is the effulgence of God's glory, it follows that He must be consubstantial with the Father, since that which emanates from light must itself have the nature of light. The relation between God the Father and God the Son is similar to the relation between the sun and the sunlight, and this leads von Gerlach to conclude: "As we cannot see the sun without the brightness which issues from him, so we cannot see the Father without the Only-begotten Son."

To make sure that there can be no question as to <sup>the</sup> divine relationship between Father and Son, the author also describes Christ as "the express image of His person," CHARAKTER, TES HYPOSTASEWS AUTOU. CHARAKTER is that which makes a mark or impression, hence also the impression itself; it is used to denote absolute similarity, or as the A.V. renders it, "express image." He is the exact impression of God's person, HYPOSTASIS, i.e., His essence, nature (literally, "substance"). He is identical with the Father as to essence and nature. In



calling Christ "the effulgence of God's glory" and "the express image of His person", the holy writer presents in terms which are crystal-clear the divine truth that Christ and God are one, and thereby enables us the better to perceive the import of Christ's statement to Philip: "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father." (John 14,9).

Since Christ is God, it is quite logical that the author should declare of Him that "He upholds all things by the word of His power," ΠΡΩΤΗΝ ΤΑ ΠΑΝΤΑ ΤΩ ΒΛΗΤΙ ΤΗΣ ΔΥΝΑΜΕΩΣ ΑΥΤΟΥ. Not only was the world originally created through His instrumentality, but its government is still carried on through His mediation. The destiny of the entire universe rests upon Him. He directs all things by the mere utterance of His divine will. Nor did He relinquish His divine function of preserving the universe during His sojourn here on earth, when He had taken upon Himself the form of a servant, for as the unique God-man He retained the full power of His divine nature even while suffering the deepest humiliation.

In this connection, the apostle next states that Christ "by Himself purged our sins," ΔΙ' ΗΣΑΥΤΟΥ ΚΑΘΑΡΙΣΜΟΝ ΠΟΙΣΑΛΕΝΟΣ ΤΩΝ ΗΜΑΡΤΩΝ ΗΣΕΩΝ. Concerning the significant use of the middle voice in the participle ΠΟΙΣΑΛΕΝΟΣ, Delitzsch writes (I, 54): "This designates the act of cleansing as one specially and properly belonging to the Son, a notion further expressed by ΔΙ' ΗΣΑΥΤΟΥ. The act was done by Him, not through the instrumentality of any outward means, but by interposition and within the sphere of His own personality." In accomplishing the purification of our sins, Christ performed a priestly act, and this act was of absolute validity, for He, the almighty Son, purged our sins by Himself. And this divine work of Christ in blotting out all our sins by His own atoning sacrifice is of such stupendous magnitude and importance that the author devotes a lengthy section of his Epistle (5, 14 - 10, 18) to an exhaustive discussion of this very matter. See

Because Christ's purification of our sins was of such infinite worth; God "highly exalted Him," which the holy writer here describes in the words, "He sat down on the right hand of majesty on high," ΕΚΑΘΙΣΕΝ ΕΝ ΔΕΞΙΑ ΤΗΣ ΤΕΤΑΡΤΗΣ ΕΝ ΕΥΡΩΤΟΙΣ. Sitting on the right hand of God is of course to be understood illocally; it is the familiar Scriptural expression used to denote the supreme fellowship of honor and dominion which Christ possesses in relation to the Father, cp. Rom. 8, 34; Eph. 1, 20; Col. 3, 1. Seated at the right hand of the Father, the Lord Jesus exercises that almighty power which belongs to His divine essence, and also performs His mediatorial work in behalf of those whose sins He has purged.

The cumulative testimony to the Deity of our Savior which the holy writer presents in this section is so convincing that it must dispel every vestige of doubt as to the fact that Jesus Christ is God Almighty. And because, as these verses state, He is the Heir of all things, the Creator of the world, the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person, the omnipotent Preserver of the universe, the Redeemer from sin, and the exalted Son, seated at the right hand of power - He is also preeminently qualified to be the perfect and final Mediator of God's revelation to man, a Mediator infinitely superior to the prophets of the Old Testament era.

Having established the Deity of Christ beyond all contravention, the The Son Superior to the Angels author now proceeds very skilfully to weave a new theme into the old, concluding His long introductory sentence with the declaration that Christ, highly exalted by God, is "made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they."

This statement of the superiority of Christ over the angels is so self-evident to us that at first blush it may seem superfluous and trite. The writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, however, had good reason to devote himself to such a

thorough discussion of this subject. The fact must not be overlooked that the angels occupied an important position in the system of Rabbinical theology. The Talmud makes the statement: "There is not a thing in the world, not even a tiny blade of grass, over which there is not an angel set." The angels were held in utmost awe and reverence by the Jews, to such an extent that a sort of angelolatry had crept in among some circles. And the opinion was held by certain Jewish Gnostics that Christ Himself belonged to an angelic creation. Hence, to the author of this Epistle the superiority of Christ over the angels was a very live subject, for he felt the necessity of dispelling the false notions concerning the relationship of Christ and the angels which were current and of establishing beyond all shadow of doubt the fact that the angels, holy and blessed and powerful beings though they are, must after all bow before the Son, their Maker.

Christ is made "better", KRAITWN, than the angels, superior to them in power and authority. And the correlative of His exaltation over them is found in His super-angelic name, for the author declares: "Being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they." He who has been appointed "the heir of all things," v.1, has received a most exalted name, ONOMA. The name which Jesus has inherited is His heavenly name, so glorious, so divine that it transcends all our limited human powers of conception. It is the name "that no man knew, but He Himself," Rev. 19, 12. And the majesty of this name is indicated in the following verse, in which Christ is directly called "the Son", HYIOS, "Lord," KYRIOS, and "God", THEOS.

The superiority of Christ over the angels is now proved by seven quotations from the Old Testament. While the dignity and blessedness of the angelic creatures is by no means denied (for Scripture is very explicit in ascribing to them a lofty position), yet the author takes pains to prove that in relation to the Son of God, their position is altogether subordinate.

The angels have received no preeminent name. They are not to receive any worship from men, but they must rather worship the Son. Despite their glorified state, they are not supreme, but only servants of God, comparable to the winds and flames, entirely dependent upon His will, and bound to do His bidding, especially in the interest of His people. While God employed them on occasions to be the mediators of His will, yet their mediatorial work was inferior to that of the divine Mediator of the New Testament. And although they have been endued with great power, their power does not include the ability or the right to rule; God has not seated any of their number on the right hand of His power, nor has He given them any jurisdiction over "the world to come."

<sup>we behold him</sup>  
Behold now the matchless superiority of Jesus Christ! For He is called the Son, the First-begotten of God; He is seated upon the throne of God; He is the Creator of the universe.

The apostle first emphasizes the eternal Sonship of Jesus Christ, citing three Old Testament Messianic prophecies, Psalm 2,7, 2 Sam.7,14 and Psalm 97,7:  
"For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee? And again, I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to me a Son. And again, when He bringeth in His firstbegotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him."

This group of quotations portrays first the unique relationship existing between the Father and the Son, a relationship into which the Father has entered with no angelic being. Jesus Christ is called the Son of God the Father; He is indeed the Son K.T. EKOCHEN, for He has been "begotten, GEGENREKA, of the Father", and the holy writer refers to Him as the "Firstbegotten" of God, PRWTO-TOKON. He has been begotten of the Father, not in time, nor by any physical process, but in an eternal, ante-mundane generation, by a mysterious and divine act within the Godhead. The term "Firstbegotten" is here used absolutely, and signifies both the priority and the preeminence of the Son over all created beings.

And one commentator has aptly stated: "The Only-begotten becomes, in His glorified humanity as the Son with many brethren, the First-born among them." And the fact that Jesus is the First-begotten of the Father involves also the eternity of His nature and existence, for the Father has said unto Him, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee," SEMERON GEGENDEKA NE, - the day, namely, of eternity.

And because He is the eternal Son of God, He is worthy of honor and worship, even on the part of the holy angels, for the writer declares: "And again, when He bringeth in His firstbegotten into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him." When God will again bring His Son into the world, namely, on the great Day of Judgment, when He will appear in all the fulness of His divine majesty and power, all creation will have to worship Him, and in this adoration of the Son also the angels will join. Striking proof, indeed, for the superiority of Christ over the angels - for He is none other than God Himself!

The author now proceeds to emphasize the preeminence of Christ over the angels still further by establishing the <sup>divine</sup> kingship of the Son, vv.8.9. Here again He quotes an Old Testament Messianic prophecy, this time from Psalm 45,6.7: "But unto the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." In this divine oracle we find a fivefold proof for the Deity of Christ - proof that is indeed incontrovertible.

In the first place, the Son is directly called "God" twice in these two verses: The Father says to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," and again in v.9, a comparison with the Hebrew text of Ps.45,8, of which this verse is a quotation, shows that ELOHIM there is to be taken as a vocative and applied to the Messiah, to whom the words are addressed, so that the exact rendition of the original would be: "Therefore, O God, (namely Christ) Thy God

hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness above Thy fellows." Here, then, the Father twice addresses the Son, Jesus Christ, as God. It would be impossible to find a more direct, clear-cut or convincing proof of the Deity of Christ, for here we have the undeniable testimony of the almighty Father in Heaven Himself — and with such testimony, any doubt of Christ's deity becomes gross blasphemy, a denial of the very truthfulness of God.

Secondly, the Son is declared to have a throne, a kingdom and a sceptre. Upon His almighty shoulders the government of heaven and earth has been placed, Isa. 9, 6. He holds His gracious and almighty sway over a threefold kingdom — of power, grace and glory. Full well could He reply to the question of the Roman governor, "Art Thou a king, then?" with firm and positive assurance: "Thou sayest that I am a King!" The kingship of Christ is one of the most familiar Scriptural conceptions of His Messiahship, and our text finds substantiation in many parallel passages, e.g., Ps. 89, 4. 6. 8. 37; Ps. 72, 5, ff.; Ps. 110, 4.

In the third place, the Son is described as having the quality of perfect righteousness and equity: "A sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity." Since the Son is the very essence of righteousness, DIKAIOSYNE, and because the very thought of iniquity and lawlessness, ANOMIA, is repulsive to Him, therefore He is able to conduct the affairs of His kingdom with complete and unerring equity, and rule with "a sceptre of righteousness", or "rectitude", BARBOS EUPHYTETOS. And it is only to God that this attribute of perfect holiness and consummate justice can be ascribed. Again, the logical conclusion: Christ, the righteous King, is God!

Fourthly, because of the Son's love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity, God has anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows. The kings and priests of the Old Testament were also anointed, but only with material oil and for a limited period of service. Christ, however, has been anointed "with the Holy Ghost and with power," Acts 10, 38. God the Holy Ghost anointed Him "to preach

good tidings unto the meek;...to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound; to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn; to appoint unto them that mourn in Zion, to give unto them beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness; that they might be called trees of righteousness, the planting of the Lord, that He might be glorified," Isa.61,1-4. And because the Son entered upon His Messianic office voluntarily and cheerfully, and also because the performance of the work whereunto the Holy Spirit anointed Him afforded Him such holy joy and happiness, therefore He is said to be anointed with "the oil of gladness", cp. Heb.12,2.

For this reason also, He has been anointed "above His fellows," ΤΟΥΣ ΞΕΤΑΧΘΟΥΣ. He has been anointed in a far higher sense and in infinitely greater measure than all the earthly kings and magistrates and priests, who are here indicated by the term "fellows." And His unique and preeminent anointing indisputably establishes the fact of His Deity.

In the fifth place, all the <sup>power</sup> dominion, righteousness and joy which this quotation declares the Son to possess is eternal, for the Father said to the Son, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever," ΕΙΣ ΤΟΝ ΑΙΩΝΑ ΤΟΥ ΑΙΩΝΟΣ - a passing up of time, so to speak, to approximate the conception of eternity. Again and again the apostle drives home this point, that Jesus Christ is the eternal God; He indeed is "the same yesterday, and today, and forever", Heb.13,8.

But even the fivefold affirmation of the Deity of Christ which the author presents in this quotation from Psalm 45,7,8 does not suffice him. So intent is he upon impressing upon his readers the doctrine of Christ's Deity - for they sorely needed such thorough instruction upon this fundamentally important subject - that He adds still another quotation from the Old Testament, this time to

reemphasize the fact that Jesus Christ, God's Son, is also the Creator of the universe. In vv.10-12 he cites Ps.102,25-27: "And Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands; They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 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."

Again the Son, in this Messianic Psalm, is directly addressed by the title of Deity: "Thou, Lord, from the beginning", etc., SY KAT' ARCHAS, KYRIE. Again the work of creation is expressly ascribed to Him: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth; and the heavens are the works of Thine hands." Again He is declared to be all-powerful: "As a vesture shalt Thou fold them up." Again He is called the unchangeable and eternal One, in striking contrast to the transitory and finite things of the universe: "They shall perish; but Thou remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; 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."

And because He is God the Son, God the King, God the Creator, the Father has bestowed upon Him the place of honor, majesty and power, of which no angel could ever boast: "Sit on my right hand, until I make Thine enemies Thy footstool." This citation of Psalm 110,1, which is definitely Messianic, expresses the communion of height and majesty which Jesus has with the Father, and looks forward to the final and complete subjugation of His enemies. The sovereignty of the Son is the end toward which all things are directed - and the angels are only instruments toward that end.

Thus the apostle has heaped quotation upon quotation, proof upon proof, to establish the preeminence of the Son. He has hammered home with ~~convincing~~ <sup>irrefutable</sup> ~~convincing~~



logic and with overpowering evidence this sublime fact: "Christ is God!" and because He is God, He is ipso facto superior to the angels. And since He is superior to the angels, the new covenant of which He is the Mediator is correspondingly superior to the old covenant which they were called upon to mediate. As one commentator declares: "The spear-point of the argument is this. The eternal Son has brought a salvation greater and higher than that of the angels."

In order to continue the discussion of the superiority of the Son without interrupting the trend of thought, we shall for the present moment pass over Chapter II, in which the author devotes Himself to an extended treatment of the incarnation of the Son, and turn to Chapter III, 1-6, wherein the apostle compares Christ with Moses.

The writer, having established the superiority of Christ over the angels, naturally is led to prove His superiority over that other great mediator of the old covenant, that figure who loomed mountain-high in the religious thought of the Jews - Moses. And lest we are again inclined to feel that the preeminence of Christ over Moses is a self-evident matter and that it was ~~rather needless~~ <sup>superfluous</sup> for the author to devote any attention to such a subject, we must again bear in mind the fact that the religious background and thought of the people to whom the apostle addressed this epistle was entirely different from ours. Saphir writes: "It is hardly possible for Gentiles to understand or realize the veneration and affection with which the Jews regard Moses, the servant of God. All their religious life, all their thoughts about God, all their practices and observances, all their hopes of the future, everything connected with God, is with them connected also with Moses. Moses was the great apostle to them, the man sent unto them of God, the mediator of the old covenant" (Vol. I, p. 173). The preeminence of Christ over Moses was by no means the self-evident fact to the Hebrews that it is to us.

Therefore it was vitally important for the holy writer to establish the superiority of Christ, the Mediator of the New Testament, over Moses, the outstanding Mediator of the Old, around whose name gathered all the revelation and legislation in which the Jews trusted. It is a delicate subject, but the apostle handles it with consummate skill.

He launches into his discussion in an <sup>discussing</sup> engaging manner, addressing his readers as "Holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling." In view of the picture of the Savior which he has drawn in the preceding chapters, he now invites them to "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus," ΤΟΝ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΝ ΚΑΙ ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΑ ΤΗΣ ΗΜΟΛΟΓΙΑΣ ΗΜΕΩΝ, ΧΡΙΣΤΟΝ ΙΗΣΟΥΝ. The titles here ascribed to Jesus are significant, in that they give us a deeper insight into His office and also emphasize His Deity.

The author refers to Jesus as the "Apostle" of our profession. Only here in the New Testament is Jesus called ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΟΣ, although the cognate verb, ΑΠΟΣΤΕΛΛΕΙΝ, is frequently applied to Him. The term "Apostle" signifies a legate or messenger. Jesus is the authorized Messenger to reveal to us the whole will of God for our soul's salvation; He is the heaven-sent Prophet who has manifested Himself as the Son of God and has taught His people the way to righteousness and life eternal. Bengel describes Him as "Eun qui Dei causam apud nos agit."

Christ is also called the "High Priest" of our profession. <sup>Only</sup> in this Epistle <sup>to the Hebrews</sup> is the term ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ applied to Christ; the ~~present~~ <sup>present</sup> writer/calls Him by this title no less than seventeen times. The <sup>title</sup> designation as referred to Christ is particularly appropriate, for it involves the twofold function of offering sacrifices and of making intercession. Moreover, He was the Antitype of whom every high priest of Israel was a prototype. The Jewish high priest occupied an extraordinary position. It was essential that He be free of all ceremonial defilement; it was required that he be attired in gorgeous robes, according to minute directions; on his mitre was inscribed "Holiness to the Lord," while on his breastplate

were written the names of the twelve tribes. Only he could enter the <sup>H</sup>oly of <sup>H</sup>olies, and only he could make the offering on the great Day of Atonement. In <sup>in</sup> fine, every respect the Jewish high priest was a remarkable type of the great High Priest who was to come, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the great Representative of His people before His Heavenly Father. Whereas, as the "Apostle" He calls men to the heavenly treasures, as the High Priest He secures them for us.

Furthermore, He who is designated as the "Apostle and High Priest of our profession" is specifically mentioned by both His human name, "Jesus", the Savior of His people, and by His divine name, "Christ", the Messiah, the Anointed One of God. The very name which He bears implies an emphatic contrast to the old covenant, which He has now superseded; He is both the Founder and the content of our Christian confession.

Having thus portrayed the person and the office of the Son, thereby lending weight to the argument upon which He is about to enter, the apostle proceeds to contrast Christ with Moses. He first emphasizes the quality which they had in common - faithfulness. He writes, "Who (Christ) was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house." Christ was indeed faithful, PISTOS, to God, who appointed Him to be the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. He manifested His faithfulness throughout His earthly life; He did everything which His holy mission required of Him, He never betrayed His trust, He did not refuse to drink the cup of suffering and sorrow which was so essential to His redemptive work.

Moses was also faithful to His particular trust. Although he was but a weak and sinful man, yet he was dutiful, assiduous and loyal in the performance of the tasks placed upon him. And he was faithful "in all his house," EN HOIΩ TW OIKΩ AUTOU, namely, in the prosecution of all his duties in the House of God, the Church.

Although Moses was the great Mediator and a notable example of faithfulness, ~~however~~ he was far inferior to Him who is the essence of faithfulness, Jesus Christ. "For", says the author in effect, "Moses was as faithful as any servant in a house can be; still he was only a servant, while He of whom I now speak was not a mere servant in the house, but a son; and that makes all the difference" (Bruce, p.136). Hence, he goes on to show in a very logical and concise manner just how and why Jesus and His faithfulness should eclipse that of Moses.

"For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house." "For every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God." Thus the sacred writer proves the preeminence of Jesus Christ over Moses by the fact that Christ was the Maker of the house, while Moses was only a member, a part of that house. Moses indeed was an exemplary character and performed a noble work in the service of the Church. But Christ is the Sovereign and Founder of that Church. He built the house, for He is the Master-builder, the Maker of Moses, of all mankind, of all creation. Therefore, the glory of Jesus Christ is greater than the glory of Moses in corresponding measure as the builder of the house has more honor than the house.

Moreover, "every house is built by some man." This statement is axiomatic; no house comes into being of its own will or springs up of itself, but its <sup>very</sup> existence is due to the will of someone who is greater than it. Now, He who built and established all things is God, hence He must have built also the Church (as one interpreter remarks, "The Church is the greatest house ever built, and if any house ever needed a builder, this is that house"). Moses is a part of the house. God built the house. Christ is God and Creator (which point has been abundantly proven and which is also the direct implication of the present argument). Therefore it logically follows that Christ is the Maker of Moses, and therefore infinitely superior to Moses and worthy of more honor and glory than He. The force of the apostle's logic and reasoning is irresistible.

But the author adds still another evidence of the superiority of Christ to Moses, showing that Christ is the Son and Master over the house, whereas Moses is but a servant in the house. He writes: "And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after; But Christ as a Son over His own house."

Moses indeed was a loyal and trustworthy servant of God, and a faithful witness concerning "those things which were to be spoken after," namely, the proclamation of the glorious Gospel tidings by the Messiah. This is the sole honor due him, and a great honor indeed it is. But after all, Moses was only a servant; he did not perform his official duties of his own initiative and according to his own ideas, but received his instructions from God.

Christ, on the other hand, was faithful, as the "Son over his own house." He is the Master, the Head of the house. Christ the Savior presides over His Church, which He has purchased with His own blood, and of which He is Lord and King. And He holds this exalted position by virtue of His eternal Sonship.

It is a self-evident fact that the Son of the household is greater than any servant in that household, as Jesus pointed out, "The servant abideth not in the house forever, but the Son abideth ever," John 8, 35. Christ is the Son; Moses is the servant. Therefore, Christ is greater than Moses. The author has clinched his argument and driven home his point.

The undertone which pervades the entire line of reasoning, is the transient nature of the old covenant in contrast to the abiding nature of the new. This is brought out by the contrast between Moses in his temporary capacity as servant and Christ in His eternal dignity as Son; it is further made evident by the representation of the ministry of Moses as being for "a testimony of those things to be spoken after"; and it is also shown by the words: "Whose house are we," for the

fact that the Christians are called the house of God clearly implies that the Mosaic dispensation was only transitory in nature, and that the more glorious structure of the New Testament Church is the eternal abode of the children of God. Christ is indeed the Mediator of a more excellent covenant.

## II. "THE WORD MADE FLESH"

We have chosen advisedly the above caption for this section, for we can think of no more appropriate title with which to head <sup>the</sup> discussion of the second chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews than this meaningful expression of the inspired apostle, St. John; The beloved apostle writes in the opening verses of His Gospel: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God;" and concerning this eternal Word, who is none other than the Son of God, John declares in v.14 of his first chapter: "The Word was made flesh and dwelt among us." The trend of thought of the writer to the Hebrews is remarkably parallel to this. He begins His letter by portraying in majestic terms the eternal Deity of Jesus Christ, God's only-begotten Son, the "Word who was God." Having established this fact, he then turns his attention to a consideration of the incarnation and the unique humanity of the Son of God. It may be contended that the humanity of Jesus does not prove His Deity, and therefore is not germane to the subject of our essay. This would be true if Jesus had been an ordinary, mortal man; but Jesus, in contrast to all His brethren, was a unique, innocent, sinless man, who, after the days of His flesh, was exalted to the right hand of the majesty on high; and therefore His humanity and incarnation have a very real connection with His Deity.

The keynote of the entire discussion is struck in v.14.15: "Foras-

The Nature  
of His In-  
carnation

much then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also  
Himself likewise took part of the same, that through death He might

destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to bondage."

Christ became man; He took part of flesh and blood, SARK KAI HAIA being the familiar Scriptural expression to denote the human nature, portraying especially its weakness and frailty. Since the rest of mankind, including also the children of God, are partakers of flesh and blood, Christ, in becoming man, had to assume the same nature as they. He had to be united with them in the natural fellowship of the same bodily life.

Christ truly became flesh and blood in all that the expression implies, with but one exception - He was without sin. He hungered, He thirsted, He slept, He was sorrowful, He became weary, He suffered, and finally He also died. Indeed, if He had not become flesh and blood He could not have died, and it was absolutely essential that He should die.

**The Purpose of His Incarnation**

Why did He have to become a partaker of flesh and blood, and why did He have to die? "That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetimes/ subject to bondage." There we have the reason for His incarnation, His suffering, His death. He could only die by virtue of the human nature which He had assumed, but when He died the God-man died (communication of attributes), and this fact gave His death infinite worth. When He uttered His piercing cry as He hung on Calvary's cross, "It is finished!" the great work of redemption was complete. By His vicarious life, suffering and death He conquered Satan and the forces of sin and death, or, as the holy writer puts it: He destroyed "him that had the power of death, that is, the devil." The devil is extremely powerful; only God could destroy him. Jesus destroyed him. Therefore Jesus <sup>must be</sup> is God.

In bringing to naught the power of the devil and rendering him impotent, KATARGESIN, Jesus "delivered them who through fear of death were all their lifetimes subject to bondage," cp. Rom. 8, 15; Col. 1, 21, 22; 2 Tim. 2, 10. Having removed the cause of death, Jesus also removes the fear of death. Because of our manifold

sins, we mortals are afflicted with a guilty and disturbing conscience; this produces in us the dread of death and eternal retribution as the punishment for sin. Hence, as St. Paul declares, "We are by nature the children of wrath" our entire life is subject to bondage, DOULEIA, - a state which is certainly contrary to the idea of sonship. But Christ has now delivered us from the bondage of sin and from the fear of death by His perfect redemption, so that we can now exult with St. Paul: "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ," 1 Cor. 15, 55-57.

In order to accomplish this redemption, the apostle goes on to say, Christ did not "take hold of angels," OU GAR AGCHETHE EPILAMBANETAI. The good angels are holy and sinless beings who need no redemption, hence it would have been needless for Christ to "take hold of them", become a savior to them. The evil angels, on the other hand, are beyond the pale of redemption.

Hence, instead of taking hold of angels, Christ "took hold of the seed of Abraham," ALLA SPERMATOS ABRAAM EPILAMBANETAI. He became a true man, a lineal descendant of the patriarch Abraham, so that He might be the Savior of both Jew and Gentile, in fulfillment of the promise which God gave of old to the father of the faithful, cp. Gal. 3, 16, 29.

And in becoming a member of the family of Abraham, "It behooved him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." The obligation which rested upon Christ by virtue of the great task of redemption which He had determined to undertake involved His becoming "like unto His brethren", in other words, to become a true human being, to share their joys and their sorrows, to associate with them and to live and work with them and for them.

This is the same truth to which the author gives voice in vv. 11-13: "For both He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one, for which cause He



is not ashamed to call them brethren, Saying, I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church I will sing praise unto thee. And again, I will put my trust in Him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me."

Jesus is called HO AGIAZWN, "the Sanctifier", namely, He who purifies by ex-  
piation. By His blood He redeems His people, and thus they become "sanctified,"  
consecrated to God. This truth is repeated at various points in the Epistle, no-  
tably in ch.13,12: "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people with  
His own blood, suffered without the gate." He sanctifies His people specifically  
as priest, and in general as the fountain of all grace.

that  
It is said of the Sanctifier and the sanctified (or: "the Reconciler and the  
reconciled"; "the Savior and the saved") "are all of one," EK HENOS PATROS, namely,  
they all have the same Father in Heaven. Hence, they share a common interest and  
a common lot.

Since this is the case, the Savior is not ashamed to call His people "brethren";  
He did not deem it to be unworthy of His divine dignity to call them His brethren,  
according to His human nature. To be sure, He rejoices to own them as His brethren,  
as the regenerated and adopted sons of God.

The apostle substantiates this assertion by quoting three Old Testament Mes-  
sianic prophecies, all of which express or clearly imply brotherhood. The first  
is from Psalm 22,22: "I will declare Thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of  
the Church will I sing praise unto thee." Christ, the speaker of these words, is  
represented as taking part in the worship of God, which manifests the completeness  
of His human nature. The second is a quotation of Isa.8,17: "I will put my trust  
in Him." Jesus, like His brethren, placed His confidence in God. The third is  
from Isa.8,18: "Behold, I and the children which God hath given me," where the Mes-  
siah associates Himself with the children whom God has given Him as being of the  
same family, for any who do the will of God He considers His brethren, cp. Mark  
3,35; Luke 8,21; John 17,6.11; Eph.5,30.

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Bruce declares, p.125: "It will be found that Christ's likeness to His brethren is closest just where the traces of the curse are most apparent: insofar 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 succor - like the poor, the tempted, the criminal."

It was incumbent upon Christ to become like unto His brethren, in order that He might be "a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation,  $\text{HILASKESTHAI}$ , for the sins of the people." It was the function of the high priest to make atonement for the people,  $\text{TOU LAOU}$ , and to cancel their sins on the Day of Atonement, in keeping with God's ordinance. Jesus Christ assumed our flesh and became our Brother, so that He is able to serve as the High Priest per excellence, and to make propitiation for our sins before His Heavenly Father, and so that He might have something to sacrifice for us and also have a nature capable of sympathy with us.

"For," the apostle continues, "in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Christ was exposed to the bitterest and most insidious temptations which the old Evil Foe could devise, and to the wildest snares that wicked men could lay for Him. No mortal man was ever so sorely tried as He. But by virtue of the fact that He Himself has suffered being tempted, He is now "able to succor them that are tempted." Thus indeed He is in a position to be a merciful and faithful high priest, for He knows the feeling of our infirmities and the temptations to which we are exposed. Hence, He has both the power and the willingness to succor <sup>those</sup> who are tempted, by removing our sins, by cancelling our guilt, and by conquering our Foe.

**The Sequel  
to His In-  
carnation**

We have purposely postponed until now the <sup>Treatment</sup> ~~consideration~~ of vv.6-10,

since these verses present a fitting climax to the consideration of

Christ's assumption of the human nature. The holy writer portrays

both the humiliation and the exaltation of Christ in quoting Psalm 8, which is un-  
questionably a Messianic Psalm: "What is man, that Thou art mindful of Him, or the  
Son of man, that Thou visitest Him? Thou madest Him a little lower than the an-  
gels; Thou crownedst Him with glory and honor, and didst set Him over the works of  
Thy hands. Thou hast put all things in subjection under His feet."

Modern interpreters are almost unanimous in denying the direct and exclusive  
application of these words to Christ. However, they miserably fail in their inter-  
pretation of the passage, for there can be no doubt that Christ, and no one else,  
is meant. Psalm 8, from which these words are quoted, is unquestionably a Messi-  
cic Psalm, for the description of the subject of the Psalm can only apply to  
Christ, the Son of God. And in substantiation of this view, the author of the  
Epistle to the Hebrews, in v.9 of this chapter, directly refers these words to  
Jesus.

He first pictures the humiliation of Christ: "What is man, that Thou art mind-  
ful of Him, <sup>or</sup> ~~and~~ the Son of man, that Thou visitest Him?" This is by no means a re-  
ference to mankind, for the author here treats of Christ's humiliation, as contrast-  
ed with God's great creation, as the study of Psalm 8,1-5, will clearly show.

The next words present a crux interpretum: ELATTSAS AUFON BRACHY TI PAR  
ANGELOUS, which the A.V. has translated: "Thou hast made him a little lower than  
the angels." We agree with the interpretation of Dr. W. A. Maier, who holds that  
the correct translation of Psalm 8,5, is: "Thou hast made him to be without God for  
a little while." The original Hebrew reads: WETECHASERGHU LE'AT ME'ELONIM. The  
verb CHASAR means "to lack", "to be without", and in the Piel, as here, "to make  
to lack." This translation is substantiated by a comparison with Ecc.4,8, where  
the same word is used. Moreover, the word ELATFOUSTHAI in Heb.2,7, which the A.V.,  
following the LXX, has incorrectly translated "to be lower than", has for its ori-  
ginal meaning, "to be without."

*This Translation, "a little while" is supported by the R.S.V.*

Furthermore, the word **ME'AT**, and its Greek equivalent, **BRACHY**, means "little" in the sense of time, not of degree, hence: "a little while," as in Ps.12,2. *A*

Moreover, **ELOHIM** in Ps.8,5 must be translated "God". The **LXX**, which the writer to the Hebrews has followed in citing this verse, is entirely without warrant in translating **ELOHIM** as "angels." **ELOHIM** means "God" in every case except in Ps. 91,5 and Exod.21,6, where the context clearly shows that it cannot mean God; here, however, the context clearly indicates that it is to be taken as "God," for there is no cogent reason why we should depart just in this instance from the ordinary, accepted meaning of the word.

The correct translation of Ps.8,5, accordingly, would be: "Thou madest Him to be without God for a little while," while the exact translation of the original Greek of Heb.2,7 would be: "Thou madest Him to be without the angels for a little while." The fact that the writer to the Hebrews follows the **LXX** and renders **ELOHIM** as "angels", instead of as "God" does not militate against the doctrine of inspiration, however, for the New Testament usually adopts the **LXX** version, even when the **LXX** is not exact, providing that it is not <sup>wholly</sup> absolutely wrong or unscriptural. The simple explanation is that the Holy Ghost, who verbally inspired both the Psalmist and the writer to the Hebrews, saw fit to <sup>quote</sup> direct the letter to quote the the **LXX** rendition, "angels." The general sense is the same, for if Christ on the cross was without God for a little while, it naturally follows that He was ~~also~~ without the angels.

The reference, of course, is to the climax of Christ's humiliation, when, as He hung upon the cross, in the deepest throes of mortal anguish, He cried out: "My God, my God, why hast Thou forsaken me?" (Matt.27,46). That was the scene of His earthly suffering; that was the deepest stroke that pierced Him. This was a suffering so intense that it is incomprehensible to human minds. He was made to be without God for a little while, in order that we might not have to be without Him eternally.

But this same Jesus, who suffered the very depths of humiliation, after He had completed His atoning sacrifice, was raised to the very heights of divine glory and honor. God crowned Him with glory and honor and set Him over the works of His hands, and put all things in subjection under His feet. The humble, meek and lowly Jesus, the carpenter's son of Nazareth, who suffered the most ignominious criminal's death, has been exalted to the position of supreme majesty and power, off the right hand of God.

The apostle continues, "For in that He put all in subjection under Him, He left nothing that is not put under Him." But now we see not yet all things put under Him." The dominion of Christ is indeed absolute, even though our human eyes, beholding so much that is evil and contrary to God's will, do not yet see all things put in subjection to Him. That sight is reserved for us until the Day of Judgment, when we shall see Christ making an open show of His complete lordship over all creation, including also His enemies.

The author now directly refers the foregoing quotation of the prophecy of Psalm 8 to Jesus; "But we see Jesus, who <sup>for a little while</sup> was made ~~a little~~ lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man." "The sting of death; we know, is sin, and the strength of sin is the law; but the strength of the law is the curse against sin, and the strength of that curse is the wrath of the Holy One. Had our Lord not died this death, with just this awful background to it, His death would have been a merely fantastic one. In order to overcome death, He had not ~~g~~ merely to put His lips as it were to the bitter potion, but to taste it in the depth of its full reality. He had to taste the very savor of wrath in death, in <sup>v</sup> order, by God's gracious appointment, to take that savor away ~~from~~ <sup>for</sup> us. And so it was the grace of God which made Him thus submit to the bitter experience of death, even to the extremity of divine dereliction, the grace of God, which He Himself subserved in <sup>His</sup> ~~that~~ submitting." (Delitzsch, Vol.I, p.115, 116).

The vindication of the humiliation of Christ is presented by the sacred pen-  
 man in v.10: "For it became Him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things,  
 in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect  
 through sufferings." The bringing of many sons to glory is the great purpose and  
 plan of God; hence, it was necessary that the children of God should be led to  
 glory by a Captain, and that this Captain should be perfected, fully equipped,  
 TELEIWSAI, by God.

"It became Him, by whom are all things, and for whom are all things," - It  
 was in keeping with the supreme love and faithfulness and mercy of God that He  
 should provide for His people's salvation, and that He should accomplish that  
 salvation through His own eternal Son, through whom many sons have come to glory.

Christ is here termed the "Captain of salvation," TON ARCHON TON SWTERIAS.  
 Just as the Israelites had their leader, under whom they made their exodus from  
 Egypt and traveled to Canaan, so also they heirs of salvation have their leader,  
 to bring them out of the bondage of sin into the eternal liberty of the children  
 of God. Christ is the "Captain", i.e., the Prince and Leader of salvation, and  
 the holy writer speaks of Him in a similar vein as "the Author and Finisher of  
 our Faith", 12,2, and as "the great Shepherd of the sheep," 13,20.

And Christ has been made perfect and complete in His official character as the  
 Captain of salvation by sufferings, all those afflictions which befell Him during  
 His earthly life. And thereby He was perfected, for by suffering He became their  
 sympathizing friend and fellow-sufferer of mankind, by suffering He made full and  
 complete satisfaction for sin, and by suffering He procured the right to the glory  
 and bliss of Heaven, in which we, because of His suffering, will also share.

The Word was indeed made flesh, but now that He has completed the gracious  
 work for which He assumed human flesh, He has been gloriously exalted by His  
 Heavenly Father, who has given Him "a name which is above every name, that at the  
 name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and  
 things under the earth", Phil.2,9.10.

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PART TWO

THE DEITY OF CHRIST PROVED BY HIS WORK OF ATONEMENT AS THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST

In the first three chapters of the Letter to the Hebrews, the Apostle portrays, as we have seen, the preeminent position of Christ as the Mediator of revelation, adducing as proof the superiority of Christ over the prophets of the Old Testament, over the angels, and over Moses. He follows this presentation with a hortatory passage extending from 3,7 to 4,13, wherein he warns his readers against unbelief and exhorts them to faithfulness toward Christ. Thereafter he resumes his Christological discussion, turning his attention to Christ as the Mediator of atonement. He devotes a large section of his Epistle, 4,14 - 10,18, to a vivid and detailed description of the superiority of Christ over the Aeronic priesthood, portraying to his readers the Son of God as the Great High Priest. This subject forms an integral part of the Christology of the Letter to the Hebrews, and is of such importance that we shall devote the second chief part of our essay to the consideration of it.

**I. CHRIST'S PRIESTHOOD THE CHRISTIAN'S CONFIDENCE**

The apostle begins his lengthy characterization of the high priestly office of Christ with an exhortation to his readers: "Seeing then that we have a great high priest that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession." The apostle reiterates with increased emphasis the fact which he had mentioned in 2,17 and 3,1, that Jesus is our "high priest." He has purged us from our sins and now represents us before His Heavenly Father, performing continually for His people that which the high priests of the Old Testament did only once a year, namely, His intercession for His people. For He is both the Propitiation for our sins and also our Advocate, whose pleading the Father cannot withstand. He is the only real Priest, the very ideal of the priesthood realized.

It is significant that the apostle calls Him the "great high priest,"  
ARCHIEREA LEGAN. His greatness is due to His exalted office and nature, which  
the apostle here depicts in two statements: 1. "He is passed into (or "through")  
the heavens, DIELELYTHOTA TOUS OURANOUS; Christ has passed through the created  
heavens into the uncreated Heaven, the DOXA of God. (Taken in connection with  
Eph. 4,10, this statement clearly indicates the ubiquity of Christ.) Whereas the  
Old Testament high priest once a year passed through the forecourts and behind the  
veil to reach the Holy of Holies, our great High Priest has passed through the  
forecourts of the heavens into the heavenly sanctuary, to make intercession for  
us before the throne of God. 2. Moreover, the holy writer speaks of the great  
High Priest as "Jesus the Son of God." This title is a concise description of  
the theanthropic Person who passed through suffering and death to royal and priest-  
ly glory, for He is referred to both by His human name, "Jesus", and by His divine  
title, "Son of God." Because our High Priest is great, as to both His office and  
His person, He is certainly worthy of our fullest trust and confidence.

The "High Priest of our profession" is further presented as being worthy of  
our confidence because of the fact that He is perfectly gracious. "We have not an  
high priest which can not be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, but was  
in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin." The twofold fact that He  
bears the divine dignity of the Son of God and that He is invisible to the eye does  
not render Him unsympathetic to our infirmities. Compassion with the weaknesses,  
the imperfections and the foibles of men was an indispensable qualification of the  
high priest, and this requisite of compassion Jesus possessed in supreme and  
perfect measure. He was tempted just as we are, and because He too has been ex-  
posed to the poisonous darts of Satan, He indeed "can be touched with the feeling  
of our infirmities." Since this is the case, we can heed the apostle's exhortation  
to "come boldly to the throne of grace," where our gracious High Priest ever makes  
intercession for us, for thus we shall "obtain mercy and find grace to help in time  
of need."



We Christians can place our full confidence in the priesthood of Christ also because of the fact that He is sinless, for the holy writer says of Him: "He was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin." Unlike the Levitical high priests, who were themselves sinful men, and who therefore had to offer up sacrifices first for their own sins, our great High Priest was without the slightest taint of imperfection or of guilt. This point is elaborated upon in 5,3; 7,26,f. and 9,7, all of which combine to show that the sinlessness of Christ, the divine High Priest, is a factor in establishing the superiority of His priesthood over the Levitical.

## II. CHRIST HAS THE ESSENTIAL QUALIFICATIONS FOR THE PRIESTHOOD

This is the burden of the apostle's discourse in the first ten verses of Chapter 5, and the statement of Christ's qualifications is indeed essential to the case which the author is logically, thoroughly, and skilfully presenting for the superior excellence of the high priesthood of Christ, the Son of God.

In vv. 1-3 the author mentions the qualifications which every high priest must possess: "For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; Who can have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself is also compassed with infirmity. And by reason hereof he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer up for sins."

The apostle now proceeds, vv. 4-10, to show how Christ measures up to these qualifications, for He, too, although He was the Son of God, was taken from among men and was ordained for men; He, too, offered up sacrifice for sins; He, too, had compassion on the ignorant and the erring.

The high priestly office is an honor, TIME, "Ehrenamt", which no one "taketh unto himself," but which is <sup>validly</sup> legitimately obtained solely by divine appointment. Thus Aaron for example was called to the high priesthood by God, cf. Exod. 28. In like manner, Christ, the greater Aaron, "glorified not Himself to be made a high priest;" He by no means arrogated unto Himself the honorable office of high priest.

but while Christ and Aaron were alike in that neither usurped the office, but rather were called to the high priesthood by God, yet Christ is far superior to Aaron, not only as to His person but also as to the manner of His call. Thus the holy writer declares that it was God who glorified Christ to be made an high priest, namely, "He that said unto Him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten Thee. As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

He who solemnly declares Christ to be His Son, Psalm 2,7, is the same who formally calls Him to be priest, Psalm 110,4. The former quotation recalls His eternal genesis from the Father, ch.1,5, while the latter emphasizes His designation as High Priest. The apostle cites these two Messianic passages to lend force to His description of Christ as the divine High Priest, for He thereby proves that He who has begotten the Son from all eternity has caused also the fulfilment in Him of the prophecy which calls Christ "a priest forever after the order of (TAKIN, i.e., character, manner, kind) of Melchizedek." The two acts are related, but not identical. The same One whom God addresses as "My Son," MYIOS HOU, appointed the Lord and Heir of creation, He also designates as "a priest forever", HIEREUS EIS TON AIWNA; in the Sonship of Christ lay His destination to the priesthood. The call of Christ was in full conformity with the prophecy of the Old Testament. And the high priesthood of Christ is not after the orders of Aaron, but of Melchizedek, whose priesthood was inseparably connected with royal dignity; he was both king and priest, and thus was the ideal type of Him who was to be the great kingly priest and priestly King. Thus the holy writer, in portraying Christ the High Priest as the eternal Son, once more drives home with compelling force the sublime truth of the Deity of Christ.

Christ possessed not only the requisite of legitimate appointment, but, as a true man, He had also those qualifications to which the apostle referred in vv.1-3 as being essential to the high priesthood. Thus, the apostle declares of Him, vv.7,8: "Who in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and

supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered."

He took upon Himself our flesh, in order that He might be "taken from among men." Moreover, He was "ordained for men in things pertaining to God," in that He offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared."

And the consequence of His discharge of His high priestly office? "Though He were a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered, and being made perfect, He became the author of eternal salvation (ΑΙΤΙΑΣ ΣΩΤΗΡΙΑΣ ΑΙΩΝΙΟΥ) unto all them that obey Him; Called of God a high priest after the order of "Elchizedek." Although Christ was the eternal, only-begotten Son of God, yet, the true God Himself, the apostle states, yet He suffered - and words cannot be found to describe the depth and the bitterness of that suffering - and thus "learned obedience," that obedience which was an essential part of His redemptive work, and which He learned by voluntary submission to God's appointment, cp. Phil. 2, 6-8. Hence also He was eminently qualified to "have compassion on the ignorant and on them that are out of the way."

In that

after Christ had shown Himself "obedient unto death, even the death of the cross," Phil. 2, 8, He was "made perfect", ΤΕΛΕΙΩΘΗΣ, in His mediatorial relationship to God. When Christ on the cross cried, ΤΕΤΕΛΕΣΤΑΙ, His atoning work was complete; He had performed His high priestly duty of "offering up sacrifice for sins." And thereby He has become "the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey Him." There is no salvation apart from Christ; He is its one personal Principal, as our author describes Him in 12, 2, "Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith." The salvation which He has wrought is eternal, and is enjoyed by all those who "obey Him", that is, who put their trust in Him alone as their Saviour.

The concluding verse of this section is noteworthy. The writer declares that Christ, the Author of eternal salvation is "called by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek," ΠΡΟΣΑΓΟΡΟΥΤΗΣΙΣ ΗΥΡΟ ΤΟΥ ΤΗΣΟΥ ΑΡΧΙΕΡΕΥΣ ΚΑΤΑ ΤΗΝ ΤΑΞΙΝ ΜΕΛΧΙΖΕΔΕΚ. Bruce's comment on this verse is so felicitous that we quote it in full: "The style is dramatic and the language emotional. God is moved by the spectacle of His Son's self-sacrifice, as old old He had been moved by the readiness of Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, and exclaims, 'Thou art a Priest indeed!' That the writer is not thinking of a formal appointment, which creates a position previously non-existent, appears from the liberties he takes with the words of the oracle which contains the evidence that Christ was a God-called priest: 'High priest' substituted for 'priest' and 'forever' omitted. The former of these changes is specially noteworthy. It is not accidental and trivial, but intended and significant. The alteration is made to suit the situation: Christ, already a High Priest in virtue of functions analogous to those of Aaron, and now and henceforth a priest after the order of Melchizedek (the two great anti-typical titles involved in one). Translated into abstract language, v.10 supplies the rationale of the fact stated in v.9. Its effect is to tell us that Christ became the author of eternal salvation because He was a true High Priest after the order of Melchizedek; author of salvation in virtue of His being a priest, author of eternal salvation because His priesthood was of the Melchizedek type - never ending." (p.193).

The apostle's reference to the Melchizedekian character of Christ's priesthood provides a link with the next section, in which Christ is described in His capacity as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. It is the apostle's plan to employ the Aeronic priesthood to <sup>illustrate</sup> demonstrate the nature of Christ's priestly functions, and the Melchizedekian priesthood to show their eternal worth and validity. He does not employ the terms "priest" and "high priest" promiscuously, but is careful to call Christ "priest" when comparing Him with Melchizedek, and "high priest" when comparing Him with Aaron. In His high priestly sacrifice of Himself on earth,

in His high priestly entrance into the heavenly sanctuary, and in His high priestly intercession for His people before the throne of God, Christ is the antitype of Aaron. In His combination of the royal and priestly offices, in His lofty supra-legal dignity and in His independence of time and of natural descent, Christ is the antitype of Melchizedek. With this transitional thought, we pass now to the consideration of the Melchizedekian character of the priesthood of Christ.

## II. CHRIST A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHIZEDEK

In the final verse of Chapter 6, the apostle, referring to Jesus as our "forerunner", PRODROMOS, who has "entered into that within the veil," (viz., that He has entered the presence of God as the herald and guarantee of our entrance), echoes the declaration which he made in 5, 10, and refers to Christ as "a high priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

Now the apostle, in Chapter 7, enters <sup>into</sup> a description of that strange and exalted figure of the old dispensation, Melchizedek, and then proceeds to prove, in a very clear and logical manner, the superiority of his priesthood over the *Aaronic*-Levitical priesthood, a fact which has as its natural correlative the superiority of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical, inasmuch as Christ is a priest after Melchizedek's order.

"For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace; Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither <sup>beginning</sup> of days, nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God, abideth a priest continually," vv. 1-3.

Melchizedek is here portrayed as an extraordinary king, for he is called, in accordance with the meaning of his name, "King of righteousness," being himself righteous, ruling in righteousness, and having righteousness as the sphere of his action. Furthermore, He is "King of Salem, which is King of peace." Jerusalem, the city over which Melchizedek in all probability ruled, is itself the inheritance or dwelling-place of peace. Besides being a king, however, he was also a "priest of the most high God." And a unique priest indeed he was, for he was "without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life." This description does not imply that Melchizedek was a superhuman being, but the attributes ascribed to him ~~and~~ have a typical and prophetic significance, as applied to the manner in which he is mentioned in Scripture. The fact ~~that~~ <sup>that</sup> Melchizedek is declared to be ΑΠΑΤΗΡ, ΑΜΑΤΗΡ, ΑΓΕΝΕΑΛΟΓΗΤΟΣ, means simply that nothing is said in Scripture concerning his father or his mother or his genealogy. This shows that the royal priesthood of Melchizedek is to be regarded as a purely personal dignity, and not <sup>to</sup> be traced back to any circumstance of natural descent. Moreover, he is said to have "neither beginning of days, nor end of life," that is, Scripture contains no record either of the beginning or end of his earthly life or the beginning or end of his priesthood. "He makes a mysterious, momentary appearance out of eternity on the stage of time, then disappears forever from view" (Bruce). His life at both ends is shrouded in mystery. Thus, "he abideth a priest continually," - the character of his priesthood is permanent, unbroken by transmission or inheritance.

And in these respects he is an eminent type of Christ, "made like unto the Son of God," ΑΠΙΣΤΑΙΩΜΕΝΟΣ ΤΩ ΗΥΙΩ ΤΟΥ ΤΕΘΟΥ. Christ, like Melchizedek, <sup>not</sup> to an exalted degree, was both a priest of the most high God and a king of righteousness and peace, both of which concepts are presented in the Old Testament as characteristics of the Messianic era. Christ, like Melchizedek,

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as far as His priesthood was concerned, was "without father, without mother, without descent;" His priesthood was unique, ideal, having no dependence on parentage or descent, but based on personal, not technical or external, qualifications. Christ, like Melchizedek, had "neither beginning of days nor end of life." Chrysostom says: "We know of no beginning and no end of either - in the case of Melchizedek, because they have found no record; in the case of Christ, because they have no existence." Thus also Christ, like Melchizedek, but again in a far higher sense, "abideth a priest continually," perpetually; since His priesthood is a personal prerogative, inherent in Himself alone, it is unchangeable and undying. To summarize: In every respect, in His personal and official character, Melchizedek was a remarkable and outstanding type of Christ, the Son of God.

Having described the nature and office of Melchizedek, the apostle now goes on, vv.4-10, to show the superiority of his order over the <sup>Levitical</sup> Levitical priesthood, which he proves in a very logical fashion from two points:

1. Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham; 2. Melchizedek blessed Abraham.

In v.2 the writer had declared of Melchizedek, "To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all." He again takes up this thread of his argument in vv.4-5.8.10: "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils. And verily, they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham...And here men that dieth receive tithes; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham. For <sup>he</sup> ~~he~~ was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him."

Abraham was indeed a great man, one of the greatest in the entire Scriptural record, for unto him were the promises given, and he was destined to be the father of the faithful; moreover, when Melchizedek met him, Abraham was at the very summit of his material greatness, having just emerged victorious from his encounter with the kings. And yet, great though he was, he paid tithes to Melchizedek, thus expressly acknowledging the royal priest as the more illustrious of the two, so that the holy writer exclaims: "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils!"

But how does this prove the superiority of the Melchizedekian priesthood to the Levitical? The matter is very clear. The Levitical priesthood indeed enjoys great dignity and honor, since by the Lord's own command the sons of Levi receive tithes from the people, their own brethren. Now, at the time when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, the patriarch contained within his body the seed of his great-grandson Levi, or, as the author declares, "Levi... was yet in the loins of his father (i.e., Abraham) when Melchizedek met him." Hence, when Abraham paid tithes to Melchizedek, Levi, in the loins of Abraham, also, in a manner of speaking, paid tithes to Melchizedek. Therefore, as the paying of tithes is a mark of the inferiority of the payer to the recipient, thus Levi, who himself receives tithes from the people, is clearly proven to be inferior to Melchizedek, inasmuch as he paid tithes to him. And this is reinforced by the statement: "Here men that die (that is, the Levitical priests), receive tithes, but there he receiveth them (i.e., Melchizedek), of whom it is witnessed that he liveth." As applied to Christ, the Son of God, who was made a priest after the order of Melchizedek, this naturally infers His complete superiority over the Levitical priesthood.

The author proves the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham, and as a consequence, over Levi and the Levitical priesthood, also from the fact that



Melchizedek blessed the patriarch. It is a self-evident truth that "without all contradiction, the less is blessed by the better," v.7. Abraham was blessed by Melchizedek, hence Melchizedek must have been the better of the two. Abraham, to whom the promises of the coming Savior had been given, was blessed by the man who was the type of Him who was both the giver and the subject of the promises.

Having thus established the superiority of Melchizedek over Abraham, and, by logical deduction, the superiority of his priesthood over the Levitical, the inspired writer now turns to the consideration of the supersession of the Levitical priesthood and the superiority of Christ's priesthood. Wv.11.12: "If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law."

It was evident that perfection could not come by the Levitical priesthood and the legal dispensation upon which it was founded. The Old Testament priests could not possibly bring the people to the perfect enjoyment of those blessings which they pointed out; they could only point forward and show the way to the ultimate realization of those blessings, namely, in the promised Messiah. If the Levitical priesthood had been perfect, there would have been no need to raise up another priest, of a different and unique order - a priest after the order of Melchizedek, not called after the order of Aaron. Therefore, since such a new and preeminent Priest has arisen, through whom perfection is attained, it follows that the Levitical priesthood could not have been perfect.

Accordingly, since there is a change in the priesthood, there must be a corresponding change of the law. The relation between the priesthood and the law is so close that one cannot be changed without the other; the new priesthood must be under a new regulation.

Superiority  
of Christ's  
Priesthood

The apostle, having given voice to this thought, proceeds to elaborate upon it, proving therefrom the superiority of Christ's priesthood. He shows that this superiority is sixfold: 1. As to origin; 2. As to form and order; 3. As to efficacy; 4. As to establishment; 5. As to duration; 6. As to moral qualifications.

1. "He of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood," vv.12,14. Thus does the holy writer describe the transference of the priesthood from one tribe to another, and the consequent superiority of origin of the new priesthood over the old. J. Capellus writes: "Translatio non veluti a ramo ad ramum, sed ab arbore ad arborem." He whose eternal priesthood was prophesied in Psalm 110 belongs not to the tribe of Levi, as the old covenant prescribed, but to another tribe, the tribe of Judah, cp. Gen.49,8,10, which had never, in any of its members, been appointed to priestly service. The establishment of the unique origin and of the priesthood of Christ is a vital link in the chain of argument which the author is forging to prove Christ's superiority.

2. "And yet it is far more evident", the apostle continues, "for after the <sup>resemblance</sup> ~~similitude~~ of Melchizedek there riseth another priest, who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life. For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof," vv.18,19. It is clearly evident, according to the author, that the priesthood of Christ is more excellent than the "evitical priesthood", because the Old Testament priests were made "after the law of a carnal commandment," whereas our Lord was made "after the power of an endless life."  
(<sup>"a legal requirement concerning bodily descent" - R.5.1.3</sup>)  
A double contrast between the old and new priesthoods is here presented: (1) The former is KATA NOMON; the latter is KATA DYNAMIN. (2) The former is dependent

upon what is SARKINE; the letter on what belongs to ZWE AKATALYTOS. The "ev-  
 itical priests indeed were made after the power of a ernal commandment, for they  
 were born of flesh, they offered up sacrifices of flesh, and they died, accord-  
 ing to mortal flesh. The Son of God, however, became a priest, not because of  
 any legal compulsion, but because of the power in His own nature which compelled  
 Him and enabled Him to undertake His priestly work; He indeed is made after the  
 p/ower of an endless, indestructible, indissoluble life - a life which even  
 survived death. And to prove the preeminence of Christ's priesthood to the Aa-  
 ronic also in this respect, the author once more quotes Psalm 110 to p/za support  
 his argument: "For He testified, Thou art a priest forever after the order of  
 Melchizedek!"

3. Because the priesthood of Christ is better than that of the old dispensa-  
 tion by virtue of His being constituted after the power of an endless life, it fo-  
 lows that His priesthood is of greater efficacy than the former. This is the  
 point which our author drives home in vv.18,19: "For there is verily a disen-  
 nailing of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness  
 thereof. For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope  
 did, by the which we draw nigh unto God."

The legal dispensation of the Old Testament era has now been abrogated, be-  
 cause of its weak and unprofitable character, cp. Gal.4,9; Rom.8,3. It was too  
 weak to bring about perfection and inadequate to unite men with God. It revealed  
 the holy will of God, it taught ceremonies and rudiments, it foreshadowed and  
 presented types, but it perfected nothing.

Whereas the Law made nothing perfect, the bringing in of a better hope it,  
 viz., of a better priesthood, succeeded where the former dispensat'on had failed,  
 for by the bringing in of this better hope "we draw nigh unto God." Under the  
 of law, only the priests could draw near to God. Now, however, there is no more

barrier between God and men; the veil which hid the Holy of Holies has been removed, and access to God is open and free to all men. This is one of the salient points in the Epistle. Christianity is presented as the religion of the better hope, or rather, of the perfect hope. Because Christ, the Son of God, is our great High Priest, we learn from this Epistle that we can "enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh; And having an high priest over the house of God; Let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith," Heb. 10, 19-22.

4. The apostle adduces still another proof for the superiority of the sacerdotal office of Christ, viz., the fact that it was established by God's oath: He declares, vv. 20-22, "And inasmuch as not without an oath He was made priest (For these priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by Him that said unto Him; The Lord swears and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek); By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament. The divine appointment of Christ as the eternal High Priest has been made by an oath, by the most binding and unalterable form of obligation known to men. In this the priesthood of Christ differed from and surpassed that of the Levitical priests, for they were inducted into their office without the solemn formality of so binding their priesthood with an oath. The fact that they were made priests without an oath indicates the temporary and imperfect character of their office, and of the ~~priesthood~~ covenant under which they served, in contrast to which the priesthood of Christ is declared to be fixed, permanent, perfect, and hence perpetually and wholly satisfactory to God.

The apostle states the manner in which the priesthood of Christ was established by the Father: "But this (was made) with an oath by Him Him that said unto Him, The Lord<sup>(ὁ κύριος ὁ θεός σου)</sup> swore and will not repent, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." God does not swear oaths lightly or promiscuously. When it is said of Him that He has sworn and will not repent, it is evident that any alteration of His plans is excluded, and that the priesthood of Christ is final and eternal. The Aaronic sacerdotal system was unsatisfactory to Him, therefore He has ordained the new priest to be constituted after the order of Melchizedek, the preeminence of which has already been proved.

Since the establishment of the priesthood of Christ was so much better than that of the Aaronic line, the apostle concludes: "By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament," KATA TOSOUTON KREITTONOS DIATHIKES GAGONHEI EGKYOS IESOUS. The superiority of the priesthood of Christ involves the superiority of the covenant based upon it. The greater excellence of the new covenant over the old corresponds to the measure in which its surety, as a priest constituted by an oath, is greater than a priest not constituted by an oath.

Jesus is called the "surety", EGKYOS, of the better testament. "It is Jesus as the eternal Priest after the order of Melchizedek, as the risen and exalted One, who is here spoken of as an EGKYOS. And He is so called because that new relation between God and men, which is the result of His great self-offering here, has now in Him, as our Forerunner in the heavenly sanctuary, 6,20, and there royally crowned with glory and honor, 2,9, its personal security for continuance and completion. As truly as He is Priest and King, so assuredly will the promises of the covenant be fulfilled in us, - a covenant which, in distinction from the impotence of that of Sinai, has for its objects true perfection and eternal realities - free, unclouded communion with God - eternal

glory. Our hope rises upwards continually to Him; in Him it sees itself accomplished. The oath in the Psalm which makes Him Priest is the sign of a promise, not of a covenant. His everlasting priesthood is not a mere office committed to Him, but a solemnly recognized possession obtained in the way of suffering. And all He has obtained was obtained for us. He exists and lives for us eternally. His indissoluble life as Priest and King is the indissoluble bond which unites us with God, and assures us of the endurance of this blissful fellowship." (Delitzsch, pp. Vol. I, pp. 368. 369.)

5. Christ's priesthood is of greater worth than that of the Levitical priests also because of the extent of its duration as compared with theirs. To this fact the author next gives expression, vv. 23-25: "And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death; But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Wherefore he is able to save them to the uttermost, <sup>(*"prevented by death from continuing in office" - (25)*)</sup> that come unto God by Him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them." <sup>(*"for all time" - (25)*)</sup>

The Levitical priesthood experienced a continual change in personnel; they were truly "many priests." The Old Testament priests were mortal, their activity was cut off by death, and thus the Levitical system was anything but fixed and settled. Christ, on the other hand, is the eternal Son of God, who "continueth ever," and therefore His priesthood is "unchangeable", APARABATON. His office is unalterable, inviolable, incapable of being transmitted from Him to another, for He is its sole and continual occupant, and will remain so forever.

Accordingly, "He is able to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by Him" - He grants perfect and everlasting salvation to all those who trust in Him, for "He ever liveth to make intercession for them." This is the same thought to which the author gives expression in Chapter 12, 24: "They are come..."

to Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel." Jesus Christ has become our all-sufficient Savior, our effectual Intercessor, by virtue of His eternal Deity.

6. The author brings His inspired argument for the superiority of Christ's priesthood to a magnificent climax by emphasizing the superiority of His moral qualifications, vv.26-28: "For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's, for this He did once, when He offered up Himself. For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore."

The apostle again points to the fact that the Levitical high priests were by no means perfect, but were themselves sinful men, for of necessity the law constituted men as high priests who were infirm, subject to the weakness and depravity to which the flesh is heir. And because they were sinners, they were constrained first to offer up sacrifice for their own sins before they undertook to make an offering for the people's sins. Furthermore, since the animals which they sacrificed were but mere shadows of holiness, physically faultless but intrinsically worthless, their offering had to bear continual repetition - and this in itself is an undeniable mark of inferiority.

Mark well the superior moral qualifications of Christ. "Such a high priest became us," **TOIOUTOS GAR HEMIN EPHEPEN ARCHIEREUS**, the apostle avers. Summing up all that has been said concerning the "elchizedekian character of the great High Priest, the author declares that a high priest of that type was

needful for us, for He and He alone can bring and keep us nigh unto God. He "became us", because He is "holy", HOSIOS, perfectly righteous in all His relations; He is "harmless", AKAKOS, innocent and free of any fault that might disqualify Him as High Priest; He is "undefiled", AMIANTOS, uncontaminated by sin, despite His contact with the world, cp. Lev. 21, 1 and 22, 9; He is "separate from sinners,"/distinct from them in His moral perfection; He is "made higher than the heavens," HYPSELOEEROS TWN OURANWN GENOMENOS, exalted to the throne of majesty on high. Here in Christ we have the ideal of priesthood, and He is ideal only because He is the eternal Son of God.

*(-it was fitting that we should have such a high priest)  
-1938*

But Christ is the High Priest who "became us", also because of His great mediatorial work, which so far surpassed that of the Levitical priests. Whereas their sacrifices needed continually to be repeated, because of the imperfection both of priest and victim, His was a single sacrifice, which needed no repetition, for "this He did once." It was of sufficient worth and validity of itself to atone for all the sins of all mankind for all time! And this single sacrifice which Jesus offered up derived its infinite power from the fact that it was a self-sacrifice, for "He offered up Himself." He was both the officiating priest and the sacrificial lamb; yea, He was the holy Lamb without blemish and without spot who was offered up upon the altar of Calvary's cross as the one divine and perfect sin-offering, by whose blood all sins are purged away. Indeed, by the very act of His self-sacrifice, He demonstrated Himself to be perfectly holy, the embodiment of Love. [And herein also He is the fulfilment of the Melchizedekian type, for self-sacrifice is truly an essential feature of the ideal priesthood, wherein priest and victim are one.]

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The apostle continues His argument by reiterating the fact that the Son was constituted a priest by the words of the oath, cited in v. 21. This oath, sworn by the Lord in the prophecy of Psalm 110, 4, was given "since the Law,"



indicating that the Law was imperfect and needed to be revised, and the Son is "consecrated for evermore," HIS TON AIVMA ESTALSIWLENON, cp. 5,7-10. This perfection of the Son in His sacerdotal office has now been confirmed and sealed by His exaltation, and will endure to all eternity.

Thus the apostle in this remarkable chapter has portrayed Christ as the priest after the order of Melchizedek, and has logically shown the transcendent superiority of His priesthood. He has by no means finished His presentation of the priestly character and office of Christ, but continues to discuss this subject in Chapters 8-10, treating it from the viewpoint of:

#### IV. CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST AS THE ANTI-TYPE OF THE LEVITICAL DISPENSATION

Earlier in the course of the essay we made the observation that Christ is portrayed as "priest" when compared with Melchizedek, and as "high priest" when compared with Aaron and the Levitical system. The author has already shown His superiority over the Levitical priesthood; now he proceeds to explain the manner in which the Levitical dispensation foreshadowed His High Priesthood.

The author begins this phase of His discussion with the words: KEPHALAION DE EPI TOIS HEGGEMENOIS, which Nicoll has aptly translated, "Now to crown our present discourse." <sup>(cp. 10:21: "give the point or what not saying it.")</sup> He begins with a statement as to the exalted position of Christ: "We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." Our High Priest, Jesus Christ, is true God; He occupies the place of ineffable glory and power on the right hand of God the Father. There He exercises both His kingly and priestly functions. He is the royal priest, not a "sacerdotal drudge", for He intercedes for sinners in His regal state. The session of the great High Priest on the right hand of the Majesty in the heavens proves: 1. That He is greater than any Levitical high priest; 2. That His sacrifice is of infinite worth, and therefore acceptable to God; 3. That He is all-powerful, and thus also "mighty to save;" 4. That He abides in the heavenly Holy of Holies continually, ever living to make intercession for His people, unlike the Levitical high priests, who went into the Holy of Holies but once a year. (Cp. Kretzmann, "Popular Commentary, p.465).

The greatness of the High Priest is now proved by the place of His ministry. He is called "a minister of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not men." Into the earthly, material tabernacle and sanctuary the Lord Jesus never entered, for He was not a member of the Levitical priesthood. His high priestly work was vastly more noble and more exalted. He performed His sacerdotal work of atonement in the "true tabernacle"; SKENE ALTERNATE, the ideal, antitypical tabernacle of His own body, and He now discharges His sacerdotal duty of intercession in the true, celestial sanctuary, of which He is a minister (ΤΩΝ ΗΑΓΙΩΝ ΛΕΙΤΟΥΡΓΟΣ). And that indeed was pitched not by men, but by the Lord Himself, which goes to prove the incomparable and preeminence of the divine High Priest who serves there.

The author now states the necessary parts of Christ's high priesthood, vv. 3-5: "For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law, who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle, for, See, saith He, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount." Hence, it was necessary: 1. That Christ should have something to offer; 2. That He should perform His intercessory duties in Heaven.

The universal law that every High priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices proves that Christ, who is the High Priest of the heavenly sanctuary, is not idle or inactive, but must be offering something. And that which Christ now offers to God is the presentation of His finished sacrifice. Just as the Jewish high priest could not enter into the Holy of Holies without the blood of the sacrificial victim, ch. 9, 7, so Jesus, the greater High Priest, had to enter the divine sanctum with the blood of the greater Victim - Himself! And that blood is of infinite and eternal merit, for it is the blood of the Son of God.

Moreover, since Christ has been proven to be our High Priest, it must be exercising in Heaven that he is ~~exercising~~ His ministry, for if He were on earth He could not serve as a priest, let alone as the high priest; hence, it is necessary that Christ perform his High Priestly duties in Heaven. The priesthood, according to the Law, was restricted to men of the tribe of Levi, which would have ipso facto excluded Jesus, a member of the tribe of Judah.

But far from detracting from the excellence of Jesus' priesthood, this consideration immeasurably enhances it, for the apostle shows that He is the perfect High Priest, of whom the Levitical priesthood was merely a type, and He performs His sacerdotal functions in the true, heavenly, holy place, of which the earthly tabernacle, built by Moses in accordance with God's ~~own~~ specifications, was but a shadow, with no independent existence nor intrinsic value.

The holy writer continues his argument for the preeminence of Christ, vv.

The Medi-  
ator of a  
Better Co-  
venant.

6.7: "But now hath He obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also He is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had

been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second." The ministry of Christ is superior to that of the Levitical priesthood in proportion to the superiority of the heavenly to the earthly, of the real to the symbolic. Since the ministry of Christ is included in His activity as the mediator of a better covenant, it must share in the superior excellence of that covenant. It is superior in that it is a clearer and more perfect dispensation of the grace of God, the "no plus ultra" of divine revelation. Moreover, it has been established on better promises, inasmuch as the free offer of salvation, as contained in the Gospel, is better than the absolute demand of perfection, as required by the Law.

The superiority of the new covenant is indisputable, for, as the author declares, "if the first covenant had been fruitless, then should no place have been sought for the second." If the old dispensation had accomplished its purpose of bringing men to God, there would have been no need or demand for a new dispensation. But the former covenant was indeed found to be faulty, and so it had to be superseded by a new dispensation.

The sacred writer now continues by quoting Jeremiah 32,31-34 to describe and emphasize the preeminence of the new covenant, vv.8-12. According to this quotation, the new and better covenant involves a better relationship between God and His people than that which existed according to the covenant which He made with the fathers, when He led them out of Egypt, because of their unfaithfulness and disobedience to that covenant.

This distinction, according to the Lord's own declaration, is fourfold: 1. "I will put my laws into their minds, and write them in their hearts"; 2. "I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people"; 3. "All shall know me, from the least to the greatest"; 4. "I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more." The new dispensation, to be sure, is based upon better promises - promises which are centered in Christ, God's eternal Son.

The apostle closes the chapter with the observation, "In that He saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away." When God speaks of a new covenant, the former covenant is thereby automatically branded as old. Thus, already at the time of the Prophet Jeremiah the Mosaic dispensation was looked upon as insufficient, antiquated, moribund. Bruce's comment on this point is too interesting to be passed by: "The time of fulfilment has arrived. Leviticalism is decrepit, and death must ensue. Think of this, ye Hebrews, who cling to Levitical ordinances!

See: the high priest's head is white with age; his limbs totter from feebleness; the boards of the tabernacle are rotten; the veil of the sanctuary is moth-eaten. Everything portends approaching dissolution. Let it die, then, the hoary system, and receive from devout men decent burial. Shut not your eyes to the white hairs and tottering steps, fanatically striving to endow the venerable with immortality, embalming that which is already dead. Accept the inevitable, however painful, and find comfort in the thought that though the body dies the spirit lives on, that when the old passes away something new and better takes its place. It is sad to lose such a one as Simeon the just and devout; but why mourn for him when Christ is born?" (p.304)

In the ninth chapter the author continues his discussion of the superiority of Christ's priesthood to the Old Testament cultus, devoting the first fourteen verses to a portrayal of Christ as the High Priest of a greater and more perfect tabernacle.

He lays the foundation for his argument by entering into a description of the old tabernacle, which, impressive though and elaborate though it was, in its appointments and services, was only a symbol and shadow, vv.1-10. He calls it a "worldly sanctuary." It was worldly, for it pertained wholly to this world, in that it was a temporary and non-stationary institution, and thus characteristic of the world. Nevertheless, it was a "sanctuary", for it was the place in which God was pleased to dwell, and it was to His glory alone that it was erected and maintained. The tabernacle was divided into the parts: The outer part, called the "sanctuary", which contained the candlestick and the table with the showbread; and the inner part, called the "holiest of all", which was divided from the outer part by the veil, and which had the golden censer, (or golden altar of incense), according to the interpretation of THE-  
LATERION (this, however, was not within the Holy of Holies proper, but was inseparably connected with its ritual), and which contained the Ark of the Covenant

In the Ark reposed the golden pot that had manna, Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; the lid of the Ark was the so-called "mercy-seat," which was overshadowed by the cherubins of glory. Concerning these holy appointments the apostle declares that he "cannot now speak particularly," and therefore immediately goes on to mention the duties and services of the tabernacle. He states that the ordinary priests went continually into the first tabernacle, i.e., the holy place, to perform their services, but that into the second, the Holy of Holies, "the high priest alone went once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people."

The great truth which the Holy Ghost, who is identified here as the author of the ritual, intended to inculcate thereby was that "the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while ~~as yet~~ the first tabernacle was yet standing. The fact that under the old covenant there was no free access to God's presence is proven by the arrangement that not all priests, but only the high priest, went into the Holy of Holies, that he went not always, but only once a year, and that he went not empty-handed, not freely, but always with blood.

The old tabernacle was merely a "figure for the time then present," and none of its gifts and sacrifices could make the doer perfect or satisfactorily appease his conscience. For the Old Testament institutions were only imperfect ordinances, which consisted of external, carnal regulations, such as meats and drinks and divers washings, and which were only temporary in duration, effective only until the "time of reformation," *MECHRI KAIROU DIORTHWSEWS* (literally, "of correction", "putting things right"), namely, the New Testament era, in which all the defects of the "evitical dispensation would be remedied, the veil which hid the presence of God removed, and man brought into the right spiritual <sup>relationship.</sup> track.

In contrast to this shadowy, typical, imperfect institution, the author now goes on, vv.11.12, to picture Christ as "the high priest of good things to come," namely, of the New Testament dispensation and of the eternal blessings which it supplies. This perfect High Priest, the author continues, "by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building; neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us."

This description offers four marks of superiority for Christ's high priestly activity: 1. He is the High Priest of a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not of human creation, as was the Old Testament tabernacle, but His own body. 2. He entered the holy place not with the blood of goats and calves, worthless animals, but with His own divine and precious blood. 3. He entered not many times, as did the Old Testament high priests, but only once. 4. The redemption which He wrought was not merely effective for a yearly respite, but is eternal.

Thus Christ is the High Priest of supreme and complete efficacy. "The blood of bulls and of goats and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh", declares the apostle, but the peerless worth of Christ's sacrifice thereby becomes all the more evident, for "how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?"

The <sup>inestimable</sup> virtues of Christ's sacrifice is expressed in the statement that He offered Himself. His sacrifice was not made under ~~the~~ compulsion, but was the free and voluntary act of His own divine will; and the sacrifice which He offered was no paltry offering of animals, but His own precious life. That is the ideal of sacrifice and priesthood, ~~as previously stated~~. And because He

was the divine and perfect Lamb of God, the author also declares that He offered Himself "without spot to God". The Levitical sacrifices were physically spotless, but He was morally spotless, the essence of perfection and of purity; therefore He is the Lamb of God "which taketh away the sin of the world."

But the apostle makes the significant statement that He offered Himself to God "through the eternal Spirit." In contrast to the earthly, material offerings of the Levitical era, the sacrifice of Christ was spiritual, in the highest sense of that word, removed from all association with mundane, temporal, carnal ideas. And His sacrifice is of eternal, never-ending efficacy. It is only because of the fact that the sacrifice of Christ was unique, in that it was the self-offering of the God-man, that it possessed such perfect and everlasting validity. Human reason cannot comprehend how the God-man could die, but the syllogism is clear: Jesus Christ died; Jesus Christ is God-man; ergo, the God-man died. The well-known Lenten hymn, "O grosse Not, Gott selbst ist todt," is therefore based upon sound Scriptural doctrine.

As a result of the sacrifice of Christ, our consciences are purged from dead works, works that are unprofitable and sinful, and we are enabled to devote our lives to the service of the living God.

The Deity of Christ, His divine essence, is the factor which gives to His sacrifice its transcendent and all-sufficient value. Or, to express it in another way, the fact that the Scriptures declare the sacrifice of Christ to be of infinite value proves Him to be true God.

In v. 15 the apostle now presents the theme about which He is to weave the remainder of the chapter: "and for this cause He is the Mediator of the New testament," ΜΕΣΙΤΗΣ ΔΙΑΘΗΚΗΣ ΚΑΙΝΗΣ. Christ has inaugurated a new dispensation, whereby men are brought into a new and holier relationship with God. The purpose of His Mediatorship is immediately stated: "That by means of death, for



the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance." The death of Christ is here viewed from a retrospective angle. The Old Testament believers had received the promise of salvation through Christ, but it was not until the actual coming of Christ that their transgressions were perfectly atoned for, cp. 11,40. Now that Christ has completed His work of reconciliation, the promised eternal inheritance is bestowed upon all those who will accept it in true faith; our eternal salvation is insured by the death of Christ.

Elaborating upon this thought, the apostle declares that it was ~~was~~ necessary for Christ to die in order to make the New Testament effectual. The general rule applies that: "Where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator; For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth." The natural conclusion is that, as in the case of all testaments, so also in the case of the testament which Christ instituted for men, this was of no force until the death of the testator, Christ Himself. Christ had to die in order that His people might enjoy the benefits and blessings which He had bequeathed to them in His last will and testament.

Moreover, the inspired author argues that the testament must needs be ratified by blood. He shows the manner in which the first testament was ratified: After Moses had instructed the people in all the Law, then he dedicated the testament with blood, sprinkling the book of the Law and the covenant, the people themselves, and the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, - all of which, of course, was a type of Christ, who has sprinkled and purged us with His own holy blood.

"Almost all things are by the law purged with blood" - that is the general rule. And above all, those things which were consecrated to the service and worship of God were purged with blood. Hence, the apostle concludes, "Without the shedding of blood there is no remission." The necessity of purging everything connected with the service of God was because of its contamination by contact with men, guilty and sinful beings. This stain of guilt is removed by the remission of sin. And remission of sin is accomplished by the shedding of blood, HAIHATEKCHYSIA. This rule applied to material things; it applied in a far higher sense to the shedding of the blood of Christ, which has purged us sinners from all our guilty stains, and made us acceptable to God, vessels of honor, purified by the blood of the Lamb.

The writer extends this thought in the next verse: "It was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these." The blood of sacrificial beasts sufficed to purge those material things, enumerated above, which were mere shadows, copies and types of the heavenly things; but these things themselves, which the new covenant comprised, had to be purified with a better sacrifice - the blood of the Son of God. And in confirmation of this statement, the author repeats the thought to which he has previously given expression: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us."

Once more the apostle drives home his ever-recurring theme, the superiority of Christ's sacrifice: "Nor yet that He should offer Himself often, as the high priest entereth the holy place every year with blood of others; or then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world, but now once in the end of the world hath He appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." Again the inspired penman depicts the superiority of Christ's

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sacrifice: First, from the fact that it was a single offering, in contrast to the oft-repeated sacrifices which the Levitical high priests had to present in the holy place, for if His sacrifice were to be of the same kind as theirs, requiring constant repetition, He would have had to suffer repeatedly throughout all the ages - which is <sup>to</sup> absurd as to be unthinkable, and which therefore proves that Christ's sacrifice must have been performed only once, ~~was~~. Secondly, it was a sacrifice of Himself, in contrast to the Levitical animal sacrifices.

The apostle finally clinches His argument for the divine efficacy and preeminence of the one offering of Christ, by illustrating it from God's appointment concerning men: "And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the Judgment, So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without sin unto salvation." It is the inexorable rule of nature that men must die, and that but once, and thereafter comes the Judgment. Likewise in the case of Christ, it was necessary that He die, but His death naturally occurred but once. And in His case, too, death will be followed by Judgment, but in the Judgment He will appear as the Judge, in contrast to all mortal men, who will be the judged. And when He comes again it will be "without sin," i.e., not as a Sin-bearer, as He did the first time, for now the burden of mankind's sins have been lifted from His shoulders, by virtue of His perfect atonement.

Over and over again the holy writers stresses the fact that Christ's sacrifice was substitutionary: He took our place and suffered in our stead. This is the burden of the ritual prescribed and portrayed in the Book of Leviticus (ch. 1, 3, 4, etc.), and which was intended to typify the substitutionary sacrifice of Christ, the Lamb of God. This is the burden of the prophecy of Isaiah 53, which points to Christ as the Servant of Jehovah who was to suffer in our stead.

And this is the burden of those chapters of the Epistle to the Hebrews which treat of the atoning work of Jesus Christ. With this doctrine of the vicarious atonement of Christ the Christian religion stands and falls.

The author has not quite finished with his argument for the greater excellence of Christ's sacrifice, but continues to dwell upon his lofty subject a little longer, showing, in Chapter 10, 1-18, how the new dispensation supersedes the old.

The New Dispensation Supersedes The Old

He begins by pointing out the weakness and inferiority of the legal dispensation, vv. 1-6. In the first place, they had no value in themselves, but only pointed forward to

Christ: "The law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of those things." Furthermore, the legal sacrifices could not make the comers thereunto perfect. This is very clear, for if they could have attained this end, they would have ceased to be offered, for in that case, there being no more sin, there would have been no more need of such sacrifices. But the fact that they did not succeed in purging the worshippers' consciences from sins is amply proved by the consideration that in those sacrifices remembrance of sin is made annually.

Moreover, the sacrifices were inherently defective - "It is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins." It was impossible that they should possess this purging power within themselves, for they were not of the same nature as sinners, they were not of sufficient intrinsic value, and they were not voluntary sacrifices - all of which <sup>elements</sup> considerations were essential to the one perfect and consummate sacrifice, which of course was fulfilled in Christ.

Lastly, the Levitical sacrifices were not <sup>in themselves</sup> pleasing to God, for they were only temporary and were destined to be repealed at the coming of Christ. In

substantiation of this contention, the apostle cites Psalm 40,6-8: "Wherefore  
when He (Christ) <sup>cometh</sup> ~~came~~ into the world, He saith, Sacrifice and offering Thou  
wouldest not, but a body hast Thou prepared me; In burnt offerings and sacri-  
fices for sin Thou hast had no pleasure. Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume  
of the book it is written of me), to do Thy will, O God."

This quotation affords a natural transition from the consideration of the  
inferiority of the old dispensation to the discussion of the excellence of the  
new. The preeminence of the Christian dispensation is demonstrated first by the  
divine purpose. The citation from Psalm 40 serves to show that already in the  
Old Testament era God had decreed and foretold the coming of Christ; moreover,  
He had determined upon the manner in which Christ should perform His work of  
reconciliation: "A body hast Thou prepared me," or, according to the literal  
rendition of the words of the Psalm: "Mine ears hast Thou opened." He should  
assume the human nature, and as a true man render perfect obedience to the  
will of His Father. We are reminded of the inspired dictum, which found its  
perfect realization in Christ: "To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heark-  
en than the fat of rams (1 Sam. 15, 22).

The new dispensation is more excellent also because of the willingness of  
Christ to undertake the great work of atonement. He is represented as saying,  
in the words of the Messianic Psalm: "Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it  
is written of me), to do Thy will, O God!" In fulfilment of the Old Testament  
prophecy, which was recorded of Him in the inspired record, Christ came to  
earth to do the will of His Heavenly Father, voluntarily, without any compulsion;  
furthermore, He entered upon His redemptive mission gladly and joyfully, for a  
comparison with the original statement of Psalm 40 shows that He exclaimed:  
"I delight to do Thy will, O God!" The will of God was the redemption and  
sanctification of all mankind, and Christ willingly and cheerfully undertook to  
carry out that will.

And His performance of the will of God was eminently successful, for thereby "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second." He abrogated the former dispensation, which was inadequate to satisfy the demands of God, and inaugurated the new dispensation, whereby a perfect and eternal reconciliation between God and man has been effected. In accordance with God's will, then, we of the New Testament era "are sanctified by through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Jesus' blood and righteousness, appropriated by faith, bring us into intimate and permanent communion with God.

The new dispensation has perfect efficacy, in striking contrast to the former system. "And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins" - surely a dreary and disheartening picture of the ineffectiveness and impotence of the old covenant! But it only serves to paint in more vivid hues the matchless worth of Christ: "But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; From henceforth expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified."

The apostle thus shows once more the finality of Christ's sacrifice. He does not need, as do the Levitical priests, to stand daily offering sacrifices, for He has performed His single, unique, self-sacrifice, and nothing more remains to be done to unite men with God. His atoning work accomplished, Christ now has ascended to the right hand of God, where He lives and reigns, as the royal priest, in eternal majesty and glory.

His completion of His priestly work and His entrance into glory is thus accounted for: "For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified." His one offering serves all the purposes of all the sacrifices

under the Law: It sanctifies men, brings them to the right relationship toward God, and it also perfects them, keeps them in that holy relationship, thus insuring their everlasting salvation. The one perpetually effective sacrifice of Christ is the anchor of our Christian hope, the guarantee of our Christian trust.

It might have been expected that the author would have brought His discussion of the sacerdotal office of Christ to a close with this impressive picture of the exalted High Priest. But He does not write "Finis" to this magnificent discourse before he has adduced another Scriptural proof for the finality of Christ's sacrifice, vv. 15-18. He quotes the prophecy of Jeremiah which he has recorded in Chapter 8, 10-12.

The fact that no further sacrifice for the expiation of sin is to be expected is attested not only by the session of Christ on the throne of God, but also by the witness of the Holy Ghost, speaking by inspiration through the Prophet Jeremiah. He repeats the two chief points of the promise: Regeneration of the heart and the banishment of all remembrance of sin, as a result of which there is no further place for an atoning sacrifice.

With the establishment of the new covenant, the law of God, inscribed in the hearts and minds of men, is deepened and spiritualized. Men thereby enters into a new relation with God, a relation which is based upon the grace and love which God has manifested in His Son. Now, in this new era, our sins no longer exist in the mind of God, for absolute forgiveness is a characteristic of the dispensation which Christ ushered in. "Now," the apostle concludes, "where remission of these (sins) is, there is no more offering for sin." With the remission of sin accomplished through the reconciliation of Christ, there is no longer any ground or reason for atonement. All need for satisfaction has been met, all sacrifices for sin are annulled, and the temporal ritual has no further value. The last word of the argument has been spoken. The case has been definitely proven.

Thus, in this lengthy section of the Epistle, extending from 4,14 to 10,18 (with the omission of the parenthetical episode of rebuke and exhortation, 5,12-6,20), Christ has been portrayed in His divine work of atonement as the great High Priest. And in this presentation of the sacerdotal character and office of Christ, we have an indisputable and absolute proof of His Deity, for only God Himself could be such a High Priest, who was "holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, made higher than the heavens," and only God Himself could render such a perfect, divine, all-sufficient sacrifice - the blood of Christ, "who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God."

We have now reached what is rightly regarded as the close of the doctrinal part of the Epistle. The remainder is taken up in warnings, exhortations, historical allusions, and the inculcation of various duties, all drawing their motive or illustration from the great and sublime truths which we have discussed, and which are centered about Christ, the eternal Son of God.

Thus the entire Epistle, in its description of Christ in His preeminent position as the mediator of revelation and in His divine work of atonement as the great High Priest, emphasizes with ever-increasing force the sublime truth of the Deity of Christ. No one can read this <sup>Great</sup> Epistle in a reverent spirit without being convinced by the overwhelming mass of evidence that Jesus Christ is indeed true God. He is greater than the prophets, greater than the angels, greater than Moses, greater than Aaron and the Levitical priesthood - because He is Himself the great God! Devout meditation upon this theological and Christological masterpiece cannot fail to strengthen and confirm the reader's faith in the Deity of his Savior, and thus, in corresponding measure, strengthen and confirm his hope of eternal salvation.



Truly, only then do we know true happiness and peace in this life and possess the sure hope of the life to come, if we look unto Jesus, the Author and Finisher of our faith, that great Shepherd of the sheep, whom the God of peace has brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

To Him be glory for ever and ever! Amen.

— Thomas Costes,

Duluth, Minnesota,

April 12, 1935.

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