

the Fountain whence flows all salvation, the other as the Channel through which it all flows to men. In chap. v., the relative position of each respectively, and their absolute oneness in the work of redemption (as in John xiv. 7, 9-11, 23; xvi. 15; xvii. 21), stand boldly out; but in chap. vi. 16 we have them awfully associated in "the wrath of Him that sitteth upon the throne, and *the wrath of the Lamb.*" In a word, that peculiar name given to the enemy of souls, suggested by his occupation, "the accuser of the brethren," who "accuses them before our God day and night." In fact, the whole book teems with unique epithets and phrases, and symbolic arrangements, suggestive of the "unsearchable riches" of that scheme of salvation which, while expressed it is true in fully developed forms in the apostolic Epistles, appears in this book as if the seer had been instructed to take us, not into the sanctuary only, but into the holy of holies.

In view of all this, can it be said that this book reads like "the connecting link between the Synoptists and the Fourth Gospel," and "that form of development which belongs to the earliest apostolic age"? Let the reader judge.

DAVID BROWN.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

XIV. CHRIST AND AARON (CHAP. VIII.).

THE discourse on Melchisedec is ended, and now Aaron comes to the front. Having used the priest of Salem to set forth the dignity and value of Christ's priesthood, the writer proceeds now to use the high priest of Israel to convey an idea of His priestly functions. The aim of this new section, extending from the commencement of the eighth to the end of the ninth chapter, is to show that the

priestly ministry of Christ is as much superior to that of the Levitical priests as He Himself is personally superior to them. The rubric of the whole passage is "the more excellent ministry." But as comparison can be made only between things that have something in common, so this comparison between Christ and the Levitical priest implies a certain resemblance which it is the writer's purpose to exhibit. By the one train of thought he accomplishes a twofold object, establishing superiority on a basis of similitude.

Thus he *crowns*¹ the discourse on the priestly Minister after the order of Melchisedec by a discourse on His priestly ministry in terms drawn from the order of Aaron. He does this on Scripture authority. His warrant for representing Christ as a Priest after the order of Melchisedec is the oracle in Psalm cx. His warrant for describing Christ's priestly functions in terms of those performed by the priests of the house of Aaron he finds in the injunction twice recorded in Exodus xxv., "*See that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.*"² This he understands as meaning that in all its essential features the Levitical system of worship was a copy or adumbration of a higher heavenly reality. This principle might easily be carried to absurd lengths, as it was by the rabbis, whose notion was that there were in heaven original models of the tabernacle and of all its furniture, and that these originals were shown to Moses in the mount, somewhat as original pictures of famous artists, whereof copies are made by obscurer men, are shown to travellers in the picture-galleries of European cities. Like

¹ The best rendering of the words *κεφάλαιον δὲ ἐπὶ τοῖς λεγομένοις* is that given by Dr. Field in *Otium Norvicense*, "Now to crown our present discourse"; also more recently by Mr. Rendall, "Now to crown what we are saying." As a curiosity in exposition, it may be mentioned that Hofmann puts a stop after *δέ*, and after *λεγομένοις* supplies *ἀρχιερεῖσιν*, and renders, "The principal matter or the sum is, that besides those called high priests we have," etc.

² Exod. xxv. 9, 40.

most rabbinical notions, this was a prosaic caricature of the truth implied in the word of God to Moses. Our author was too much of a poet and philosopher to be capable of such pedantry as to imagine that of every article of furniture in the Jewish tabernacle—snuffers, candlesticks, tables, altars—there was an eternal material pattern in heaven. But he did believe, and he here teaches, that the material tabernacle with all its appurtenances was an emblem of a spiritual, Divine, eternal sanctuary, shown to Moses in vision on the mount. Hence he describes the Levitical priests as those who serve that which is the pattern and shadow of the heavenlies, *viz.* the material, man-made tabernacle (ver. 5), and represents heaven itself as a sanctuary, the holy place *par excellence*, the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, not man (ver. 2). In the same way he assumes that as there was a priesthood and a system of sacrifices in the religious establishment set up by Moses, so there must be a priest in the real heavenly sanctuary (ver. 1), and the man who fills that office there must have something to offer (ver. 3). A celestial Sanctuary, High Priest, and Sacrifice: such are the transcendent realities whereof the material tabernacle, and the Levitical priests, and sacrifices were the rude, shadowy copies.

It is worthy of note with what a firm, confident tone the writer asserts the superiority of the heavenly patterns over the earthly copies. The heavenly sanctuary is the true, genuine tabernacle, that which answers to the ideal (*ἀληθινῆς*¹); the material man-made tabernacle, on the other hand, is but a rude sketch, or barely that, only such a dim, scarcely recognisable likeness as a shadow (*σκιᾶ*) supplies, of the fair spiritual sanctuary which, like Plato's republic, is to be found

¹ The word is used in the same sense in the fourth gospel; *e.g.* "I am the true vine" (*ἡ ἀμπελος ἡ ἀληθινή*). In this sense *ἀληθινός* is opposed to the vulgar reality which comes short of the ideal, while *ἀληθής* is opposed to the false or unreal in the common sense.

nowhere in this world, but only in the heavens. With this way of describing the things contrasted the Hebrew Christians of course would not sympathise. They would feel disposed to invert the terms, and apply the epithet "true" to the material structure, and the epithet shadowy to the spiritual one. Yet what, after all, are the essential constituents of a holy place? Not the boards and the veil, not stone and lime; but a God present in His grace, and a priest competent to transact for man with God, and a people drawing nigh to God through his mediation. Given these, your religious establishment is complete in all essential points. And these essentials are found in connexion with the celestial sanctuary more perfectly than they were in connexion with the old tabernacle in the wilderness.

Corresponding to the transcendent excellence of the heavenly sanctuary is the incomparable dignity of its priestly Minister. He is "such an High Priest as sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." He is a royal Priest, who does not stand ministering like the sacerdotal drudges of the tribe of Levi (chap. x. 11), but while He ministers, interceding for men, sits in regal state.

On the principle that all the great religious realities are to be found in heaven, there also must be the true offering, or sacrifice. What is it? That is the question on which the writer specially desires his readers to exercise their thoughts. For them it is the hardest question. They might recognise that heaven could, by a certain latitude of speech, be called a sanctuary, and that the glorified Christ could be conceived of as in some vague sense a priest; but sacrifice in heaven! What has He to offer? Their teacher does his best to help them to master this abstruse point. First, he remarks that if Christ were on earth He would not even be a priest at all, there being those who offer gifts according to the law (ver. 4). This statement does not

mean that Christ while on earth was not a priest in any sense. The remark is meant for Hebrew ears, and is intended to provoke reflection on the question, What gift did the Priest of the new order offer? in the hope that readers slow to learn would at length get hold of the great idea (unfamiliar to them, though commonplace to us) first hinted in the close of the seventh chapter, and developed in the sequel, that Christ's offering was *Himself*. In catechetical form our author's meaning may be put thus: "Christ is a Priest, the true, high, highest, ideal Priest. He must therefore have something to offer; for the very duty of a priest is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sin. But what is it which He offers? It is not any such sacrifice as the Levitical priest offers, insomuch that were He on earth He could not be recognised as a priest at all. What then can it be? It cannot certainly be the blood of bulls and goats. The daily scenes of slaughter that took place before the door of the tabernacle were utterly out of place in the celestial sanctuary. You cannot imagine such sanguinary work going on up yonder. The sacrifice that is to make even heaven pure must be of a very different character. No shadows, no dim emblems, no rude, barbaric rites will do there. All must be real, spiritual, and of the highest kind, and in the highest measure of perfection. The priest that gets entry yonder must be more than officially holy, and his offering must be as holy as himself. Can you not guess what it is? It is *Himself*, offered without spot or stain of sin unto God, through the eternal Spirit of filial obedience and lowly love. That will do even for heaven." This, or something like it, is what the writer has in his mind; but he does not utter all his thought just yet. He is content for the present to throw out the remark, "This Man must have something to offer," and to leave his readers for a while to puzzle over the question, What can it be?

At no point in the epistle is it more needful to bear in

mind its apologetic character, and to realize the ignorance of its first readers as to the nature of Christianity, which made an elaborate apology necessary, than at the place which now engages our attention. If we assume that the Hebrew Christians were familiar with the doctrine that Christ was a Priest, and that by His death He made atonement for sin, it is difficult to understand what the writer could mean by the statement that He must have something to offer. It degenerates into a mere truism. Why, of course He had His own blood shed on the cross to present to God in heaven. Or are we to suppose the writer means something additional to that: such as intercessions for sinners, and presentation to God of the prayers and praises of His people? Assume, on the other hand, that the Hebrew Christians were ignorant of the great truth that in His death Christ offered Himself a sacrifice to God, and all becomes clear. The observation that Christ must have somewhat to offer gains point, and the added remark that if He were on earth He would not be a priest serves an important purpose. The former is no longer a theological commonplace, or dogmatic truism, but an apologetic device to force slow-witted men to think; and the latter is a friendly hint as to the direction in which the solution of the problem is to be found.

This Man must have somewhat to offer—what can it be? such was the puzzling question for the first readers of our epistle. The puzzle for modern readers and interpreters is different. The priestly ministry is in heaven; and yet the sacrifice the Priest presents there appears to be none other than that offering of Himself which He made once for all; an event, so far at least as the initial stage of it, the blood-shedding, is concerned, happening on earth, and within this visible world. This is the antinomy of which I have spoken more than once. For the final solution we must wait till we have come in the course of exposition to

the writer's fullest expression of his conception of Christ's sacrifice. Meantime it will suffice to hint that in his view "true" and "heavenly" are synonyms; whatever is "true" is heavenly, belongs to the upper world of realities, and whatever belongs to that upper world is true and real. If Christ's sacrifice of Himself be a true sacrifice, it belongs to the heavenly world, no matter where or when it takes place. Then, secondly, Christ's sacrifice is for him a true sacrifice, because it is an affair of spirit. Flesh and blood, whether of man or of beast, are of the earth, earthy, and belong to the realm of shadows. Even the blood of Christ, literally considered, can find no place in heaven; so that it is vain to distinguish between the first stage of the sacrifice, the death or blood-shedding, and the second, the sprinkling of the shed blood on the mercy-seat within the sanctuary, and to relegate the former to earth as something lying outside the sphere of Christ's proper priestly activity, and to locate the latter in heaven, regarding it as the point at which Christ's priestly ministry begins. Christ's sacrifice of Himself finds entrance into heaven only when blood is transmuted into spirit. In other words: the shedding of Christ's blood is a true sacrifice, as distinct from the shedding of the blood of bulls and goats, which was only a shadow of sacrifice, because it is the manifestation of a mind or spirit. And because it is that, it belongs to heaven, though it take place on earth. As in the Gospel of John the Son of man living on the earth is represented as claiming to be in heaven, so we may claim for the death of Christ, in virtue of the spirit it revealed, that it belongs to the heavenlies, though it took place on Mount Calvary. The magic phrase, "through an eternal spirit," lifts us above distinctions of time and place, and makes it possible for us to regard Christ's offering of Himself, in all its stages, as a transaction within the celestial sanctuary.

Leaving his readers for a while to their own meditations

on the question, What is it Christ had to offer? our author proceeds to show that the ministry of the "true tabernacle," whatever its precise nature, must needs be one of surpassing excellence. For this purpose he reverts to the idea of the "better covenant" introduced in the previous chapter (ver. 22), of which he declares Christ to be the "Mediator," that is, the agent by whom it is established, as he has already declared Him to be its "surety," that is, the agent by whom its stability is guaranteed. "But now," he argues, "hath He obtained a more excellent ministry by how much He is also Mediator of a better covenant, one which has been constituted upon better promises." From one occupying this position what may not be expected? Of the priestly service connected with the better covenant, based on better promises, too lofty ideas cannot be formed. Thus would the wise teacher entice backward pupils onward in the untrodden path that conducts to Christian enlightenment. Whether he was successful we know not. Not improbably he failed with his first readers because of the novelty of his thoughts, as he fails with us through their being too familiar. The "new covenant" is now a trite theme, and it requires an effort of historical imagination to conceive that at one time it was a great, spiritual, poetic thought: first for Jeremiah, whose prophetic soul gave birth to it; and then, ages after, for the author of our epistle, who utilized it in his grand apology for the Christian religion. In so doing he certainly showed his wonted skill. For Jeremiah's oracle of the new covenant, here quoted at length, serves excellently the purpose of the whole epistle, while it facilitates the exposition of the peculiar nature of Christ's priestly ministry. The oracle speaks of a *new* covenant, and is thus another Scripture text showing that a new order of things was contemplated even in long past ages, and that the old order was felt to be unsatisfactory. The oracle further represents the new, desiderated order

as a *covenant*, implying an analogy as well as a difference between the new and the old, and preparing us to expect, in connexion with the new not less than the old, a priestly ministry and sacrifice, serving a purpose analogous to that served by the Levitical system of worship, only serving it far more effectually.

After justifying the application of the epithet "better" to the new covenant by the remark that, if the first covenant had been faultless, no place would have been sought for a second (ver. 7), and by pointing out that the oracle of the new covenant is introduced with disparaging reflections on the old (vers. 8, 9), the writer quotes the oracle (with its preface) at length (vers. 8-12), and leaves it to speak for itself as to the quality of its promises which he had declared to be "better" than those of the old covenant. Read the oracle, he says in effect, and judge for yourselves. It would certainly have been satisfactory if he had so far treated his readers of all ages as children, as to think it necessary to give a succinct enumeration of the promises, that they might know on what he chiefly laid stress. Fortunately he returns to the subject farther on, and by a partial re quotation lets us see what bulks most largely in his view (chap. x. 16-18). Two promises are covered by the second quotation: the writing of the law on the heart, and the everlasting oblivion of sin. One might have been quite sure, apart from any express indication, that our author had the last mentioned promise very specially in mind when he characterized the promises of the new covenant as "better"; for the very aim of his whole work is to show that Christ for the first time deals effectually with the defilement of sin, so that we can indeed draw near to God. But it is important to observe that remission of sin, while of great moment in his view, is not everything. He includes the writing of the law on the heart within the scope of Christ's work. He thinks of that as one of the ends to

be effected by Christ as the founder and guarantor of the new covenant. In other words, he conceives of Christ as the Sanctifier in the ethical or Pauline sense, as well as in the ritual or theocratic sense of putting men through forgiveness in right relations with God.

The new covenant might well be left to speak for itself as to the superior quality of its promises. Under the Sinaitic covenant God gave the people of Israel, through Moses as mediator, the Ten Commandments written on tables of stone, and promised to bless them if they kept these commandments, to be their God if they would be His people and do all the words of His law. He gave them, further, detailed instructions with reference to their religious duties, and provided a priestly caste to keep them right in point of ritual, a thing very necessary under so complicated a system. Finally, God promised to His people temporary forgiveness of sins of ignorance and infirmity, on condition of their offering certain specified sacrifices, at certain stated times, and in accordance with certain prescribed forms; cancelling, *e.g.*, the "ignorances" of a year in consideration of the sacrifices offered by the high priest on the great day of atonement. Benefits these not to be despised, but how poor compared with those of the new covenant! Instead of a law written on tables of stone, and deposited in the ark, was to be a law written on the *heart*, and deposited in the safe custody of a renewed mind. And there is no "if" in the promise of the covenanting God. It is absolute, and runs: "I will be their God, and they shall be My people." Then, instead of instruction in the details of a cumbrous ceremonial system by the priest, or by any neighbour who happened to be better informed, there is to be intuitive, first-hand knowledge of God, of His will, and of His heart possessed by all, accessible to laymen as well as to priests, to the poor as well as to the rich, to the least as well as to the greatest, to the illiterate as well as to

the learned—the knowledge being of a kind not dependent on talent, status, or profession, but simply on moral disposition, the common possession of all the pure in heart. Finally, there is promised under the new covenant, not a temporary—say, annual—forgiveness of sins of a minor and artificial character, but forgiveness free, full, everlasting, of all sins, however heinous. “I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more”; words which in the mouth of a prophet meant something more serious than the pardoning of petty offences against a religious ritual.

The new, reformed covenant is evidently constructed on the principle of avoiding the defects of the old one. The oracle announcing it is in one aspect just a criticism of the Sinaitic covenant. When prophets thus boldly criticise the constitution of their nation, change more or less revolutionary may be looked for. The first item in the reform programme, the law written on the heart, may indeed appear a poet's dream, to be relegated to the realm of Eutopia. No fault is found at this point with the old law in itself. The law referred to is the Decalogue, as we gather from the implied contrast between writing on the heart and writing on stone tablets. It was this law above all that the people of Israel broke when they provoked God to disregard His covenant, and send them into exile. They were banished to Babylon, not for neglecting religious ritual, but for neglecting the great duties of righteousness, which it was the glory of the prophets to preach. This law in itself was good, and accordingly in this case the old covenant is blamed merely for not providing that the law should be kept. The complaint may seem unreasonable, but there can be no doubt that a law which not only told men what to do, but insured compliance with its own precepts would be a great boon.

The second item in the programme points not merely

to a new method of enforcing old laws, but to abrogation. The dependence of each man upon his neighbour for the knowledge of God's will arose out of the fact that under the ancient covenant the people of Israel were subject to a vast body of *positive* precepts, which had no reason except that God was pleased to enjoin them. Even under that covenant the moral law was to a certain extent written on the heart. But the heart, or the conscience, could give no guidance in reference to religious ritual or ceremonial purity. In such matters men had to seek the law at the priest's mouth. Yet ignorance might have serious consequences. Exact knowledge of God was at once necessary and difficult. It was so difficult, that the rise of a class like the scribes, whose business it was to interpret the law, became inevitable; it was so necessary, that a man could not be legally righteous without a minute acquaintance with the contents of the statute book, there being innumerable offences which were not sins against the Decalogue, but only against ceremonial precepts, having penalties attaching to them. This it was which made the legal yoke grievous. It was not enough to be a good man; you must likewise, as touching the positive precepts of the law, be blameless. And it was so difficult to be this, that one might know God essentially very well, even as a prophet knew Him, and yet be in Divine things an *ignoramus* from the point of view of the priestly code. For this abrogation was the only remedy. Sweep away the cumbrous and vexatious system of positive precepts, and let the things needful to be known in order to acceptable acquaintance with God be reduced to a few great moral and spiritual truths comprehensible by all, without aid of priest, scribe, rabbi, or village schoolmaster, the all-sufficient organ of knowledge being a pure heart. This was one of the boons to be brought in by the days that were coming, the "time of reformation," the era of the "new covenant."

Another was the abolition of the Levitical priesthood, and the system of worship with which it was connected. For this is what is pointed at in the third complaint virtually brought against the old covenant, that it did not deal effectually with the problem of sin. This is the most serious charge, as it is the one which the author of our epistle is most concerned to emphasise. It was well founded. The Levitical system might, without any breach of charity, be characterized as trifling with the great question, How can human sin be pardoned, and the sinner brought near to God? It dealt really only, or at least for the most part, with artificial sins, arising out of ignorance of the ritual law, and its tendency was to divorce religion from morality. A man might be ritually right who was morally wrong, and morally right who was ritually wrong. Perhaps this was not of what Jeremiah was thinking when he wrote, "I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin will I remember no more." But an implied censure on the old religion is what our author finds in the words. For him they contain the promise of a boon which it was not in the power of that religion to confer; therefore by inference an intimation that it must and shall pass away, and give place to a better religion that shall effectually provide for the pardon of sin and the establishment of peace between man and God. He does not interpret the prophecy as pointing to the total abolition of priests and sacrifices; he finds in it rather the promise of a *better* priest and a *better* sacrifice. That is for him *the* promise of the new covenant, the fulfilment of which brings along with it the fulfilment of the other two. Give us only the true Priest and the true Sacrifice, then ritual worship becomes useless, and a simple worship of the living God takes its place, and obedience is made easy by law being transmuted into love.

How fully the revolutionary character of Jeremiah's oracle of the new covenant was present to our author's

mind appears from the remark which he appends to the quotation from the prophet. "In that he saith new he hath made old the first" (ver. 13). He regards the mere use of the ominous word "new" as implying that even in the prophet's time the Sinaitic covenant was in a decadent, dying condition. It was a notice to the old order of things, and to the Levitical priesthood in particular, to set its house in order, for that ere long it must die. The obvious moral is pointed still more plainly for the benefit of Hebrew readers by the added reflection: "That which is becoming antiquated and getting old is nigh unto vanishing away."

This is a reflection fitted to show the folly of insisting on perpetuating that which bears all the symptoms of being doomed to disappear. Why fight against the inevitable law, that what is old must die? "Think of this, ye Hebrew Christians who cling to Levitical ordinances! The ancient covenant with all that belongs to it is old. The high priest's head is white with age; his limbs totter from very feebleness; the boards of the tabernacle are rotten; the veil of the sanctuary is moth-eaten. Everything portends approaching dissolution. Let it die then, and receive from devout men decent burial. Say you, 'Ah! but the old covenant is so venerable!' Venerable indeed, but so is your ancient sire who has seen more than eighty summers. You do not wish him to die; you will be thankful to have him with you yet another year. But you will not be surprised should the event be otherwise. You would not even greatly grieve, for you know that that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away. And when the spirit of the aged one has fled to its eternal rest, you are pensive rather than sorrowful. You do not so much mourn a loss which could not be averted as muse on the certainty of death, and the mutability of man's earthly state, and count your own days, and resolve anew to apply your heart to wisdom. Even so would I have you act in regard to old

and decadent religious institutions : not shutting your eyes to the white hairs and tottering steps, not fanatically striving to endow the venerable with immortality, not embalming that which is already dead, but letting that which is old die in peace, and when dead burying it reverently in the dust ; remembering for your comfort that, though the body dies, the spirit lives for ever, 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 a *Christ* is born ? ”

Wise counsel, and accepted by all as such in reference to revolutions lying behind them in past history. Good counsel, we think, for the Hebrew Christians, and for the men of the sixteenth century when Luther introduced his reforms. The difficulty is to accept and act on the counsel in connexion with changes impending or now going on. Then the voice of wisdom is by many mistaken for blasphemy. “ Abolish the Sinaitic covenant, and the law, and the priesthood—what an impious outrage ! ” It is this that makes the prophet ever a heavy-hearted man. He sees so clearly to be a duty what to other men appears a crime.

A. B. BRUCE.

HEREDITY AND ITS EVANGELICAL ANALOGIES.

(ROM. v. 15-19 ; 1 COR. xv. 21, 22, 45-49.)

THE offence of the ancestor involves the race in disability, condemnation and temporal death. The obedience of One lifts the race with which He becomes incorporated as its Head and Representative, to strength, acceptance, and eternal life. What is that but the great scientific law of heredity reaching out into the sphere of the unseen, and forming a momentous factor in man's relation with his Maker and his