

illustrate the variety of gifts which has been bestowed upon the Church. They do not, at any rate in most cases, designate offices, but functions or endowments. Paul continues the list thus: "then miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, divers kinds of tongues" (1 Cor. xii. 28). But although the prophets, teachers, and evangelists of the early Church were not, as such, Church officers, yet they, no doubt, served in some degree to bring the churches into relations with each other and to foster the feeling of a common life and interest. The evangelists at least seem to have travelled from place to place, and would naturally concern themselves for all the believers with whom they would come into contact. They might be, at the same time, officers in some local church, as was Philip "the evangelist" who was also "one of the seven" (Acts xxi. 8). The labors of such men, so far as they were not merely local, would tend to foster a common consciousness and a sense of unity among the believers of various localities. The believers would thus be helped to refer their differing gifts and functions to the one Spirit and to connect their various duties with the one Lord.

In the early Church, outwardly considered, we seem to see only isolation and division. There was the great division between Jewish and Gentile Christianity. For a time this threatened to separate the Church into two irreconcilable factions. But this danger was averted mainly through the labors and arguments of Paul, who was able to show that the old covenant was fulfilled in the new, that the gospel was complete and sufficient in itself, and that grace and faith are the principles on which men always have been and always must be saved. Then appeared the divisions over various teachers, over the relation of the believer to heathen practices, over points of ritual and of etiquette. Some of these differences were trifling and could be easily composed, but others were serious and far-reaching. Yet the believers were held together, largely by the power of Paul's comprehensive view of Christian unity. Many of the grounds on which, in subsequent times, Christians have separated have been

trifling compared to some of the apparent reasons for division which existed in Paul's day. Yet he held them together, and he did so because he believed, and succeeded in making others believe, that the Church's true unity is not outward but inward; that it does not consist in uniform opinions or uniform ritualistic practice, but in the unity of the Spirit. This unity was what the apostle labored to induce his churches to keep (Eph. iv. 3), and they kept it—not, indeed, perfectly, but sufficiently to prevent the believing community from falling apart into unsympathetic divisions over every point of difference that might arise. It was reserved for a later age to develop a conception of Church unity which is widely different from Paul's, namely, that of a leaden uniformity of opinion and practice. This conception has been in full operation for many centuries. It has worked out its results on the largest scale in modern Protestantism on the principle that the Church is a means of discriminating against those who have defective opinions, and that men who differ in some theory or point of ritual cannot, of course, belong to the same Church. Had this principle prevailed in the apostolic age, the early Church would have been rent into contending factions. That this principle, which so readily allies itself with human prejudice and selfishness, was not permitted to assert itself and to do its divisive work in the early Church, must be credited, I think, in great measure to the splendid advocacy, by the apostle Paul, of a truer and more Christian view.¹

¹ “The one real sin against the unity of the Church is the spirit which would exclude from its fellowship any who confess Christ as Head and own the common brotherhood in him.” D. W. Forrest, *The Christ of History and of Experience*, p. 287.

CHAPTER XII

ESCHATOLOGY

THE conceptions of the apostle which fall under this head are chiefly developed in connection with his descriptions of the Christian's hope of a life beyond this. The Lord's second coming and the resurrection are the most prominent themes of Paul's eschatology. His arguments on both these subjects are directed towards the strengthening of the believer's faith and hope. To the Lord's parousia the apostle, with the whole apostolic Church, looked forward as the great day of deliverance and triumph, when Christ should destroy his enemies by the brightness of his coming (2 Thess. ii. 8). He dwelt upon the resurrection in order to remove the difficulties and objections which were felt by the Greek mind with regard to it, and to assure the Corinthian believers that there would be provided, even in the spiritual world, a suitable embodiment for the spirit (1 Cor. xv. 12 *sq.*). The references by Paul to other eschatological themes than these are rather incidental.

There can be no reasonable doubt that the apostle expected the personal, visible return of Christ to occur in the near future. In 1 Thessalonians he expresses himself in such a way as to show that he hoped to be living at the parousia. In his preaching Paul had emphasized the hope of Christ's speedy coming (v. 2). When some of the members of the church died, the question naturally arose: How should those who had died stand related to the Lord's advent? Would not they be at some disadvantage as compared with the living, who would be ready and waiting to enter at once into the joys and rewards of the Messianic Kingdom? To this difficulty the apostle

addresses himself in 1 Thess. iv. 13-18. He assures his readers "by the word of the Lord"—some saying of Jesus which he regards as covering the point—that those who have fallen asleep in Jesus will be at no disadvantage. The certainty of resurrection is the guaranty of their full and immediate participation in the Messianic blessedness at the parousia. At the Lord's coming "the dead in Christ" shall at once arise so as to be ready to join the living in being caught up into the clouds to meet the Lord in the air, hence to be ever with the Lord (v. 17). Paul evidently regards those members of the Church who had died as forming in this scene a minority as compared with those who should be living, among whom he himself expected to be. Twice he uses the expression: "We that are alive" (*ἡμεῖς οἱ ζῶντες*, vv. 15, 17), in contrast to those who shall have died before the Lord returns. The well-known fact to which the whole New Testament testifies, that the apostolic Church regarded the parousia as near at hand, confirms this natural interpretation of the passage in question.

Did the apostle abandon this expectation in later years? It is certainly less prominent in the later epistles. The references to it are less definite. Still, the Lord's coming is urged as a motive to faithfulness. The Corinthians are urged to await the Lord's coming (1 Cor. i. 7, 8); to refrain from judging "until the Lord come, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and make manifest the counsels of the hearts" (iv. 5). In his later letters also he refers to the manifestation of Christ in glory (Col. iii. 4), and his watchword still is: "The Lord is at hand" (*ὁ κύριος ἐγγύς*, Phil. iv. 5). Such are the facts. The natural inference to be drawn from the facts is that, as time went on, the parousia ceased to be central in Paul's thought. The great controversies over the doctrine of salvation drew his attention away from that subject and concentrated it upon other themes. Thus there took place a change of emphasis and of proportion in the apostle's doctrine. It is improbable that the expectation of personally surviving the parousia remained so fixed and defi-

nite in his mind as it was in his earlier ministry. How could this be the case, when in prison he faced the prospect of speedy martyrdom? He still believed that in the near future the Lord would come to consummate his Kingdom and to judge the world, but he must have deemed it less and less likely that he would still be living when that event should occur. It would be natural that the expectation of the advent should lose something of its definiteness with the passing of time and the unfolding of events. Still we cannot affirm, as some have done, that Paul changed his opinion respecting the nature or the nearness of the second advent. All that can be legitimately inferred from his language is that his later expectation was less definite and precise, and that the parousia had a relatively less prominent place in his thoughts than it had formerly occupied.

This changed emphasis may be accounted for in part by considerations which meet us in the passage commonly called "the Pauline Apocalypse," 2 Thess. ii. 1-12. The practical effect at Thessalonica of the preaching of the Lord's speedy return had been to develop fanaticism. Some had relinquished their employments and given themselves up to idleness and to indifference respecting the present life (2 Thess. iii. 11, 12). The apostle must have perceived the dangers attending a form of expectation which so easily led to such results. In the second Epistle he seeks to recover his readers from the fanatical excitement into which they had been thrown by directing their attention to certain intermediate events which must happen before the parousia. He declares that he had never taught them, and that there is no reason to believe, that the day of the Lord is on the very point of dawning (*ἐνέστηκεν*, ii. 2), that is, in the immediate future. Various events must precede it. Not until these have occurred should the parousia be expected. These intermediate events are described by the terms, "the apostasy" (ii. 3), the revelation of "the man of sin, the son of perdition" (v. 3), and the "mystery of lawlessness" (v. 7). The apostle evidently has in mind some form of the doctrine

of the *dolores Messiae* which was current in Judaism. Messiah's advent is to be preceded by dread signs and portents.

Within what sphere these events were to occur and of what nature they were to be, are questions on which the most divergent opinions have been entertained. I hold that the manifestation of evil of which the apostle speaks was conceived of as occurring within the sphere of anti-Christian Judaism. This view is favored both by the opposition to his work, which he had encountered from the Jews (*cf.* Acts xiii. 46, 50 ; xiv. 2 ; xvii. 13), and by the terms in which he describes the wickedness in question. It is an "apostasy," which naturally suggests a defection from the true religion, and is embodied in a "lawless one," apparently a false Messiah, who takes his place in the temple and sets up blasphemous pretensions. The power which is holding this "mystery of wickedness" in check is, I cannot doubt, the Roman Empire. This view is favored alike by the vague terms in which Paul names it (*ὁ κατέχων; τὸ κατέχον, vv. 6, 7*), which are quite natural in connection with the intimation of its approaching destruction (*ἕως ἐκ μέσου γένηται, v. 7*), and by his experience in being protected by the Roman power against Jewish fanaticism during this period of his career (*cf.* Acts xix. 35-41 ; xxii. 22-29). It should not be claimed, however, on the ground of this passage that Paul changed his view of the parousia between the time of writing the first and that of writing the second Epistle. He simply qualified his statement of it by emphasizing considerations which were adapted to temper the expectation of the parousia as immediate by directing attention to certain events which must first occur. The materials for this representation, which does not meet us elsewhere in Paul, were present in his mind and are amply illustrated in the existing form of one Synoptic tradition. They represent a survival in the early Church of the Jewish conception of the premonitions and accompaniments of Messiah's advent. This conception was transferred by the disciples from the first to the second coming

and modified in accordance with what Jesus was supposed to have said respecting his advent and interpreted, as in the present case, in the light of the progress of events.

It must have been a great change for Paul to pass from the Jewish to the Christian view of death. To the mind of the Jew death was the greatest of misfortunes. It was departure to Sheol, a gloomy realm of shadows and forgetfulness. It was the forfeiture of life, the loss of life's fulness and richness, abandonment to a vague and purposeless existence, a state of deprivation and incompleteness. For Paul the Christian all this was changed. Death was departure to be with Christ, which is better than continued life on earth (Phil. i. 23); it is the portal to a full and happy existence in which the believer is "at home with the Lord" (2 Cor. v. 6-8). Death is not to be feared, but to be welcomed, because it is the gate to eternal fulness of life. Death, as the Jew knew and dreaded it, exists for the Christian no more. This conception was no doubt rooted in Paul's conviction of the believer's union with Christ, confirmed probably by words of Jesus concerning the future life with which he was familiar (*cf.* 1 Thess. iv. 15). As involving the dissolution of man's earthly body, death remains; but for the Christian its power is broken, its sting is taken away (1 Cor. xv. 56). The believer knows that death shall not have dominion over him; that life shall subdue the "last enemy" (xv. 26), and that death shall be "swallowed up in victory" (xv. 54). Hence Paul is fond of describing death, by a euphemism, as a sleep in Jesus (1 Thess. iv. 14; 1 Cor. vii. 39; xv. 6, 18, 20, etc.). The term expresses the blessed rest in fellowship with Christ into which the believer enters at death. Death is robbed of its terrors and is seen as the entrance into the fulness of peace, joy, and blessedness.

It is in connection with this conception of death as the entrance into fulness of life that Paul develops his doctrine of resurrection. As I have said, the immediate occasion of his defending this doctrine at so great length was the denial of it by some (1 Cor. xv. 12) who were evidently

possessed of the common Greek idea that the soul, as a spiritual entity, was sufficient unto itself and required no embodiment (*v.* 35). The apostle's argument proceeds on the assumption that in passing from this world into a higher sphere man's personality is not to be dismembered; that his corporeal life, like his spiritual life, is to be continuous and unbroken. The primary ground of this conviction lies in Paul's mysticism. It is union with Christ which, to his mind, guarantees this continuity of life, Christ's resurrection is the pledge that God will bring from the dead those who are fallen asleep in him (1 Thess. iv. 14; 1 Cor. xv. 12-19). Paul starts from the fact that Christ rose from the dead. That being true, the possibility of resurrection cannot be sweepingly denied (*v.* 12). Now Christ's resurrection carries with it the resurrection of those who are united to him (*v.* 20). Moreover, our salvation would be only an imperfect affair if it related only to this life (*v.* 19). If the idea of resurrection is to be summarily ruled out of Christian belief and hope, then the apostle's doctrine of salvation would rest upon an error of fact, since the assertion that Christ rose from the dead was central in it (*v.* 15) and, equally, upon a delusive hope for the future since, in that case, we should be without the guaranty of triumph over death (*vv.* 16-18). But when we know that Christ, the spiritual head of humanity, has risen from the dead, all is changed. Faith and hope have strong foundations (*v.* 21 *sq.*), and sufferings for the cause of Christ are amply justified (*vv.* 31, 32).

These arguments are adapted to foster faith in the resurrection, but they do not clear it of the difficulty: How can it be conceived as happening? With what sort of a body is the subject of resurrection clothed (*v.* 35)? The apostle declares the objection superficial, and appeals to analogies to show that transformations from one form of being to another, and the variety of bodies which we observe in nature, suggest the reasonableness of an appropriate embodiment for the spirit in the heavenly world. His first illustration is drawn from seed-grain. The kernel which is buried in the earth is transformed by

nature into a new product; to the life which the seed enfolds God gives a new form or body through the mysterious operation of natural law (*vv.* 36–38). This analogy is adapted to suggest both the possible organic connection between the present and the future body and, also, the superiority of the latter. He next appeals to the variety of embodiments which God provides for different creatures, — men, beasts, fishes, — which are, in each case, adapted to the environment and needs of the several orders of being (*v.* 39). “All flesh is not the same flesh.” Again: If we contemplate the heavenly bodies, we behold great variety in magnitude and beauty. Here we observe higher and lower; more and less glorious (*vv.* 40, 41). “So also,” says the apostle, “is the resurrection of the dead.” There may be a future embodiment for the spirit as much higher than the present as the spiritual world is beyond this material world, as well adapted to the uses of man’s personality in a higher realm of existence as the present body is adapted to this, and as much surpassing our present body of flesh and blood as one star surpasses another star in splendor. “There is a spiritual body” (*σῶμα πνευματικόν*), a glorified corporeity, adapted to the spiritual world, as truly as there is “a natural body” (*σῶμα ψυχικόν*) adapted to our life in this world (*v.* 44). Paul’s gospel is the gospel of the body as well as of the spirit. The whole personality is to be conserved and saved. No part of our life is to be discarded, but all is to be fulfilled and perfected. Salvation includes “the redemption of the body” (*Rom.* viii. 23).

It is obvious that these considerations do not answer all the questions which it is natural to ask concerning the subject. The apostle does not undertake to say what is the nature of this higher embodiment, this “house from heaven” (*2 Cor.* v. 2), which God will provide for the redeemed spirit. It is enough for him to know that it will be in the image of the glorified Christ (*1 Cor.* xv. 49) — a body conformed to his own glorious body (*Phil.* iii. 21). What the relation will be between the present body and

that which is to be, Paul does not say. His analogy of the relation of the seed to its product suggests at once a connection and a difference. The grain comes out of the seed, but it is also something new and different from it. "Thou sowest not the body that shall be" (v. 37). The analogy would be quite inappropriate if the apostle had conceived the resurrection as consisting in the resuscitation of the buried flesh. It was enough for Paul to maintain a continuity of corporeal life. It is unlikely that he had any precise conception of the mysterious connection between the psychical and the spiritual bodies.

How, then, does Paul conceive of resurrection (*ἀνάστασις*)? What is raised, and from what is it raised? It is to be noticed that Paul does not speak of the resurrection *of the body*, as he naturally would have done had he believed in a *resurrectio carnis*. He always predicates resurrection of *persons*. His uniform phrases are: *ἀνάστασις νεκρῶν*, or *τῶν νεκρῶν*, and *ἀνάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν* (1 Cor. xv. 12, 13, 21, *et al.*; Rom. vi. 4; vii. 4 *et al.*) The latter expression he regularly applies to Christ's resurrection;¹ the former to the resurrection of other persons. It is therefore the *person* who is raised and he rises from among the dead (*ἐκ νεκρῶν*), that is, from the abode of the dead, conceived of by the Jewish mind as the underworld. Unless Paul had completely abandoned the conception of Sheol he would necessarily conceive of resurrection as a rising from the realm of death. For him, resurrection is neither resurrection of the body nor resurrection from the ground in which the body is buried, but is a rising of the personality from the realm of death into the realm of light and life, whereupon the spirit is clothed with its heavenly habitation. In this Jewish form the apostle has expressed the contents of his Christian hope respecting the blessed

¹ In Phil. iii. 11, however, the apostle writes: "If by any means I may attain unto the resurrection from the dead" (*εἰς τὴν ἐξανάστασιν τὴν ἐκ νεκρῶν*). The phrase refers to the resurrection of believers, elsewhere expressed by *ἀνάστασις [τῶν] νεκρῶν*, but this resurrection is here mystically conceived of as participation in the resurrection of Christ (*cf. v. 10*), and is thus naturally described in the terms which are regularly applied to Christ's resurrection.

and perfect life. He has not touched upon the numerous questions which speculation suggests. These questions did not concern him. His interest in the subject was entirely religious and practical. It was enough for him to know that Christ was the guaranty of a perfected life to come, that the believer should triumph over death, and attain his complete salvation in the fellowship and likeness of Christ.

Did Paul, then, believe in an intermediate state? His views of the resurrection as a rising from the underworld and as a definite future event, would seem to involve the idea of a middle state. Yet he has developed no doctrine on that subject. Perhaps his neglect of it may have been due to his expectation that the parousia was near. On such a view the significance of an intermediate state would be greatly reduced. Against the supposition that Paul believed in such a state between death and resurrection, may be urged the fact that he describes Christians as entering at death into immediate fellowship with Christ (2 Cor. v. 6-8; Phil. i. 23). How is this idea of perfected blessedness at death to be adjusted to the idea that the resurrection is a future eschatological event occurring in connection with the Lord's second coming? The apostle has furnished us with no means of answering this question. If we solve the problem by making the resurrection a process, or by supposing that an imperfect preliminary embodiment which is, perhaps, subject to a development, is given at death, we go quite beyond Paul. Some such supposition, however, seems necessary if the two conceptions in question are to be adjusted at all.

Paul does not hold the conception of two resurrections, that of believers, and that of the rest of mankind, separated by a millennium or other period. The words: "The dead in Christ shall rise *first*" (1 Thess. iv. 16), stand over against the words: "*Then* we that are alive shall be caught up" (v. 17). The correlatives *πρῶτον* and *ἔπειτα* here refer to the rising of the dead in Christ as a *first* event, to be followed *next* by the translation of believers, and contain no reference to a second resurrection. Some

find the idea of two resurrections in the words: "Christ the first-fruits; then they that are Christ's at his coming. Then cometh the end," etc. (1 Cor. xv. 23, 24), that is, the end of *the resurrection*, that is, the resurrection of non-Christians. But this interpretation is improbable in view of the words which follow and which seem to explain "the end," namely: "When he shall deliver up the kingdom to God, even the Father" (v. 24). "The end" most naturally refers to Christ's consummation of his Kingdom, and denotes the termination of the present world-period, the goal of human history.

Whether Paul held that the resurrection will be universal or not is a difficult and disputed question. In Acts xxiv. 15 he is described as asserting "a resurrection both of the just and unjust." In his epistles, however, he nowhere speaks of a resurrection of all mankind, unless he does so in the passages just noticed. The words: "As in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22), can hardly be appealed to in support of the absolute universality of the resurrection, since the context and drift of the whole argument naturally limit "all," in its concrete application, to those who are in living fellowship with Christ. Moreover, the whole argument for the resurrection, in 1 Cor. xv., is based upon mystic union with Christ as its ground and guaranty, and would be inapplicable to unbelievers. Such are the facts of the case. What is the natural inference from the facts? Those who argue from the silence of the epistles respecting the resurrection of unbelievers and from the applicability of his arguments to Christians only, may be referred to Acts xxiv. 15, and to the fact that, according to Paul, all men are to be judged (1 Cor. vi. 2; xi. 32), and that Paul regards the judgment as preceded by and presupposing resurrection. Moreover, the argument of 1 Cor. xv., which was addressed to Christians, may have been constructed in view of a special situation, and may not have represented the only ground on which Paul would have affirmed belief in the resurrection. On the whole, it is probable that he assumed the resurrection of all men,

though in some different sense and with different accompaniments and conditions, in the case of the righteous and in that of the wicked respectively.

All men are amenable to the final judgment. The work of Christians shall be tested and approved or rejected, but even if the work is burned up in the fire of the judgment, the persons shall be saved, but as if by escaping through the flames which consume their misdirected life-work (1 Cor. iii. 14, 15). "We shall all (that is, all Christians) stand before the judgement-seat of Christ. Each of us shall give account of himself to God" (Rom. xiv. 10, 12). But in the day of judgment God will render to all men according to their works (Rom. ii. 5-9). The apostle here seems to describe the judgment in strictly legal terms, and to represent its awards as bestowed according to the works of men (2 Cor. v. 10). How can such a conception be harmonized with the doctrine that God deals generously with the obedient and trustful. If equivalence to one's deeds is the principle of award in the judgment, what becomes of the doctrine of grace? Various answers have been proposed for this difficulty. It has been held that the correlatives, faith and works, and grace and debt, express theoretic contrasts which are resolved in application to life and character. Some have said that Paul's doctrine of judgment remained Jewish, and was never assimilated to his doctrine of grace. It is certain that Paul has expressed his doctrine of judgment in Jewish, rather than in evangelical, terms. But the suggestion of Weiss, that the equivalence between the awards and the deeds done "is not to be regarded in the rigid judicial sense, but as the natural correspondence of harvest and seed-time" (Gal. vi. 7, 8),¹ seems to me very pertinent. The Christian's "deeds" are not regarded by Paul as legal "works" of merit, but as deeds and services which, as inwardly inspired by the Spirit, naturally flow from the Christian life. It is no more necessary to separate Paul's doctrine of judgment from his gospel of grace and faith than it is to read his doctrine of salvation in juridical

¹ *Bibl. Theol.* § 98, d.

terms alone, because of his doctrine of justification. For some reason Paul did not carry over the terms of his doctrine of grace and apply them to the subject of final judgment. But it is impossible that he could have conceived of the principle of equivalence as having the same application, in the judgment, to the believer and to the unbeliever. For the former whom God has graciously accepted and forgiven there is "no condemnation," either here or hereafter. His references to the judgment must be read in the light of his central doctrine of gracious forgiveness.

The order of the events which we have studied, as Paul conceives it, is, the parousia, the resurrection, and the judgment. These issue in the final consummation of the Messianic Kingdom. Then Christ, after vanquishing all enemies, will surrender to God his mediatorial Kingdom, that God may be all in all (1 Cor. xv. 24-28; Col. i. 20; Phil. ii. 10, 11). The apostle is confident of the victory of Christ over all opposing powers. Does he conceive this victory as involving the voluntary submission of all, that is, universal restoration to holiness, or does the supposition of a reduction of all foes to impotence, even should they remain foes, satisfy the apostle's language? Paul's strong expressions concerning the triumph of Christ must be understood in the light of his system as a whole. Taken in isolation such phrases as: "In Christ shall all be made alive" (1 Cor. xv. 22), and, "that God may be all in all" (v. 28; cf. Eph. i. 10), strongly suggest universal restoration. But the former doubtless refers to resurrection and how can "all" be raised "in Christ" unless they first be joined to Christ by the union of faith and love? In the second phrase (*ὁ θεὸς τὰ πάντα ἐν πᾶσιν*), the word *πᾶσιν*, whether taken as masculine or neuter, cannot well be understood as more comprehensive than the "all things" which have just been mentioned as ruled over by the Son. All shall bow to Christ (Phil. ii. 10), but the apostle does not say that all shall willingly and obediently bow to him. He certainly does not conceive that, at the judgment, all will have received Christ, but that there will then be those who "are factious and obey

not the truth, but obey unrighteousness" to whom God will render "wrath and indignation, tribulation and anguish" (Rom. ii. 8, 9).¹

The apostle's eschatology was the projection of Christian hope into the life beyond. The form of this hope was not a little affected by the views of the future life in which he had been trained. Paul was certain that God would judge the world in righteousness (Acts xvii. 31) and that a blessed and perfected life awaited the Christian. His language cannot be made to yield any definite and complete eschatological programme. The elements of his teaching are not coördinated into a scheme of doctrine. It is only by making the most generous inferences from his language that any of the modern eschatological systems can be derived from his teaching. On this subject, as on all others, he wrote, not with a view to satisfying speculative thought, but with the hope of fostering and strengthening the Christian faith and hope.

¹ On "Alleged Pauline Universalism" see Note C to Lecture IX. in Orr's *Christian View of God and the World*.

PART V

THE THEOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

WITH respect to the historical problems which concern the Epistle to the Hebrews there is but a single point on which modern critics are substantially agreed, and that is the rather barren negative conclusion that the epistle was not written by the apostle Paul. This result is the less satisfying because there is no cogent reason known to us why it should ever have been regarded as Pauline. It does not claim to have been written by Paul, and the diction, style, and mode of argument are so widely different from Paul's as to furnish almost a demonstration that the epistle is the work of some other hand. Little, if any, progress, however, has been made in modern times towards a positive view respecting its authorship. Criticism is still compelled to acquiesce in the ancient opinion of Origen, as reported in Eusebius.¹

The most plausible conjectures respecting the authorship are those of Tertullian and Luther, the former of whom assigned the epistle to Barnabas,² the latter to Apollos. Either of these suppositions would fairly well

¹ "Who it was that really wrote the epistle, God only knows." *Ecc. Hist.* Bk. VI. ch. xxv.

² "For there is extant an epistle of Barnabas, inscribed to the Hebrews, a man of such authority that Paul has placed him next to himself in the same course of abstinence" (1 Cor. ix. 6). *De Pudicitia*, ch. xx.

account for the phenomena of the epistle. As a prominent member of the Jerusalem Church and a disciple of the primitive apostles (*cf.* ii. 3), Barnabas might naturally write to his fellow-believers in Palestine to warn them against lapsing back into Judaism. Moreover, as a Hellenist from Cyprus, Barnabas might be supposed to possess the requisite literary qualifications for writing such an epistle, and as a Levite he might, not unnaturally, have the familiarity with the details of the Levitical worship and the keen interest in it which the epistle so frequently displays.¹ On the other hand, it is strange that if Barnabas, a man of apostolic rank and influence (Acts xiv. 4, 14), had been the writer, his name should not have been given to the epistle, or, at any rate, preserved in connection with it from the beginning. Moreover, we have no evidence that Barnabas possessed the Alexandrian culture which is revealed in the epistle. The principal consideration in favor of Apollos is that he is described in the Acts as a cultured and rhetorical Alexandrian, who was well versed in the Greek Old Testament.² This fact might account for the elaborate style, the Alexandrian cast, the kinship with Philo and the Book of Wisdom, and the copious use of the Septuagint in the epistle, while the fact that Apollos had come under the influence of Paul might be regarded as explaining its kinship to Paul's thought.³ On the other hand, Apollos was not a disciple of the primitive apostles, as the author of Hebrews seems to have been (ii. 3). The argument carries us only thus far: The author, if not Apollos, was some such a man as Apollos was; he was a literary Hellenist, who was familiar with the philosophical ideas which were current at Alexandria and practised in the argumentative use of the Septuagint.

¹ Among the modern scholars who favor the Barnabas hypothesis may be mentioned Renan, Ritschl, Weiss, and Salmon.

² Acts xviii. 24 *sq.*; *cf.* 1 Cor. ii. 1-5, where Paul seems to be contrasting his own plain and straightforward style with the more rhetorical and speculative method of Apollos.

³ Among the modern scholars who have adopted this view are Bleek, De Wette, Lünemann, Alford, and Farrar.

Respecting the nationality and location of the persons addressed, and the date of writing, scholars are still much divided. The common view is that the readers were Jewish Christians. Some, however, hold¹ that they were, at least in part, converted Jewish proselytes, and that the writer warns against a relapse into heathenism (*e.g.* in iii. 12; vi. 2; xiii. 9) as well as against a reversion to Judaism. The title, "To the Hebrews," cannot greatly help us here, since, although ancient, it is not original. The Alexandrian tone of the letter supplies but a slender basis for the view that it was addressed to Alexandria—the more so since we have no evidence that at Alexandria, where the epistle was so highly valued, anything was known of that city as being its original destination. A widely prevalent view at present—especially among the representatives of the German liberal school—is that the epistle was written to Rome. It is thought that the allusions to the persecutions of the readers (x. 32, 33; xii. 1–13) tally with the history of Roman persecutions under Nero and Domitian respectively, and that the allegorizing and typical method of interpretation found in the Epistle of Clement of Rome may have been derived from Hebrews, since Clement betrays a special fondness for this epistle. The fact that greetings are sent to the readers by the Italian Christians (xiii. 24) is also thought to point in the same direction. This theory is sometimes associated with the view that the Roman church was predominantly Jewish—an opinion which seems to me decidedly contrary to the evidence furnished by the Epistle to the Romans.² More commonly, however, those who now regard Rome as the destination of the letter hold that it was not addressed to Jewish Christians at all, but to Christians in general.³

¹ So Weizsäcker, von Soden, Pfeiderer.

² The view that our epistle was addressed to Rome is held by Pfeiderer, von Soden, Holtzmann, Jülicher, and McGiffert. Harnack and Ménégos say that it is impossible to determine where the persons addressed resided.

³ "The inscription 'To the Hebrews' is only the unhappy conjecture of a later time." Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, II. 157 (orig. p. 490). "It

The more common view has been that the letter was written to Palestinian or Syrian Jewish Christians.¹ The numerous and detailed references to the Jewish temple-worship, the apparent reference to the readers as hearers of the primitive apostles (ii. 3), the allusion to the long time which had elapsed since their conversion (v. 12), and the fact that the whole burden of the letter is: Do not go back to the ritual law and the sacrificial worship, are among the reasons for this theory.² This view is not without difficulties. We should hardly expect to hear the dependent Palestinian Christians credited with such liberality and generosity as the author ascribes to his readers (vi. 10); yet the poor may be generous. The peculiar use which the author makes of the Septuagint may not have been perfectly adapted to Hebrew readers, but if he was trained in the Greek Bible it would be perfectly natural for him. All things considered, I hold this "traditional" opinion to be the best supported.

Closely connected with the question of destination is the question of date. Those who hold that the letter was addressed to the Christians of Rome commonly place it within the reign of Domitian (81-96).³ The more common view is that the epistle was written during the years 65-70.⁴ The numerous references in the present tense to is extremely unlikely that the epistle was addressed to Jewish Christians at all." McGiffert, *Apostolic Age*, p. 465.

¹ "To one of these great Syrian churches, perhaps to Antioch itself, I conceive the epistle to have been addressed; for there alone existed flourishing Christian churches, founded by the earliest missionaries of the gospel, animated with Jewish sympathies, full of interest in the Mosaic worship, and glorying in the name of Hebrews, who nevertheless spoke the Greek language, used the Greek version of the Scriptures, and numbered amongst their members those who had, like the author, combined the highest advantages of Greek culture with careful study of the Old Testament, and especially of the sacrificial law." Rendall, *Theology of the Hebrew Christians*, p. 69.

² This opinion is defended by Bleek, Weiss, Godet, Westcott, Hort, Bruce, and Beyschlag. Ménégóz holds that the epistle was written to Jewish Christians, but whether living in Rome, Palestine, or the Diaspora, cannot be determined.

³ So Holtzmann, Pfeiderer, Jülicher, Harnack, McGiffert. Harnack, however, says that the epistle may be earlier than the reign of Domitian.

⁴ So Weiss, Beyschlag, Sanday, Farrar, Ménégóz.

the temple-worship naturally imply that the temple was still standing at the time of writing. The whole character and scope of the argument against a reversion, on the part of the Christians, to the Levitical cultus seem to assume that the sacrificial system was a present reality and exerted a powerful attractive force upon the minds of the readers. To these considerations it is hardly a sufficient answer to say that the references to the temple services are made solely on account of their significance, and therefore do not imply the temple's existence at the time.

Although I hold to the earlier date and to the Palestinian, or Syrian, destination of our epistle, a pronounced view on these points is in no way essential to my present task. The doctrinal ideas of the epistle, and their relation to Paulinism on the one hand, and to Alexandrianism on the other, may be studied and determined independently of one's theory on these difficult and disputed points.

The aim of the epistle is to induce the readers to remain steadfast in their adherence to Christ. The burden of all the author's arguments and appeals is: Do not apostatize. The author fortifies his exhortation by an elaborate series of arguments designed to prove that the gospel is more perfect than Judaism. He first dwells on the superiority of Christ to the angels who (according to the Septuagint and Jewish tradition) introduced the legal system (chs. i., ii.); then upon his superiority to Moses, the great law-giver (chs. iii., iv.). He then enters upon the most elaborate argument of the epistle to show that Christ's priesthood is superior to the Old Testament priesthood. The chief points of the argument are that Christ is a priest after a higher order (that of Melchizedek) than the Aaronic priests; that unlike them he ministers in the upper, heavenly sanctuary, the immediate presence of God; and that he is connected with a better covenant than that which God made with the Jewish people. These points are enforced with appropriate exhortations to fidelity (chs. v.-xii.). The letter closes with sundry advices and appeals (ch. xiii.).

The epistle betrays a general kinship to Paulinism. There is the same eagerness to prevent the readers from going back to Judaism which we find in Galatians — the same intense conviction of the defects of the Old Testament system, and of the completeness of the gospel, which Paul so frequently asserts. With Paul our author regards the old covenant as divine, but as having served its providential purpose and as having been superseded by the gospel. But these resemblances are, after all, very general. In their modes of thought and methods of argument the two writers differ widely. When Paul speaks of the law he refers primarily to its ethical content and requirements. To this writer the law means the Levitical cultus. The apostle's philosophy of the law as deepening the consciousness of sin and making transgressions abound, is wholly wanting in Hebrews. The reasons why the law cannot save are quite different in the two writers. With Paul the law cannot save because of the moral impotence of sinful man to keep it; with our author its failure is due to the inefficiency of animal sacrifices to cleanse the conscience. In Hebrews the law and the gospel are related as shadow and substance, promise and fulfilment; the contrariety of the two in principle and effect is less strongly emphasized than by Paul. Our author's conception of faith is less mystical than Paul's. With the former, faith is constancy, fidelity, heroic belief in the unseen and the apparently improbable; with Paul it is life-union with Christ. Of the import of circumcision, the opposition between flesh and spirit, Christ's endurance of the curse of the law, justification by faith, and the call of the Gentiles, our author says nothing. The likeness and differences to which I can only refer here will be more particularly noted in the exposition.¹

(The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews was strongly imbued with Platonic and Alexandrian thought. The contrast between the lower world of shadows and semblances and the heavenly world of abiding realities which

¹ For an instructive study of our author's relation to Paulinism, see Ménégoz, *La Théologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, ch. vi. § 2.

is so prominent in the epistle, reminds one of the distinction between the sensible and the intelligible world which Philo had derived from Plato. Many of our author's peculiar words, phrases, and allusions, such as the cutting word of God and the references to Melchizedek, are, doubtless, echoes of Philo. Most clearly of all do the allegorizing exegesis of our author and his exclusive use of the Septuagint betray his Alexandrian education. These peculiarities seem to me to lend a special interest and charm to his exposition of Christianity. Since we have interpretations of the gospel, largely in terms of Judaism, from the primitive disciples, James and Peter, and an elaborate exposition and defence of it from the bold and independent mind of the converted legalist, Paul, it is a matter of no small interest that we have also a rendering of Christianity in terms of the Alexandrian philosophy of religion. Yet these various tongues speak essentially one message.¹

¹ In addition to the elaborate biblico-theological treatises of Riehm and Ménégoz on this epistle, I would particularly commend to the student a series of twenty papers by Professor A. B. Bruce, in the Third (Vols. VII.-X.) and Fourth Series (Vols. I., II.) of *The Expositor*. These articles take up the epistle part by part, and graphically portray its theological and practical contents.

CHAPTER II

THE OLD AND THE NEW COVENANT

THE author's main purpose is, as we have seen, to persuade his readers to remain faithful to Christ. In the effort to attain that end it is necessary for him to establish the superiority of the gospel to the law. This he does by exhibiting a series of contrasts between the two systems. The comparison is chiefly made between Christ, on the one hand, and the angels, Moses, and the Aaronic priests, on the other. The author develops his argument both on its negative and on its positive side. He pictures the defects of the Mosaic system and dwells upon the superlative excellences of Christ and his work of salvation. It will be convenient, for purposes of analysis, to begin by deducing from the epistle the writer's doctrine of the old covenant.

Like the apostle Paul, our author regards the Old Testament system as divine in its origin. God made the old covenant with the fathers in the days of their deliverance from Egypt, although it was not a faultless covenant (viii. 7-9). It was the voice of God which, in the olden time, spoke through the prophets, although it gave but a partial disclosure of the divine will and purpose (i. 1). We have seen that, for our author, the sacrificial system was the centre and soul of Judaism. This he regards as divinely established. The plan of the tabernacle and the arrangements for its worship were divinely revealed and sanctioned (viii. 5; ix. 1 *sq.*). Jewish history presents a long list of believers who have been the agents of God in the accomplishment of his purposes (xi.). Moses was God's faithful servant in the regulation and administration of his household, the Old Testament theocracy (iii.

2-5). With awe-inspiring portents the law was divinely promulgated on Sinai (xii. 18-21) and solemnly ratified by the covenant-sacrifice (ix. 18-21).

This teaching resembles that of Paul, who declares that the law, in itself, is "holy, righteous, and good" (Rom. vii. 12), and that it is "glorious," although its splendor pales before the surpassing glory of the gospel (2 Cor. iii. 7-11). The points of likeness and of difference can be best exhibited by ascertaining what were the specific defects of the Old Testament religion, as our author views the matter, and what the grounds of its failure to give men a secure sense of pardon and of peace with God.

The opening words of the epistle — *πολυμερῶς καὶ πολυτρόπως πάλαι ὁ θεὸς λαλήσας* — "in many parts and in many ways," etc. (i. 1), suggest the relative inferiority of the earlier revelation. It was given fragmentarily, by a series of providential dispensations, and was communicated to men by a great variety of means and methods. It lacked the marks of complete unity and finality which belong to the self-disclosure which God has made in his Son. Moreover, it was introduced by angels whose rank is far beneath that of Christ; his is the highest place of authority and dominion at God's right hand (i. 3), while they, the ministering servants of his people (i. 14), are bidden to render him homage (i. 6).

Our author here avails himself of an idea which meets us in but two other places in the New Testament (Acts vii. 53; Gal. iii. 19) — that of angelic mediation in the giving of the law. This idea is not found in the Hebrew Old Testament, but is probably derived from the Septuagint rendering of Deut. xxxiii. 2: "The Lord came from the myriads of holy ones," that is, issued forth from his heavenly dwelling-place, from the midst of the great company of angels which surrounded his throne. Here the Seventy introduced the very loose rendering, *ἄγγελοι μετ' αὐτοῦ*. This phrase readily lent itself to the support of the idea which was so current in the later Judaism, that the angels were the agents by whom the law was introduced into the world. In the speech of Stephen (Acts vii. 53)

this mediation of angels is regarded as heightening the dignity of the law and as emphasizing the guilt of those who transgress it, while by Paul (Gal. iii. 19) it is used to show that the law was not given immediately and directly by God, and was, therefore, inferior to the gospel promise, which was given without mediation. Our author makes a similar use of the idea and dwells upon it at length. The angels who introduced the legal system are inferior in rank to the Son who is the author and theme of the gospel. Jehovah addresses him as his Son *par éminence* (i. 4, 5), and they are bidden to do obeisance to him when he comes in glory to judgment (i. 6).¹ The angels may, indeed, be likened to the swift and subtle powers of nature (i. 7), but to the Son is applied the highest title of divine majesty (*ὁ θεός*), and to him is ascribed supreme and universal dominion (i. 8 *sq.*). To no angel has Jehovah ever said: "Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool" (i. 13); it is only the Messiah who is so addressed. To angels, on the contrary, is assigned the relatively humble position of acting as servants and attendants upon those who become partakers in the Messianic salvation (i. 14). Since, then, the agents by whom the old system was introduced are so inferior in nature, rank, and office to the Messiah, it follows that the system must be less complete as a revelation of God and less adequate to meet the needs of mankind. Our author's practical conclusion is: Since we possess a fuller revelation, we have a heavier responsibility; for if God severely punished disobedience to the earlier and less perfect legislation, with what strictness will he treat those who disregard the clearer light of the gospel (ii. 1, 2). We have here an example of the characteristic procedure of our author. Each point which is established by argument is enforced by an exhortation. Here, accordingly, the order of thought is: Since the gospel is so superior to the law in the dig-

¹ I refer this "bringing in of the first-born into the world" to the parousia, and not to the incarnation, resurrection, or exaltation. The reference to the second advent is favored by most modern interpreters, *e.g.* Riehm, Moll, Lünemann, Weiss, Davidson.

nity and authority of its introducing agent, do you remain faithful to him; in a word, do not apostatize.

The author's second argument, designed to show the superiority of the new covenant to the old, is that Christ takes rank above Moses, the great lawgiver of the Old Testament system (iii.). In this argument, however, even less than in the previous one, does the writer exhibit his real philosophy of Old Testament revelation. In both these arguments the primary intention is to exalt the person of Christ, and the defects of the Jewish religion, as contrasted with Christianity, are only hinted at so far as they are involved in the contrast between the rank of Christ and that of the angels and of Moses. Further consideration of these passages, therefore, may best be deferred until we come to the study of our author's doctrine of the person of Christ.

Another mark of imperfection which belonged to the old covenant was that its priests were weak and sinful men who needed to offer sacrifices for their own sins as well as for those of the people. The author graphically pictures the Old Testament priests as perpetually performing the round of animal offerings; and how ineffectual it all is! "Weak and unprofitable" is his verdict on Leviticalism (vii. 18). Everything about it is faulty. Its priests are erring men (vii. 28); its offerings are mere dumb animals, whose blood can never cleanse from sin (x. 4); the constant repetition of the sacrifices shows how unavailing they are, for if they were effectual their work would remain (x. 1, 11.). They can, indeed, keep alive the consciousness of sin (x. 3), but they are powerless to purge it away; they are mere outward symbolic transactions, useful only as pictorial representations of certain truths until the day of fuller revelation (ix. 10). Hence the sacrificial system cannot be final. It is external and symbolic, and, therefore, preparatory and provisional. It necessitates and prophesies a more adequate system. Its representatives, the prophets, discerned its inadequacy. They spoke of a new covenant, thereby implying that the system then existing was old, and if old, then destined

soon to pass away (viii. 13). Thus Judaism, conscious of its own imperfection, foretold its own abrogation. "I will make a new covenant," is Jehovah's word to Israel (viii. 8).

Thus it appears that our author holds essentially the doctrine of Jesus concerning the fulfilment of the law and the prophets in his own person and work. He is also at one with Paul in regarding the law as a temporary institute designed to serve a providential purpose in preparation for the gospel. But we have already followed him far enough to see that he has quite an original view of the nature and relations of the two systems. For Paul, indeed, the law is a rudimentary system of religion (Gal. iv. 3, 9), as it is for our author (vii. 16, 18). Both emphasize its outward or cosmic character.¹ But the emphasis is widely different in the two cases. The idea is quite differently carried out and applied by the two writers. For Paul the inadequacy of the law is not so much due to any inherent weakness as to its incapacity to enable man to obey the will of God. The law is "weak," but it is weak "through the flesh" (*διὰ τῆς σαρκός*, Rom. viii. 2), that is, unable to overcome the resistance to its demands which is made by the power of sin dwelling in the flesh. Paul would never characterize the law as carnal (*σάρκινος*, vii. 16) or as consisting of "carnal commandments" (*δικαιώματα σαρκός*, ix. 10). For our author, however, the legal system is inherently, and by reason of its external character, weak and unprofitable (vii. 18). It can "make nothing perfect" (v. 19) because it consists of a series of outward and morally ineffectual transactions. It cannot reconcile men to God; it cannot cleanse the heart from sin or give peace to the conscience; it cannot, therefore, accomplish that perfecting (*τελείωσις*, vii. 11) of man, that placing of him in right relations of fellowship and likeness to God, which is the ideal of religion. The difference between our author and Paul at this point is due, as has been mentioned, to the fact

¹ Paul: *τὰ στοιχεῖα τοῦ κόσμου* (Gal. iv. 3). Hebrews: *νόμος ἐντολῆς σαρκίνης* (vii. 16); *δικαιώματα σαρκός* (ix. 10); *τὸ ἅγιον κοσμικόν* (ix. 1).

that the former views the law in its ceremonial, the latter in its ethical, aspects. Paul's doctrine of the law is a corollary of his doctrine of justification by faith; our author's is a corollary of his doctrine of the perfection of Christ's sacrifice. The two views are quite different, but they are not incompatible. The contrast between the two dispensations is most strikingly exhibited under the categories of type and reality, shadow and substance, and the like, which were probably adopted from the vocabulary of Alexandrian philosophy.

According to the conception of our author, the priestly *régime* belongs to the realm of the lower, the external, the pictorial; while the work of Christ belongs to the world of abiding and heavenly realities. The sacrificial rites of Judaism are a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (*ὑπόδειγμα καὶ σκιά τῶν ἐπουρανίων*, viii. 5), the pictured semblances of their spiritual and eternal counterpart which is embodied in the work of Christ. They bear a relation to their archetypes like that of the Mosaic tabernacle in the wilderness to the divine idea which was disclosed to Moses on Mount Sinai (viii. 5). This tabernacle was a "cosmic sanctuary" (*ἅγιον κοσμικόν*, ix. 1), a visible, earthly symbol and representation of the immediate presence of God where Christ is exercising his ministry for our salvation. It was a "parable" (*παραβολή*, ix. 9), or similitude, by which, in the pre-Christian age, certain religious truths were pictured forth. Its various appointments were "copies of the things in the heavens" (ix. 23), and its most holy place is an "antitype of the true" (ix. 24), an imitation of the ideal — heaven itself. The author sums up his argument, under this head, as follows: "For the law having a shadow of good things to come (*σκιά τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν*), not the very image of the things (*οὐκ αὐτὴν τὴν εἰκόνα τῶν πραγμάτων*), can never¹

¹ I follow the reading *δύναται* here, which makes the subject *ὁ νόμος* (so Bleek, Tischendorf, Lünemann, Weiss, Farrar), instead of *δύνανται* (W. and H., R. V.), although the latter is more strongly supported by external evidence. On this reading the subject would be "the priests" understood. The idea is essentially the same in either case.

with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect (τελειῶσαι) them that draw nigh" (x. 1).

What is the nature of this contrast between "shadow" (σκιά) and "image" (εἰκών)? It is to be noticed that three things are here distinguished: the shadow, the image, and the good things (ἀγαθά). The law has the shadow (σκιά); the gospel has the very image (εἰκών) of the good things. The two systems are thus contrasted as containing, respectively, a less and a more adequate embodiment of divine truth. Σκιά means a meagre outline; εἰκών an exact representation. A rude pencil sketch of a man, or his shadow cast on a wall, would be a σκιά, while a lifelike statue representing him would be an εἰκών.¹ Both are relative terms, and their difference is, primarily, one of degree, though it may pass, as it does here, into a difference in kind. In the view of some the contrast is derived from art.² In any case, it represents the priestly system as a rude and imperfect expression of heavenly truth, — outward, symbolic, pictorial, — while it describes the gospel as adequately exhibiting to us the true nature of the divine realities. These realities constitute, for our author, the invisible, intelligible world. We cannot directly contemplate them; we know them as they are disclosed to us; the law vaguely represented them; the gospel adequately discloses them. We see, then, that the contrast here drawn is not exactly that between shadow and substance, although those terms loosely express its practical import; it is a contrast between two widely differing representations of the "substance," the heavenly "good things," of grace and salvation.

¹ "The terms σκιά and εἰκών are fitly chosen to convey an idea of the comparative merits of Leviticalism and Christianity. A σκιά is a *rude* outline; an εἰκών is an *exact* image. But a shadow is, further, a likeness separate from the body which casts it; whereas the image denoted by εἰκών is inseparable from the substance, and here, without doubt, stands for it." Bruce, *The Expositor*, Fourth Series, Vol. I. p. 437.

² So, e.g. Westcott: "The word (σκιά) contains one of the very few illustrations which are taken from art in the New Testament. The 'shadow' is the dark, outlined figure cast by the object, contrasted with the complete representation (εἰκών) produced by the help of color and solid mass." *The Epistle to the Hebrews*, p. 304.

We have now reviewed the principal terms in which our author presents his view of the relation of the two covenants. His doctrine of the superiority of the new to the old is, to us, very familiar and commonplace. But we must remember that he was writing to people who were still enamoured of the ancient order and who were still disposed to sew the gospel of Christ as a patch upon the old garment of Judaism. His arguments are not needful to convince us; indeed, many of them would have little convincing force for the modern mind. But for the mind of his age they must have been forcible. The demonstration from the Old Testament that a higher dignity is there accorded to the Messiah than to the angels or Moses, the description of the wearisome round of ritual sacrifices, — altars dripping with blood, oft-repeated atonements made by sinful priests, which still left the conscience burdened with guilt, — and the contrast of all this with Christ's willing and obedient sacrifice of his holy life, must have produced a powerful effect on the minds of the readers. And justly so; for, making all due allowance for the peculiar form of the author's interpretations and arguments, his appeal is marked by a dignity, eloquence, and lofty spiritual tone which must have given it a persuasive power for those to whom it was addressed, and which, ever since, have made this anonymous writing, of the historical setting and relations of which we know so little, one of the literary treasures of the Church.

CHAPTER III

THE MEDIATOR

THE two most elaborate biblico-theological treatises on our epistle — those of Riehm and Ménégoz — reach diametrically opposite conclusions concerning its doctrine of the person of Christ. Riehm holds that the epistle ascribes divine attributes to the Son and explicitly teaches his preëxistence and eternity;¹ while Ménégoz holds that the author regards him, not as divine, but as a unique, created being, who became incarnate by natural generation and achieved perfection by discipline and suffering — a view closely resembling the doctrine of Arianism.² We must make our decision between these two interpretations by carefully reviewing the relevant passages.

The author's doctrine of the person of the Mediator is developed quite incidentally; but it is not on that account less fundamental to his whole view of the new covenant. In the effort to secure the practical end which his epistle contemplates, he begins by exalting before his readers the incomparable person who is "the captain³ of their salvation" (ii. 10). But very soon the purpose of his argument requires him to dwell on the humiliation of the Son and his perfect contact and sympathy with men. Let us

¹ *Lehrbegriff des Hebraerbriefts*, p. 269 sq.

² *La Théologie de l'Épître aux Hébreux*, ch. i.

³ It is a disputed question whether ἀρχηγός here and in xii. 2 bears its primary meaning, leader or captain, or its secondary meaning, author or originator. I prefer the former meaning in both cases. R. V. renders "author" in both passages; A. V., "captain" in ii. 10 and "author" in xii. 2 — renderings which Thayer's Lexicon exactly reverses. Similar ambiguity attends the meaning of the word in the phrases, ἀρχηγός τῆς ζωῆς and ἀρχηγός καὶ σωτήρ in Acts iii. 15, and v. 31 respectively, the only other places where the word occurs in the New Testament. Here, too, the word seems to have its primary meaning (so R. V. and A. V.).

start from this point in the study of his doctrine and seek to determine to what length the author carries out the correlative idea — that of the Son's exaltation and dignity.

The writer is well acquainted with the experiences of the historical person Jesus, who lived, sorrowed, and suffered here on earth. He knows to what tribe he belonged (vii. 14), that he wrought miracles (ii. 3, 4), passed through a course of temptation, and was rejected and ill treated at the hands of sinful men (xii. 3). The scenes of Gethsemane and Golgotha are vividly present to his imagination (v. 7; xii. 2; xiii. 12). The resurrection and glorification of Christ are to him familiar truths (xiii. 20; i. 2, 3). He emphasizes the sinlessness of Jesus and its relation to his saving work when he says: "For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (vii. 26).

Our author lays stress upon the genuine humanity of Jesus. He assumed human flesh and blood (ii. 14) and was in all things made like to his brethren (ii. 17). He made common cause with the men whom he had come to save; he confessed himself their brother and, along with them, acknowledged his dependence upon God (ii. 11-13). He had a genuine human development. He grew and learned in consequence of his earthly experience (v. 8). His life was characterized by such human virtues as obedience (x. 7), humility (v. 5), piety (v. 7), and fidelity (iii. 2). The writer does not hesitate to represent him as the chief example of faith in God. When the Messiah calls men his brethren, he announces his perfect community of life with them as consisting, in part, in the common trust which he and they must exercise in God (ii. 13). The author calls upon his readers to follow after the "leader and perfecter" of their faith,¹ who has illustrated his trust in God and his pursuit of his heavenly vocation in a life which is the perfect pattern of fidelity (xii. 2, 3). Thus for our author Christ is represented not only as the object of faith, but as the perfect example of it. By his faithful performance of his divinely appointed task

¹ See previous note on ἀρχηγός.

and by the discipline of his sufferings he was perfected for his redeeming work (v. 8, 9). He experienced a normal, moral development in which through temptation and discipline he achieved a positive perfection of life. This development was, at every stage, sinless; but it moved forward from the imperfections or innocence which belongs to the earlier stages of a moral career, to that completeness which can only be achieved by the processes of testing and struggle. The life of Jesus on earth was genuinely human, but sinless; its progress was not, as in the case of other men, a gradual elimination of the evil, but a constantly increasing realization of the good.

But the perfecting of Jesus for his work by means of his earthly experience does not express the whole of the author's thought respecting his career as Messiah and Saviour. He stooped to become "a little lower than the angels" (ii. 9), and humbled himself to endure the shameful death of the cross; but this, in turn, proved to be the way to his heavenly glory and crown. "Because of the suffering of death we behold him crowned with glory and honor" (ii. 9).¹ His exaltation to heavenly power and glory is strikingly emphasized. God has appointed him heir of all things (i. 2)² and has assigned to him the seat of honor and authority in his Kingdom (i. 3). The angels are bidden to worship him when he shall come again (i. 6). His victory is assured by Jehovah's decree:

"Sit thou on my right hand,
Till I make thine enemies thy footstool" (i. 13).

¹ With most modern interpreters I connect *διὰ τὸ πάθημα κ.τ.λ.* with *ἐστεφανωμένον* (R. V.), instead of with *ἠλαττωμένον* (A. V.). Bruce (*Expositor*, Third Series, Vol. VIII., p. 372 sq.) gives to *διὰ* here the force of *eis*, and understands the passage to mean that Jesus was crowned for death, that is, accorded the high honor and privilege of dying for the salvation of men.

² In the view of many scholars this verse refers to God's pre-temporal purpose, and not to the glorification of Christ (so Bengel, Bleek, Westcott, Lünemann, and Dwight). I have assigned to it a historical sense like that of the phrase: "Sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high," in the next verse (so Tholuck, Delitzsch, DeWette, Moll, Riehm, Kendrick, and Davidson). If the former interpretation be adopted, the passage would simply fall into the category of those which refer to the preëxistence of the Son, to be considered later.

To his authority has been subjected the new order of things in the coming age of Messianic blessedness (ii. 5), and nothing has been left outside the scope of this subjection (ii. 8). He is not, like Moses, a mere servant in God's household (iii. 2, 5); but as a son he has been set over the house with full authority, that is, made supreme in God's Kingdom on earth (iii. 6).

Our author dwells with special fondness upon the idea that Christ, now exalted to heaven, is perpetually ministering on behalf of his people on earth. He has passed through the heavens to the immediate presence of God where he now fulfils, for our salvation, his high priestly office (iv. 14). This lofty position he did not assume, but God appointed him to it (v. 5). It belongs to him by virtue of his own inherent, indissoluble life (vii. 16). Hence his high office is perpetual and changeless: "Because he abideth for ever, he hath his priesthood unchangeable" (vii. 24). The solemn oath of God has appointed to this function him who is "a Son, perfected for evermore" (vii. 28). In heaven he continues to exercise the functions of a faithful helper and heavenly friend to his people, "the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever" (xiii. 8).

Such is the writer's conception of the position to which Christ was elevated after the completion of his work on earth. The question now arises: Is there in the epistle any corresponding idea of the Son's dignity and glory previous to his earthly manifestation? Did Christ come from heaven to earth as well as ascend from earth to heaven? We can best answer the question by reviewing again the earlier chapters of the epistle.

In contrast to the prophets, through whom God revealed himself in olden time, stands one who is a Son (i. 2). The word is used without the article in order to accentuate the superior character and dignity of Christ as compared with the prophets: "One who is no less than a Son" (*cf.* vii. 28). Of this Son the writer makes two affirmations: first, the one already noticed, that God has made him "heir of all things," Lord of the world (*cf.* i. 8; ii. 5); and, second, that through his agency or mediation

God created the world.¹ The logical relation of the two affirmations, if the first one is understood as referring to Christ's glorification, is that his installation in his world dominion rests upon his original relation to creation; if, on the other hand, *ὃν ἔθηκεν κληρονόμον* be referred to God's eternal purpose, the second assertion would rest upon the first.² In either case Christ is described as the coefficient agent of God in creation.

The three following phrases (i. 3) continue the description of this Son whose pre-mundane existence has already been affirmed. They must all refer, therefore, to what he inherently and essentially is. He is the effulgence or outshining of God's glory (*ἀπαύγασμα τῆς δόξης*), the impress of his substance (*χαρακτήρ τῆς ὑποστάσεως*), and the sustainer of the world (*φέρων τὰ πάντα*) by his all-powerful word. He is one in whom God's glory is perfectly reflected, and in whom his essence is perfectly expressed, and, as such, his will supports the order of the world which he has constituted.³ We have here a striking parallel to Paul's Christology in Colossians, where the readers are described as rescued from the realm of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of God's dear Son, who is the image, the exact counterpart (*εἰκὼν*), of the invisible God, antedating all creation, of which, in the most emphatic way, he is described as the originator and sustainer (Col. i. 15-17). The correspondence of *χαρακτήρ* with *εἰκὼν*, of *ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας* with *ἐν αὐτῷ ἐκτίσθη τὰ πάντα*, and of *φέρων τὰ πάντα* with *τὰ πάντα ἐν αὐτῷ συνέστηκεν* is especially noticeable.

A similar conception of Christ's preëxistence emerges,

¹ Literally "the ages" (*τοὺς αἰῶνας*) here used to denote the contents of time and space, equivalent to *πάντων* (v. 1) and *τὰ πάντα* (v. 3). The same use of *αἰῶνες* is found in xi. 3.

² See note on p. 500.

³ For the discussion of the precise meaning to be attached to *ἀπαύγασμα* and *χαρακτήρ* here, I must refer to the critical commentaries. They are both figurative words, and we should beware of hinging great doctrinal questions too much upon them. For our purpose it is sufficient to note that, taken in connection with their context, they express the unique and incomparable relation of the preëxistent Son of God.

here and there, in the course of the argument. He is the one who built or arranged (*ὁ κατασκευάσας*) the house of God (iii. 3), that is, established the Old Testament system and was the authoritative agent in its development (*cf.* 1 Cor. x. 4). One point in the author's use of Melchizedek as a type of Christ is to emphasize not only the perpetuity of Christ's priesthood, but the eternity of his person. The independence of Melchizedek's priesthood of all human conditions and relations (vii. 3) suggests the still higher character of his saving activity, whose work is based upon his own absolute life (vii. 16). There can hardly be a doubt that the writer means to assert that the mysterious priest-king who, so far as the validity of his office is concerned, has "neither beginning of days nor end of life" (vii. 3), is "made like unto the Son of God" because the Son is regarded as a pre-temporal, eternal Being.¹ We do not, however, find in the epistle the later theological conception of the "eternal generation" of the Son.²

Two other passages remain to be considered. In i. 8 the author quotes Ps. xlv. 7: "Thy throne, O God (*ὁ θεός*; Heb., *Elohim*), is for ever and ever," etc., as being spoken by Jehovah to the Messiah, and in i. 10 he uses in a similar manner Ps. cii. 25 (after the Septuagint): "Thou, Lord (*κύριε*), in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth," etc., which he also understands as addressed to Christ. Interpreters are divided on the question whether *Elohim* in the original refers to an Israelitish king (after the analogy of Ps. lxxxii. 6; *cf.* Jn. x. 34, 35), or to Jehovah. For our purpose it makes no practical difference, since our author knew only the Septuagint whose

¹ So Beyschlag, *N. T. Theol.* II. 308 (Bk. V. ch. iii. § 3), who, however, regards this "higher Christology" as a poetizing personification characteristic of "naive Biblical realism."

² Interpreters are greatly divided as to the reference in *σήμερον γεγέννηκα* in the quotation made in i. 5 and v. 5. It is variously referred to the incarnation, baptism, resurrection, and ascension of Christ, and to eternity. With De Wette, Riehm, and Dwight I hold that the word *σήμερον* is not to be pressed into any definite time-reference in the application of the quotation.

language, including the title $\acute{\omicron}$ $\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, he freely applies to Christ. The second Psalm passage in question clearly refers to Jehovah, although there is no title in the original corresponding to $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ in the Septuagint. Our author's use of the Old Testament, here as elsewhere, disregards the primary sense and historical setting of the passage which he uses. But it is not what Calvin called the *pia deflectio* of Old Testament language from its original meaning by our author, but the application of that language — its meaning *for him* — with which we are now concerned. He must have held a view of Christ's person which made it seem natural to apply to him the titles of $\kappa\acute{\upsilon}\rho\iota\omicron\varsigma$ and $\acute{\omicron}$ $\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$ ¹ — titles with which he was perfectly familiar as designations of supreme Deity. At the same time and in the same connection (i. 9), he distinguishes Christ from God by speaking of his God: "Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee," etc. For our author, therefore, Christ must have been distinguished from God, the *fons et origo* of divinity, but, at the same time, must have been an eternal Being, sharing the divine nature and attributes. His doctrine is, in substance, the same "higher Christology" which we find in Paul and John. Jesus Christ is, in the strict sense, divine, and, at the same time, personally distinct from God, alike in his historic manifestation, his glorified life in heaven, and his eternal preëxistence and activity.

Beyschlag has subjected the Christology of our epistle to the same treatment which he applied to that of Paul. He admits that the author regarded Christ as an eternal person, whose almighty word supports the universe, but holds that he was able to entertain this view only "because his thought, like all the thought of antiquity, was not directed to the idea of personality and its preconditions,"² and that the opinion in question had no basis

¹ No special significance attaches to the use of the article here. The writer quoted the text as he found it in the LXX. In an Alexandrian, like our author, we should rather expect that Christ would be designated by the generic $\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, in distinction from $\acute{\omicron}$ $\theta\epsilon\acute{\omicron}\varsigma$, as in Philo and the prologue of the fourth Gospel (i. 1, 2).

² *N. T. Theol.* II. 313 (Bk. V. ch. iii. § 5).

either in the teaching of Christ himself or in that of the primitive apostles. In fact, Beyschlag finds an insoluble contradiction between the author's description of Jesus' human life and his higher Christology. He regards the latter as having been useful in heightening the appreciation of Christ at the time of writing, but as without value or truth for us. As I am here concerned with the exposition, and not with the defence, of our author's teaching, I will only say concerning Beyschlag's view that it assumes: (1) that the effort of himself and others to explain away the teaching concerning Christ's preëxistence in the Gospels has been successful; (2) that both Paul and John, as well as our author, were led by defective ideas of personality into the mistake of hypostatizing an idea; and (3) that preëxistent glory and a lowly human life in the flesh are mutually exclusive. These are, to say the least, disputable assumptions. For myself, I doubt them, each and all, and, therefore, am not convinced by the argument which rests upon them.

CHAPTER IV

THE HIGH PRIESTHOOD OF CHRIST

OUR author prefaces his discussion of the high priesthood of Christ by a sketch of the essentials of the high priestly office (v. 1-9). These are two: first, the priest who will minister on behalf of men must himself be a man; he must be able to enter with full sympathy into the sins and sorrows of mankind; second, he must not assume his office, but must be divinely appointed to it. Jesus fulfils both these conditions. He can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities" (iv. 15), for he has undergone a truly human experience of suffering and trial by which he himself achieved his moral victory over sin, and was fitted to be the perfect Redeemer (v. 7-9). He fulfils the second condition also, for he did not "glorify himself to be made a high priest," but he who proclaimed him his Son, that is, God, declared him "a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek" (v. 5, 6). But if, in these respects, Christ resembled the Old Testament priests, he also differed from them. They were sinful; he was sinless. They must offer sacrifice for themselves; he makes his offering solely for others. They served in a temporary sanctuary made with hands; he has passed through the skies and now ministers on our behalf in heaven itself, fulfilling an office which is changeless and perpetual.

After the manner of Philo, our author allegorizes the brief history of Melchizedek, the priest-king, as given in Genesis (xiv. 18-20), and draws a parallel between his priesthood and that of Christ (vii. 1-10). He finds a special significance in the name Melchizedek, "king of righteousness," and in the name of his residence, Salem,

meaning "peace." The dignity of his office is shown in the fact that the great patriarch paid tithes to him, as to a superior, and in the further fact that he appears suddenly on the stage of the Old Testament history — a fully authorized priest, as if by some inherent or divine right. Nothing is said of his descent, nor even of his birth or death; he simply stands forth in his priestly character, dependent upon no tribal connection or outward relations whatever. In this absoluteness of his priesthood Melchizedek stands in contrast with the Levitical priests and is "made like unto the Son of God" (vii. 3). Indeed, his office is more directly shown to be superior to theirs. When Abraham paid tithes to him, the whole priestly tribe of Levi did, as it were, pay him honor, because Abraham's act may be regarded as representative and as logically including the homage of his descendants (vii. 9, 10). Since, now, Melchizedek's priesthood is so superior to that of the Aaronic priests, how much more superior must be the priesthood of Christ who is the antitype of the royal priest.

From this general conception of Christ's independent and perpetual priesthood the author now deduces several conclusions (vii. 11 *sq.*). One of these is, that the very fact of the rise of a new priesthood is a proof of the inadequacy of the Levitical system. For if this system could have accomplished that perfecting of man's relations with God which is sought in sacrifice, it would thereby have proved itself sufficient and would have continued in operation. But, as matter of fact, it has been superseded by a priesthood, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. This is proof of its imperfection (vii. 11). Now for our author the priestly cultus is the very centre and soul of the Old Testament religion. Hence he argues that a change in the priesthood involves a change in the whole legal system (vii. 12). With the appearance of the new priest, whose office rests upon his own indissoluble life (vii. 16), the old order disappears, a new way of access to God is opened, and a new hope is born in the hearts of those

who draw nigh to God through this "new and living way" (vii. 19; x. 20).

Another corollary of the perpetuity and independence of Christ's priesthood is that his office is unique and incomparable. In the Old Testament system there were many priests; under the new and better covenant there is but one, and his work is not interrupted by death but is continuous and constant. Hence he can effectually save those who avail themselves of his mediation, since "he ever liveth to make intercession for them" (vii. 23-25). It is, indeed, true that the pure and holy high priest has offered up his sacrifice once for all when he died upon the cross (vii. 27; ix. 26; x. 12); but our author also attributes to him a perpetual priestly activity in heaven on behalf of mankind. This intercession, or appearance on behalf of men (*ἐντυγχάνειν ὑπὲρ αὐτῶν*, vii. 25), is a priestly function. Christ is in the heavens at the right hand of God in the character of a priest (viii. 1). "He abideth a priest continually" (vii. 3). Our author thus combines the conception of Christ's single and final sacrifice on earth with that of a continuous and perpetual atoning work carried forward in the upper sanctuary, the immediate presence of God. The relation between these two conditions he does not define, or even consider. We are left free to harmonize and unify them on the supposition that Christ's saving work, as wrought on earth, is a historical expression of principles and laws which are eternal and perpetually operative in the nature of God. It was "through an eternal spirit" (*διὰ πνεύματος αἰωνίου*, ix. 14),¹ the spirit of eternal love and sacrifice in his own nature, that he offered himself unto God. Traces of this

¹ "This fitly chosen phrase thus makes the one sacrifice of Christ cover with its efficacy all prospective sin. But it does more than that. It is retrospective as well as prospective, and makes the sacrifice valid for the ages going before. For an eternal spirit is independent of time, and gives to acts done through its inspiration validity for all time. In this respect it might be said of Christ, that though he offered himself in historical fact after the world had been in existence for some thousands of years, he offered himself in spirit 'before the foundation of the world.'" Bruce, in *The Expositor*, Fourth Series, Vol. I. p. 159.

conception of "eternal atonement" are found elsewhere in the New Testament, but have been but sparingly recognized in theology.¹

Having thus sketched the salient features of Christ's priesthood and shown its superiority, in the various particulars specified, to the Aaronic priesthood, he pauses to emphasize the chief point in his whole argument, which is, that Christ's saving office is exercised, not in this lower world of time and sense, but in the heavenly world of abiding spiritual realities (viii. 1 *sq.*). Christ is thus lifted above all comparison with those priests who, in their ministrations, deal only with pictures and shadows of the heavenly realities of grace and salvation. He belongs to a higher order—the realm of spiritual and abiding reality. Hence he represents a better covenant through which men may obtain such a secure sense of peace with God as was not possible under the law (viii. 6).

This contrast between the spheres, in which the two priesthoods are exercised, is now more fully elaborated in chapters ix. and x. 1–18. The author dwells upon the structure and arrangement of the cosmic sanctuary (τὸ ἅγιον κοσμικόν, ix. 1). It consisted of two parts, an outer one, called the holy place, and an inner one, called the most holy place, each with its appropriate furnishings (ix. 2–5). Now, in accordance with this construction of the tabernacle, the priests might at all times freely enter the outer court and offer their sacrifices. But the inner court might be entered by the high priest only, and by him but once a year, when he made atonement for his own sins and for those of the people (ix. 6, 7). What now, in our author's view, is the significance of this arrangement? Why was the holy of holies made so inaccessible? The answer is, that it was made so as a divine indication that free approach to the immediate presence of God was not yet permitted under the old covenant, that is, that the perfect system of religion had not yet appeared (ix. 8). Our author thus sees in the seclusion of

¹ See my *Doctrine and Life*, pp. 170–175.

the inner sanctuary a symbol of the inadequacy of Leviticalism. The sacrifices which were offered also bore the marks of imperfection; they were outward and temporary; they could not cleanse and renew the heart (ix. 9, 10).

Now Christ has introduced the ideal religion to which the Mosaic economy pointed. His ministry on our behalf is not an outward performance, making use of material means which are but symbols of divine realities, but is a moral and spiritual affair. He has offered not some foreign object, but himself. He shed not the blood of unknowing beasts, but his own blood. He presented to God not some lower creature, but his own spotless and holy life — an offering of inherent value and of perpetual validity. Hence his sacrifice does not merely procure forgiveness in a constructive way; it secures deliverance from the power of sin (*ἀθέτησις ἀμαρτίας*, ix. 26). It does not merely cleanse ceremonially and technically, but really and inwardly (ix. 11–14). A priesthood so superior in these respects to that of Judaism must belong to a more perfect type of religion than that of the Old Testament. Christ's perfect sacrifice supplies the defects of the Jewish offerings and possesses a retroactive power which makes its benefits available for those who lived under the law. His death is described as having for its purpose the deliverance from their transgression of those who lived under the first covenant, so that the salvation of all God's people — under Judaism and Christianity alike — might be secured (ix. 15). Here we find the counterpart of our author's doctrine of the perpetuity of Christ's priestly office in heaven. His offering is not only valid for all future, but for all past time. His giving up of his life when on earth is founded in those changeless principles and laws of the divine nature which must find expression wherever sin is. It was "through an eternal spirit" that he offered himself — a spirit of eternal love and holiness which makes atonement, in its essence and principle, an eternal process in the nature and action of God.

At this point (ix. 16, 17) the writer gives a new turn

to the comparison which he is making between the two covenants. By dropping the uniform Scriptural meaning of *διαθήκη* (covenant), and adopting a current Alexandrian meaning (testament), he is able to urge upon his readers in a new way the necessity of the Messiah's death.¹ A will goes into effect only when the testator dies. Hence that Christ might bequeath to us his saving benefits, it was necessary that he should die. This argument serves to introduce the next point which he wishes to urge, namely, that the shedding of blood in sacrifice was a constant factor in Judaism. So common was it as a means of ratifying covenants, of accomplishing ceremonial purifications, and of seeking forgiveness at the hand of God, that it was practically universal: "According to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (ix. 22). By such analogies our author seeks to illustrate the necessity of Christ's death. As the lower sanctuary, the symbol of the true, was ceremonially purified by sacrifice, so "the heavenly things themselves must be cleansed with better sacrifices" than those of Judaism, that is, made ready and accessible to believers by the sacrifice of Christ (ix. 23).

The leading points on which the author dwells as he draws his argument to a close are these: Christ's priestly ministration is performed in the upper holy of holies, God's dwelling-place in heaven (ix. 24); his sacrificial death was so effectual that it does not need to be repeated, as the Jewish sacrifices did (ix. 25, 26); hence when he comes again to earth it will not be to die a

¹ Some interpreters, indeed, refuse to admit that there is a play on the word *διαθήκη* here, and seek to maintain the meaning "covenant" throughout the passage. With the great majority of exegetes, I regard this effort as quite unwarranted. Its result may be seen in Mr. Rendall's translation: "For where a covenant is made, it is a necessity that death be offered of him that maketh the covenant; for a covenant is valid *only* if men be dead; for is he that maketh it strong at the time (*τότε*) when he liveth?" (*Theology of the Hebrew Christians*, p. 160). A similar effort to carry through the meaning "covenant" is made by Professor Moulton in Ellicott's *New Testament*, *in loco*.

second time, but to complete the salvation of his followers (ix. 27, 28): his offering consisted in his perfect obedience to the will of God, whereby, in contrast to the ineffectual sacrifices of Judaism, "he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified" (x. 14). How fitly, then, does the prophet describe forgiveness and moral renewal as the characteristic effects of the Gospel (x. 16, 17), and how clear is the conclusion that under a system where these results are attained, there can be no further need for expiatory sacrifices (x. 18).

It remains, now, to estimate the doctrinal significance of the type of teaching which we have just sketched. It is obvious that we have here a reading of Christ's saving work in terms of Judaism, but with a difference; and this difference is deep and wide. The Jewish sacrificial system belonged to the world of picture and symbol; Christ's sacrifice belongs to the world of eternal spiritual reality. The words by which it is described are Jewish, but the writer takes all possible pains to make his readers understand that they are used in a higher than the Jewish meaning. He sees in the death of Christ a wealth of divine truth at which the Old Testament sacrifices could only vaguely hint. That wonderful self-offering of the Son of God was to him the expression and revelation of the deepest mysteries of Deity. This conception is involved in the constant emphasis which is laid upon Christ's work as a copy or representation of eternal truths and realities. But when we ask: Precisely what were the divine truths which Christ's death embodied and expressed, and how did it embody and express them, we do not find a ready answer. The writer planted himself upon the current views of sacrifice, and was content to urge the capital point that Christ had made the one complete and adequate offering. Into the philosophy of sacrifice he does not go further than to insist that Christ's sacrifice belonged to a higher world than that to which the Levitical offerings pertained.

It is sometimes said that our author comes nearer to elaborating a theory of atonement than any other New

Testament writer.¹ If this means that he dwells more at length — in terms of the Jewish ritual — upon Christ's priestly function on earth and in heaven than any other New Testament writer, the statement is quite correct. But if it means that our author comes nearer to supplying us with the elements of a philosophy of atonement, I can by no means agree with it. The problems concerning the atonement are: What is the necessity in the nature of God and in his relation to sinful man for the death of Christ? and: How does the death of Christ meet the demands arising out of that necessity? An answer to these questions will be sought in vain in our epistle. Not that they are formally answered anywhere in the New Testament; but the apostle Paul clearly shows (Rom. iii. 24–26) that he had pondered them, and his epistles contain suggestions of a theoretical view of atonement. On the contrary, our author, while giving expression to highly suggestive views of the spiritual and eternal significance of Christ's atoning work, betrays no philosophy of the subject. Of the motive in God which renders atonement necessary, or the way in which it procures or conditions the bestowment of forgiveness, he says nothing.

He lays the main stress upon the moral effect of Christ's sacrifice. His favorite words are *καθαρίζειν*, *ἀγιάζειν*, *τελειοῦν*. Christ's work cleanses the conscience, puts away sin, and renews the life. Paul's figure of ransom (*λύτρωσις*) through Christ's death he uses but twice (ix. 12, 15), but without elaborating or explaining it. The conception of reconciliation (*καταλλαγή*) — so common in Paul's epistles — does not meet us in Hebrews. The term *ἰλάσκεσθαι*, to expiate, occurs once (ii. 17). But it is difficult to base any conclusion as to the import of sacrifice upon it, since the employment of this word by an Alexandrian like our author may reflect the well-known Septuagint use of *ἰλάσκεσθαι* as a translation for *כָּפַר*, to cover, to forgive, to purge away (as in Ps. lxxv. 3; Sept. lxxiv. 4), where these verbs mean *to purge away* (sins).² Ἰλαστή-

¹ So Adeney, *Theology of the New Testament*, p. 227.

² So both our English versions.

ριον occurs but once (ix. 5), where it is used in the Septuagint sense of the *Kapporeth*, or lid of the ark of the covenant.¹

The question how, in the view of our author, sacrifice is related to sin, involves questions as to the nature of the Old Testament offerings with respect to which interpreters are divided. I cannot doubt that they were regarded as expressing, in some instances at least, the guilt and heinousness of sin in God's sight and as testifying to his condemnation of it. That idea seems to me to be assumed in this epistle. Sacrifice has something more than a subjective significance and effect. On the great day of atonement "a remembrance is made of sins year by year" (x. 3). In like manner Christ's offering for sin must have been regarded as expressing its ill desert. Why such an expression was necessary, and how it can be shown to be an indispensable accompaniment and condition of remission, are questions for theological reflection into which our author does not enter.

¹ Cf. Paul's use of the word in Rom. iii. 25. See p. 413 of this volume.

CHAPTER V

FAITH AND HOPE

THE author depicts the religious life chiefly in terms of faith and hope. Salvation is appropriated by faith, which remains a constant factor in the development of the Christian character. "Without faith it is impossible to be well pleasing to God" (xi. 6). Hope is the confident expectation of future blessedness, "the sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" which, amid the storms of life, holds the believer in secure connection with the invisible world beyond the veil which separates heaven from earth (vi. 19).

The writer sets forth his doctrine of faith both negatively and positively. On the one hand, he shows how essential faith is to the religious life by illustrating the disastrous consequences of unbelief in Israel; on the other, he confirms this necessity by an eloquent description of the nature and effects of faith, as seen in a long list of heroic believers. He warns his readers against imitating the unbelief with which the Jews received the promise of a happy rest in Canaan (iv. 2). Faith is thus, at least in part, a believing reception of the divine word; in this case it is the assurance that in the coming ages God will fulfil his promise to grant a sabbath rest to his people. The writer prefaces his catalogue of the heroes of faith by a definition: "Now faith is a firm confidence with respect to the objects of hope (*ἐλπίζομένων ὑπόστασις*), an assured conviction of the existence of invisible realities" (*πραγμάτων ἔλεγχος οὐ βλεπομένων*, xi. 1). Faith is belief in a supersensuous world. The author purposely defines it in the most general terms as an attitude of mind with respect to a realm of reality lying

beyond human perception and calculation — a definition large enough to include the various phases of faith which he proposes to illustrate. No other New Testament writer makes use of so abstract and philosophical a conception of faith. With Paul especially, faith is personal trust in Christ and mystic fellowship with him. This idea is not wanting in our epistle, which speaks of believers as “partakers of Christ” (iii. 14) and of faith as involving obedience to Christ (v. 18); but it is not brought out as defining the essence of faith. This difference is not due to any fundamental doctrinal divergence, but to the different method and object of the two writers. Paul, arguing against putting confidence in legal works, insists upon trusting in Christ alone for salvation; our author, seeking to strengthen a weakening hold upon all spiritual truth, aims to make the invisible and supernatural in general seem more real and practical to his readers. Both aimed to foster devotion to Christ as the one only Saviour, — the former more by an appeal to a sense of sin and of the need of pardon, the latter more by an appeal to the religious nature, the capacity to perceive and respond to an invisible spiritual order.

The writer’s conception of faith is amply illustrated in chapter xi. It is by a conviction concerning the unseen that we believe in the creation of the world by the power of God, whereby the visible order of nature has come into being (xi. 3). This is an example which especially illustrates the attitude of the understanding (*πίστει νοοῦμεν*) towards an event lying wholly beyond the range of human observation. The next illustration — the faith of Abel — presents quite a different aspect of the subject. The offerer’s faith gave religious value to his sacrifice, and won for him the divine verdict which pronounced him righteous, that is, acceptable to God (xi. 4). In like manner Noah, by heeding the divine warnings and acting in view of them, “became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith” (xi. 7). Our author makes no use of the juridical analogies by which Paul is accustomed to expound the divine acceptance of men. He

does not use the terms, "to justify" (*δικαιοῦν*) and "to reckon for righteousness" (*λογίζεσθαι εἰς δικαιοσύνην*), and "righteousness" (*δικαιοσύνη*) is not represented as a legal status but as a moral condition. There is thus a formal difference; but, if I have correctly interpreted the Pauline doctrine of justification by faith, there is no contradiction in principle, since for Paul, as well as for our author, the terms in question are ethical in their content.¹ The confidence of Abraham and Sarah that what God had promised, although from a human standpoint so highly improbable, would come to pass (xi. 8-12), is especially adapted to illustrate the faith of those who "believe that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that seek after him" (xi. 6). But, continues our author, after all that may be truly said of the heroic confidence in God which was cherished by these Old Testament saints, there was something which they lacked. They never realized on earth the full fruition of their faith. Abraham and his family died without having received the blessings of a happy life in Canaan which had been promised them. But not even by this disappointment was their faith shaken. They did not regard this life as measuring the scope of God's purpose of grace. As the world darkened on their sight they caught a clearer view of the divine promise, and knew that God would fulfil it in a more perfect way than they had dreamed. Though they found no home in Canaan, they knew that they would find it in the heavenly city of God, which has eternal foundations, and thus faith achieved its victory in the very face of disappointment and disillusion (xi. 13-16).

The faith which Abraham showed in his willingness to offer up Isaac was a heroic trust in God. Although to human seeming the death of his only son would preclude the fulfilment of the divine promise of a numerous posterity, the patriarch still believed that it would come true even if it were necessary to raise up Isaac from the dead (xi. 17-19). The faith of Isaac in declaring what

* ¹ See p. 421 *sq.*

should be the future destiny of his two sons seems to have been a prophetic prevision (xi. 20). Similarly, Jacob was enabled by faith — a sublime confidence in God's plan and purpose — to forecast the future of Joseph's two sons, and reverently to thank God for his goodness, supporting himself in his weakness upon his staff (xi. 21). Joseph's foresight of the deliverance of Israel from Egypt is an example of faith (xi. 22). The action of Moses' parents in daring the wrath of the Egyptian king, and hiding the child for safe-keeping during three months, was an act of faith because they believed that God had some great purpose to serve in the life of the beautiful child (xi. 23). It was due to his faith in God that Moses, when he grew up, disdained the honor and power which might have been his as the reputed son of a royal princess, and chose to suffer hardships with the people of God rather than to enjoy the sinful pleasures of Pharaoh's court. The faith displayed in this choice lay in his preference for righteousness to wealth — for heavenly blessedness to earthly comfort and luxury (xi. 24-26). These examples, and those which follow, illustrate the effects of faith in the field of human life and action. They show what dangers men have faced, what sufferings they have endured, what improbabilities they have been able to believe in, in consequence of their confidence in God and their assured conviction that there is a supernatural and invisible order of forces and laws which asserts itself in the life of men.

For our author faith is no mere intellectual belief. It is a living and intense conviction of the supernatural which evinces itself in conduct. Its most characteristic effect is heroism. It is the faith which "removes mountains" of difficulty and improbability on which our author is most fond of dwelling. Among its fruits are achievements in war, deliverance from perils, and endurance of the greatest privations and sufferings (xi. 33-38). The Christian must regard himself as surrounded by a great company of persons who have given such proofs of their faith and who are now watching him to see if he, too, will

prove steadfast. He should be inspired to a heroic confidence in God by the examples of those whose achievements, through faith, are described (xii. 1). Especially should the Christian look to Jesus himself who is the "leader and perfecter of faith," the supreme example of unshaken trust in God. He passed through a career of the severest moral trial and proved himself victorious over evil. He endured the greatest sufferings without the slightest loss of confidence in God, because his hope was set upon the future blessedness with which he knew he would be rewarded (xii. 2). Thus did it please God, "in bringing many sons unto glory," to set before them, in the life of Jesus, an inspiring, perfect example of the faith which is well pleasing to himself. Thus was the "captain of their salvation perfected through sufferings" (ii. 10), and now he is going before his followers, and, if they are true to him, will lead them on in their conflict with sin and suffering to final victory. Faith has a certain militant quality in the thought of our author. It is an imitation of Christ in his endurance of suffering and his triumph over sin. It possesses the magic power to transmute the hardships which the readers are enduring into benefits. Faith looks upon sufferings as providential chastisements at the hand of God (xii. 5-11). It sees a way in which such trials may minister to the good of the believer by disciplining him in patience and directing his thoughts to the heavenly reward of the faithful.

We have seen that the faith of the epistle is intensely ethical and practical. The question now arises: Does our author also know of the love which Paul declares to be greater than faith (1 Cor. xiii. 13), without which even the faith which could "remove mountains" would be morally worthless (1 Cor. xiii. 2)? The idea of love is certainly not developed, or dwelt upon at length, in the epistle. But it is by no means wholly wanting. The circumstances of the readers and the purpose of the letter sufficiently account for the stronger emphasis which is laid upon courage and steadfastness than upon love and

kindred virtues. But our author incidentally recognizes the fundamental importance of love in the Christian life. One of the grounds of his hope that his readers will not finally apostatize from Christ is, that they have shown their love to God by benevolent ministrations to their fellow-believers (vi. 10); and in his concluding exhortations he urges them to exercise fraternal affection towards one another, to show hospitality unto strangers, and to succor those who are enduring imprisonment or persecution (xiii. 1-3; *cf.* x. 24). The epistle is not a treatise on the Christian virtues, but an argument and an appeal designed to dissuade the readers from going back to Judaism, by strengthening their confidence in Christ and his salvation. Naturally, therefore, it takes account chiefly of those aspects of the Christian life which are most closely related to the present condition and experience of the reader.

Both on this account and in consequence of the current expectation of the near return of the Lord (x. 25, 37), the writer dwells much upon the attitude of the Christian towards the future life—the coming age of Messianic blessedness. He solemnly warns his readers against imitating the unbelief and perverseness of the Israelites in consequence of which entrance into the promised land was denied them (iii. 7 *sq.*), and exhorts them to hold fast to the end their hope of entering into the rest of the Messianic Kingdom (iii. 6, 14). Now the rest of Canaan and that of the Messianic age are, in the view of our author, typical parallels. They are so nearly identified that his thought glides easily over from one to the other. Since the Israelites did not occupy the rest which was promised to them, it still remains available, in a new and higher form, for the people of the new covenant (iv. 6, 7). “There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest (*σαββατισμός*) for the people of God” (iv. 9). The believer must give all diligence to make that rest his own, for God who searches the depths of motive and purpose in man will hold him to a strict account of his fidelity and obedience (iv. 11-13). To such a holding fast of his confession the

Christian is encouraged by the sympathy of Christ with him in all his trials. He may ever rest assured of the divine aid in helping him to overcome the power of evil (iv. 14-16).

The readers are exhorted to such progress in religious life and knowledge as will enable them to understand the deeper aspects of Christian doctrine, especially, it would seem, the doctrine of Christ's heavenly priesthood (vi. 1 *sq.*). In this connection the author introduces a dark picture of the fearful consequences of apostasy from Christ (vi. 4-8; *cf.* x. 26-31, where the same subject recurs). These passages have been so long forced to do service in the dispute about predestination and irresistible grace, that their original and natural meaning has been well-nigh lost to view. Curiously, they were, in part, available on both sides of the controversy. On the one hand, it was argued, as against the doctrine of irresistible grace, that the first passage speaks of some as having fallen away from a state of enlightenment and of participation in the Christian salvation (vi. 4-6); on the other, it was contended that if such a fall is possible, it must be fatal, since it is stated that "it is impossible to renew again unto repentance" those who "fall away" (vi. 6; x. 26). As thus used these passages contradicted both theories: the one in speaking of "falling from grace" as possible, if not as actual; the other, in saying that the lapsed could not be restored to repentance. This fact is evidence enough that both parties to the controversy misapplied the passages. As I have elsewhere shown,¹ the author's thought here is: If a man deliberately and wilfully deserts Christ, he will find no other Saviour; there remains no sacrifice for sins (x. 26) except that which Christ has made. The Old Testament offerings are powerless to save; one who refuses to be saved by Christ refuses to be saved at all. For him who turns away from Christ and determines to seek salvation elsewhere, there can be only disappointment and failure. While such an attitude of refusal and contempt

¹ *The Johannine Theology*, pp. 154, 155. See the references there given.

lasts,¹ there is no possibility of recovery for those who assume it. But this impossibility is not an absolute but a relative one; it is an impossibility which lies within the limits of the supposition made in the context, namely, that of a renunciation of Christ. Nothing is said against the possibility of recovery to God's favor whenever one ceases from such a contempt of Christ and returns to him as the one only Saviour.

The future is full of bright prospects for the Christian. The hardships of the present life will be far outweighed by the glory and blessedness of the world to come. There the believer will receive a better possession than those of earth — a great recompense of reward for all his sufferings here (x. 34, 35). There he will enter "a better country, that is, a heavenly" (xi. 16), "the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (xi. 10), the heavenly Jerusalem, inhabited by an innumerable company of angels and of perfected men (xii. 22, 23). The day of testing draws near when a great shaking will overturn all things that are not stable, "in order that those things which are not shaken may remain" (xii. 27). Then the full perfection (*τελείωσις*) of the believer will be realized and all his longings satisfied. This hope of a speedy and blessed consummation is the ground of exhortation to gratitude and devotion: "Let us feel thankfulness, whereby we may offer service well pleasing to God with reverence and awe" (xii. 28); "Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name" (xiii. 15).

¹ Note the force of the *present* participles, *ἀνασταυροῦντας* and *παραδειγματίζοντας* (vi. 6), which we may render: while they are crucifying to themselves afresh the Son of God and putting him to an open shame. See R. V., margin.

PART VI

THE THEOLOGY OF THE APOCALYPSE

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

THE Apocalypse represents a type of religious literature which flourished in the late Jewish and early Christian periods. It was an aftergrowth of prophecy and made free use of prophetic materials.¹ The age of apocalyptic writing was marked by revolution, oppression, and persecution. The Syrian and Roman conquests, and the threatened destruction of the Jewish state, gave to the spirit of prophecy in the nation a new direction and a new sphere of activity. The minds of the people were filled with mingled alarm and hope in view of impending calamities, and their eager attention was directed to their significance and consequences.

During the later years of Judaism two great emotions struggled in the heart of the nation: anxiety on account of the darkening cloud that was gathering over the land, and hope of deliverance through the Messiah. Jewish apocalyptic literature took its rise from this combination, which supplies its motive and determines its character. This literature depicts the sufferings of the people and derives comfort and hope for them from the expectation of Messiah's speedy advent. The Jewish apocalypses are commonly issued under the name of some prophet or other worthy of the olden time, and into his mouth are put warnings and predictions which, under forms of thought

¹ See Terry's *Biblical Apocalypses*. New York, 1898.

derived from the age of the person whose name is assumed, reflect the time when the writing is actually composed. A convenient example is the Book of Daniel. The temptations and sufferings of a faithful servant of Jehovah in the period of the captivity are rehearsed, the doom of his oppressors is declared, and the fall of Babylon, "the beauty of the Chaldeans' pride," is proclaimed, in order that, under this form, the apocalyptist may utter, on behalf of his people, his complaint to heaven against the cruelties of the Syrian oppressor, Antiochus Epiphanes, and comfort the nation by fostering the hope of his destruction at the impending advent of the Messiah. Here we observe the two main factors which unite to produce apocalyptic writing: (1) complaint against oppression, coupled with delineations of its severity; and (2) assurances of the deliverance of the people from it — the object of all being to encourage and comfort the people of God.

When the occasion, nature, and aim of this species of literature are considered, and when its great influence in the later Judaism is appreciated, it seems quite natural that Jewish Christians should adopt this style of writing for the expression of their complaints against Jewish and Roman hostility, and of their hope of Messiah's second coming. Here, as before, the two facts which combine to prompt these apocalyptic representations are oppression and the Messianic hope, with this difference, that now it is the oppression of the Christians by Jews and Romans and the hope of Messiah's second, not of his first, advent.

Our canonical Book of Revelation is a specimen of the type of literature whose general features have been described. The peculiarities of the book illustrate the fixed characteristics of this kind of writing. It is, on the one hand, an outcry against Jewish antichristian fanaticism and Roman persecution, and, on the other, a symbolic description of the destruction which should overtake these hostile powers, and usher in the deliverance of the Church at the second coming of Christ. The book is at once "a rallying cry to Christian warriors" (Farrar) and "the

epic of Christian hope" (Beyschlag). It is the outcry, the protest of the persecuted Church against Jewish hate and Roman cruelty; it is also a prophetic threat of the destruction of these foes, and thus a message of comfort to believers. The writer sees in the troublous times in which he lives the travail-throes of the coming age, the *dolores Messiaë*, the manifestations of the "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thess. ii. 7), which, according to the prevailing mode of thought, were regarded as heralding the approaching advent. Thus the aim of the book was distinctly practical. It was primarily a book for its age, and must be read in the light of the conceptions and conditions of its time. We may believe that it had a powerful effect in promoting Christian courage and hope during the trying experiences of an age of bitter persecution.

The obscurity of the book is partly due to the nature of its theme, the programme of the future which God has not clearly revealed, and partly to the nature of its language and materials. It is purposely obscure in its references to the dread power of Rome. It deals in visions and symbols. It is a book of enigmas. The interpretation of its language must always be, in considerable part, conjectural. But the leading thought and purpose of the book need not remain doubtful, if it is read in the light which the study of apocalyptic writing has thrown upon it, and with a sense of the terrible sufferings which called it forth. As some one has said, the book must be read by the lurid glare of burning cities, — Jerusalem and Rome, — and, it might be added, by the light of martyr-fires.

Respecting the questions of the authorship, the date, and the unity of the book, scholars have not been able to reach any agreement. Only a brief reference can here be made to the present state of criticism. The principal discordant note in the early ecclesiastical tradition, which ascribed the book to the apostle John, is the opinion of Dionysius, bishop of Alexandria, who held that it was written by John the presbyter.¹ Many moderns have adopted the

¹ Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.* Bk. VII. ch. xxv.

same opinion.¹ The Tübingen school accepted the common tradition respecting the origin of the Apocalypse, and then made its differences from the fourth Gospel a makeweight against the Johannine authorship of the latter. The successors of this school deny both Gospel and Apocalypse to the apostle.² Some maintain the apostolic authorship of both.³ The book does not claim to have been written by the apostle John; its style and tone are very different from those of the fourth Gospel, and its manner of speaking of the apostles (xxi. 14) seems strange if the author were one of the Twelve. For these and other reasons a decided majority of scholars, holding various theories respecting the fourth Gospel, doubt the apostolic authorship of the Apocalypse. Moreover, the hypothesis of composite authorship, to be noticed presently, has put quite a new face on the whole question. It is very difficult to suppose that the apostle John was the author of the book, in the strict sense of authorship, provided it be held that he wrote the fourth Gospel. But the documentary theory represents the book as a growth arising out of successive combinations of a fund of apocalyptic material. On this view the apostle might well have compiled and published one or more editions of it. In this way the association of his name with it would be explained, and the apocalyptic style, characteristic of the materials used, would create less difficulty than on the supposition of direct and unitary authorship. But whatever view be taken on this point, the entire thought-world of the Apocalypse is so different from that of the Gospel and Epistles of John that it should be separately treated in Biblical Theology.⁴

¹ So De Wette, Bleek, Düsterdieck.

² So Pfleiderer, Holtzmann, Harnack, and Weizsäcker. The last-named scholar, however, regards it as a product of the "school" of John, which had its centre at Ephesus. *Apostolic Age*, II. 174 (orig. p. 504).

³ Godet, Meyer, Salmon, Westcott, Weiss, Farrar. Beyschlag thinks it not impossible that John wrote two such different books, supposing an interval of twenty years between them.

⁴ As by Weiss, Farrar, and Beyschlag, who says: "The difference between the Apocalypse and the rest of the Johannine writings is so

The question of date is as unsettled as that of authorship. The traditional date is 95 or 96, in agreement with the testimony of Irenæus: "The vision of the Apocalypse was seen no very long time since, but almost in our own days, towards the end of Domitian's reign" (91-96).¹ Later, however, this date was given up by most scholars in favor of 68-70, on the ground of internal indications.² This remained the generally received view until quite recently. At present a large number of critics hold to the later date, partly in deference to the testimony of Irenæus, partly from historical considerations derived from the study of conditions reflected in the book, and partly (in some instances) for reasons connected with theories of composite authorship.³ It remains, therefore, a disputed point whether the book reflects the age of Nero (54-68) or that of Domitian (91-96). On the documentary theory of the book which holds that it is composed of short apocalypses emanating from different periods, a combination of these views is made possible. By this theory the phenomena which favor an earlier, and those which favor a later date, could be accounted for, as well as the apparent combination of Jewish and Christian elements.

Although the unity of the Apocalypse had been questioned before, it was in 1882 that a scientific character was given to the partition-hypothesis by the labors of Weizsäcker and Völter. Increased currency was given to the theory by Vischer,⁴ who held that the canonical Apocalypse was a translation into Greek of a Jewish apocalypse, written before A.D. 70, and published, with additions and interpolations, shortly before 100. To this

great, and the question of authorship so unsettled, that we must consider them for Biblical Theology separately, inasmuch as, even though the author should be the same, they give expression to a different view of the world." *N. T. Theol.* II. 362 (Bk. V. II. ch. i. § 5).

¹ *Against Heresies*, V. 30, 3. Cf. Eusebius, *Ecc. Hist.* V. 8.

² So Westcott, Lightfoot, Farrar, Bovon, Sanday, Beyschlag.

³ Among those who hold the later date are Weizsäcker, Harnack, Jülicher, Ramsay, Briggs, and McGiffert.

⁴ *Die Offenbarung Johannis*, 1886.

view Harnack gave his assent. A little later Sabatier¹ contended, on the contrary, that the Apocalypse is Christian in structure and basis, but that the author blended with his materials certain Jewish oracles. Still later Spitta² maintained that the book had a Christian nucleus, written by John Mark about 60, and that with this the Christian editor had combined two Jewish apocalypses: one written in the time of Pompey (*ca.* 63), the other in the time of Caligula (37–41). In this view the book is made up of three distinct apocalypses — one Christian, two Jewish — blended together. More recently, Gunkel³ has sought the key to the sources of the Apocalypse in the Babylonian creation-myth. Briggs⁴ holds that six complete apocalypses underlie our Book of Revelation, and that it has passed through four editions.⁵ The earliest of these apocalypses is held to date from the time of Caligula; the latest — that of the epistles — to be not earlier than Nero and perhaps as late as Domitian. All of them, with the possible exception of the latest, were originally written in Hebrew. This composite work, as we now have it, was issued near the end of the first century.⁶ It will be seen that there is a difference of opinion as to whether the Apocalypse is composed in part of Jewish materials⁷ or is entirely Christian.⁸

Although the theory in question has met with vigorous opposition,⁹ an increasing number of scholars favor it in

¹ *Revue de Théologie*, Lausanne, 1887.

² *Die Offenbarung des Johannes*, 1889.

³ *Schöpfung und Chaos*, 1895.

⁴ *The Messiah of the Apostles*, 1895.

⁵ For the analysis, see *op. cit.*, p. 305.

⁶ For a fuller history of the documentary theory, see Dr. Briggs's work cited above, pp. 284–305, and an article by Professor George A. Barton, entitled "The Apocalypse and Recent Criticism," in *The American Journal of Theology*, October, 1898.

⁷ So Vischer, Harnack, Pfeiderer, O. Holtzmann, Sabatier, Spitta, Gunkel, Bousset, McGiffert.

⁸ So Weizsäcker, Völter, Ramsay, Briggs.

⁹ From Warfield, Weiss, Salmon, Beyschlag *et al.* H. J. Holtzmann, in the *Hand-Commentar* (1891), expresses himself as doubtful respecting the value of the hypothesis. In his *Neutest. Theol.* (1897), however, he seems to regard it more favorably.

some of its various forms. I do not feel warranted in expressing any positive opinion upon it. This much, however, must be said in its favor: It offers, at least, a tentative explanation of some of the seams and incongruities in the structure of the work and a solution of the apparently conflicting evidence bearing on the date of the book, and supplies a new method of harmonizing its Jewish and Christian elements. Since, however, the book as it stands undoubtedly has a certain unity of plan and aim, whatever may have been the method of its composition, I shall not hesitate to speak of "the writer" or "the author." For our present purpose, it makes small difference whether he was the author in the strict sense or a compiler and redactor. The substantial unity of the book is not inconsistent with the documentary theory.¹

A brief sketch of the way in which the scenes of the Apocalypse are unfolded may properly precede the more particular exposition of its main thoughts. After the first three chapters, which contain the messages to the seven churches of Asia, a mysterious voice calls the seer to heaven and promises to show him the events which must shortly come to pass (iv. 1). These events are connected, more or less closely, with the destruction of Jerusalem and of Rome, and with the return of the Lord for the salvation of his people and the destruction of his foes. Here the glory of God is described in striking imagery. He is seated in heavenly splendor upon his throne, surrounded by the figures which represent the Church (elders) and the powers of nature (living creatures), and other symbols of less certain meaning, generally presented under the sacred number seven. This chapter, whatever its details mean, is a splendid description of the supremacy of God, and of the homage of the universe to him.

Chapter v. opens with the description of a sealed book—symbol of the mysteries of the future. In a most

¹ Both the analysis and the unity are maintained by Briggs, *Messiah of the Apostles*, p. 289.

striking way the thought is presented that only Jesus can open this book. The Messiah alone holds the key of the future; he alone can unlock the mystery of providence. The representatives of the Church and of nature (elders and living creatures, *v.* 8) reverently ascribe to the Lamb alone power to open this mysterious book; and this is true because he is the Redeemer (*vv.* 9, 10). Angels join this chorus of praise, and then the opening of the seals begins.

At the opening of the first seal (*vi.* 1, 2), a white horse — a good omen — appears; on him is seated the conquering Christ. The first mystery of the book is that Christ shall triumph over all foes. The opening of the second seal discloses a very different omen. A blood-red horse appears, and on it sits one armed with a sword, who takes away peace from the earth (*vv.* 3, 4). It is the symbol of war. Next comes a black horse, and a voice is heard announcing the price of a morsel of wheat or barley (*vv.* 5, 6). This horse and his rider represent famine. The opening of the fourth mystery reveals a pale horse, on which sits Death, and after him follows Hades — the realm of Death (personified) — to claim his prey (*vv.* 7, 8). The breaking of the fifth seal discloses a picture of persecution and martyrdom, in which the followers of Christ are heard to cry: "How long, O Master?" in anguish of spirit, and are seen to receive the white robe of righteousness (*vv.* 9–11). When the sixth seal is opened, a terrific catastrophe overtakes the physical world (*vv.* 12–17). It is a time of terror and of judgment. The whole description of chapter *vi.* is an apocalyptic picture of the calamities and judgments which are to come upon those who spurn Christ and persecute his followers. Similar modes of describing great crises are found in the prophets, as in Joel *ii.* 28–32 — a passage of which Peter sees the fulfilment in the events of Pentecost (Acts *ii.* 16–21). Indeed, to a considerable extent, our Lord's description of his second coming, as presented in Matthew *xxiv.*, is embodied in similar pictures and symbols.

The description now pauses, before the opening of the seventh and last seal, in order that a picture of the host of the redeemed may be presented (ch. vii.). It is a scene of peace, in which an angel sets the seal of God upon the vast and countless multitude of the redeemed, who now join the universal chorus of praise to God for his redeeming love (vii. 1-12). The seer is now asked: Who are they who are arrayed in white robes? and is told that they are those whom the Lamb has redeemed, and that they live henceforth in blessed fellowship with him (vv. 13-17). This episode of the seventh chapter is intended to enhance the interest with which the opening of the last seal is awaited.

And now, at the dread moment of the opening of the seventh seal, all heaven waits in silent expectancy (viii. 1). The contents of this last mystery are presented in a peculiar and elaborate manner. When the seventh seal is broken, seven angels appear with trumpets, to proclaim the revelation of the final mysteries. Thus we pass from the seven seals to the seven angels and the seven trumpets. As these are sounded, one after the other, the terrible events which constitute the contents of the seventh mystery occur one by one. The detailed interpretation of the symbols under which the events proclaimed by the trumpets are portrayed is very difficult (ch. viii.); but in general the trumpets announce signs and portents of the coming judgment, when the Messiah shall appear for the destruction of his enemies and the glorification of his saints.

Just as before the opening of the seventh seal was long delayed (ch. vii.), so now the sounding of the seventh trumpet is deferred until a long episode (x. 1-xi. 14) is introduced. This passage includes a solemn proclamation of the near-approaching end, a symbolic description — under the figure of the little book which is sweet to the taste, but afterwards bitter — of the mingled joy and sorrow which the end will bring (x. 9-11), and the abandonment of Jerusalem to destruction. In this connection the faithful testimony of the Chris-

tians and the cruelty of their persecutions are depicted (xi. 1-14).

And now the seventh trumpet sounds, proclaiming Messiah's triumph (xi. 15-18). Heaven is opened (xi. 19) and certain great mysteries are disclosed. First appears the mystic figure of "a woman arrayed with the sun" (xii. 1) — a symbol, probably, of the Old Testament Church whence the Redeemer proceeds. A second sign appears, "a great red dragon," "which is called the Devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world" (xii. 9), who makes the evil world-power, the Roman Empire, his instrument. The dragon has seven heads (emperors) and ten horns (perhaps provincial governors). This satanic power desires to devour the Messiah when he shall be born; but he is rescued and is caught up on high unto God's throne (xii. 3-6). Then follows a deadly conflict between the world-power and the heavenly powers, in which the latter are triumphant (*vv.* 7-12); and, again, a picture — very enigmatical in its details — of the persecutions of the Church by Antichrist (*vv.* 13-17). The same general idea of the opposition of the Roman power to the Church is presented under other forms in chapter xiii. A beast arises out of the sea — a symbol of the Roman Empire, or, possibly, of the emperor personally (xiii. 1). The ten horns of the beast point to the imperial provinces, the seven heads to seven emperors, and the blasphemous names on the diadems to the Roman worship of emperors. One head (emperor) is smitten unto death (*v.* 3), referring to the death of Nero. The healing of the death-stroke may refer either to the popular belief of the time, that Nero was not actually dead, but was in concealment in the East, and would soon return in greater power and wickedness than ever, or to the return of his antichristian spirit in the persecuting Emperor Domitian. The worship of the emperor and his persecutions of the Christians are referred to in verses 4-10. Next appears (*vv.* 11-17) a beast coming up from the land, apparently denoting false prophecy or a false Messiah. He is the ally of the beast from the sea. His

position is subordinate to the Roman power, which continues to be called "the beast" (v. 17). And now the name of "the beast" is given in a mystic number, 666. Probably the meaning is that if the numerical value of the letters which spell the name of the beast be taken, the sum of the numbers would be 666. If the words "Nero Cæsar" are written in Hebrew letters, and the numerical values of the letters are added together, the result is 666. If *Lateinos* (Latin) is written in Greek letters, the result is the same. Very probably the mystic name of the beast is either Nero Cæsar or Lateinos. In either case it is a veiled designation of the Roman power.¹

Chapter xiv. is an episode preceding the introduction of the cycle of the seven vials or bowls, and presents still further pictures of the supremacy and triumph of Christ, and of the certainty and terribleness of his judgment upon his foes. This last thought becomes the keynote of the chapters which follow. The bowls of divine wrath are poured out upon the sinful world (chs. xv.-xvii.). This cycle of woes ends with the utter destruction of the mystic Babylon, the beast, or the "woman drunken with the blood of the saints" (signifying the horrors of persecution), as Rome is variously called (xvii. 1-6). And now another mystic explanation of the seer's meaning is given (which is, in part, a repetition). The beast that "was and is not" (xvii. 8) is Nero. His coming up from the abyss and the healing of his death-stroke (xiii. 3) are thought by many interpreters to refer to the popular expectation of his return to Rome. If it does not, the reference is probably to Domitian, as already indicated. The view taken on this point influences the interpretation of verses 10-12. In any case the seven mountains are the seven hills of Rome on which "the woman" (the city) sits. The five fallen "kings" are Augustus, Tiberius, Caligula, Claudius, and Nero. The one that *is* may be either Galba or (if the three "rebellious princes," who

¹ Briggs regards the number 666 as denoting "a straining after the holy number 7," "the anti-Lamb" or false Messiah. *Messiah of the Apostles*, p. 324.

reigned for so short a time and were never fully acknowledged, are not counted) Vespasian. If the sixth is Galba, the seventh is Otho; if the sixth is Vespasian, the seventh is Titus. The view that "the eighth" is Nero is adjustable to either opinion as to the sixth and seventh (whether Galba and Otho, or Vespasian and Titus). The theory which makes Domitian the eighth is reconcilable only with the supposition that Vespasian and Titus are the sixth and seventh. On the view that Nero is the eighth, the statement that the eighth "is one of the seven" (*v.* 11) is understood to mean that he is both the fifth and the eighth; on the theory that Domitian is the eighth, he is said to be "of the seven," not in the sense of being one of the number, but in that of derivation or descent.

Again the destruction of Rome is proclaimed (*ch.* xviii.), and the triumph of Christ is celebrated by angelic choruses (*ch.* xix). Then Satan is bound for a thousand years (the millennium). The faithful dead are raised and reign with Christ during this period, at the end of which the general resurrection takes place (*xx.* 1-6). Whether this description is to be taken literally or figuratively is disputed. At the end of the millennium a new conflict with Satan takes place, which ends in his complete overthrow (*vv.* 7-10). Next follows the final judgment (*vv.* 11-15) and the consummation of the Kingdom of God (*chs.* xxi., xxii.). The new Jerusalem, the heavenly city of God, in all its splendor and purity appears. The two closing chapters represent the culmination of the great drama of conflict and judgment in a scene of eternal peace and joy. The key-thought of the book is that of Christ's speedy coming to judge the world, and especially to destroy the hated Roman power, and to rescue his followers from their persecutions. All the events described are seen by the seer as in the near future (*i.* 1); and the book closes with the united prayer of the spirit of prophecy and of the Church (bride), that Christ would come (*xxii.* 17), to which the answer is given: "Yea, I come quickly" (*xxii.* 20). The writer appends (*xxii.* 18, 19) a solemn warning against

any alteration of his book, in apparent imitation of similar threats in the Old Testament (Deut. iv. 2). The book is a picture of the persecuted Church, a prophecy of her certain deliverance by her heavenly Redeemer, a delineation of the supremacy and triumph of Christ over every foe, and of the glory which awaits his faithful disciples.

CHAPTER II

THE LAMB OF GOD

THE Apocalypse pictures the Messiah chiefly as Redeemer and King, but his character as such presupposes his earthly life. Accordingly, we find that he is most frequently designated by his personal name Jesus (i. 9; xii. 17 *et al.*), less frequently by "the Christ" or Messiah (xi. 15 *et al.*). The author mentions his descent from the tribe of Judah and from the family of David (v. 5; xxii. 16). He is represented as the child of the Jewish theocracy, which is symbolized by the figure of "a woman arrayed with the sun" (xii. 1), who brought forth the child who should rule over the nations, and who, in turn, was threatened and persecuted by the evil world-power represented by the "great red dragon" (xii. 3, 6). The number of Jesus' apostles (xxi. 14), his death in Jerusalem (xi. 8), his resurrection (i. 5, 18), and his exaltation (iii. 21; xii. 5) are all alluded to. That he is contemplated as a priest is clear from the description of him in i. 13, as "clothed with a garment down to the foot, and girt about at the breasts with a golden girdle."

But the most characteristic designation of the Saviour is "the Lamb of God," which occurs twenty-nine times. Whether it is a reminiscence of the description of the suffering Servant of Jehovah, under the figure of a lamb, in Isa. liii. 7, or points to the Passover lamb, or to the covenant offerings, or represents a combination of ideas which is no longer directly dependent upon any one of these Old Testament conceptions, we cannot certainly determine. In any case "the Lamb" is a symbol of obedient and self-denying love. The title is meant to

portray him "who loveth us and loosed¹ us from our sins by his blood" (i. 5). It is "in the blood of the Lamb" that the saints have "washed their robes and made them clean" (vii. 14; xxii. 14); that is, the death of Christ is redemptive; it is a means of purification from sin. The same truth is expressed under the figure of purchase (*ἀγοράζειν*) when it is said: "Thou wast slain, and didst purchase unto God with thy blood men of every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation, and madest them to be unto our God a kingdom and priests" (v. 9; *cf.* xiv. 3, 4). Although no formulated doctrine of the person and work of Christ should be sought in the Apocalypse, it will be found that the book is peculiarly rich in its descriptions of the dignity and glory of his person and of the surpassing greatness of his redeeming work. He is "the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth" (i. 5); "the Lord of lords and King of kings" (xvii. 14; xix. 16). The most striking imagery is employed to describe his dignity and authority. With eyes like a flame of fire, feet like unto burnished brass, and a voice as the voice of many waters, he walks in the midst of the seven golden candlesticks (i. 12-15), that is, appears as sovereign Lord of the Church. In his right hand he holds seven stars; a sharp sword issues from his mouth, and his countenance is like the sun shining in his strength (i. 16, 17). The "angels of the churches,"² symbolized by stars (i. 20), are in his power; he utters the sharp and searching word of God (*cf.* Heb. iv. 12 and Wisd. Sol. xviii. 15, 16), and is clothed with surpassing glory. His authority extends to all nations (xii. 5). In allusion to Dan. vii. 13 he is called "one like unto a son of man" (i. 13; xiv. 14), in contrast to the world-powers, symbolized by "beasts." Soon this exalted One will come again in power and glory to judge the world and save his people (i. 7; xiv. 14-16; xxii. 20); as "the

¹ The reading *λύσαντι* (loosed) is better supported than *λούσαντι* (washed). So the critical texts and R. V. *vs.* the Textus Receptus.

² By angels here are probably meant guardian angels, rather than the rulers or the characters of the churches personified.

bright, the morning star" (xxii. 16) he will then rise upon the world and usher in the consummation of his Kingdom.

But our author goes further. To Christ are paid divine honors. The praises of the redeemed are ascribed "unto God and unto the Lamb" (vii. 10); an innumerable host unites in the doxology: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing" (v. 12). The elders who bear the "golden bowls of incense, which are the prayers of the saints," fall down before the Lamb (v. 8); while angels, refusing all worship for themselves (xix. 10; xxii. 8, 9), join with all creatures in worshipping only God and the Lamb (v. 11 *sq.*). During the millennial reign of the saints (xx. 4) priests minister to him as to God himself (xx. 6). He holds the keys of Hades and of death (i. 18), that is, determines who shall enter and who shall be released from the realms of the dead. He sits with God in his throne (iii. 21; vii. 17; xii. 5), which is now called "the throne of God and of the Lamb" (xxii. 1, 3). He is the assessor of God in judgment (vi. 16, 17). Many Old Testament designations of Jehovah are freely applied to him, as where the description of "the ancient of days" (Dan. vii. 9) is transferred to Christ (i. 14, 15), and the searching of the hearts and reins ascribed to Jehovah (Ps. vii. 9) is attributed to him (ii. 23). While it is true that believers are children of the theocracy (xii. 17) and sons of God (xxi. 7), it also appears that the sonship of Christ to God is regarded as quite unique. From "his God and Father" (i. 6) he has received supreme authority (ii. 27), and has accordingly sat down with his Father in his throne (iii. 21).

But is Christ also, for our author, a preëxistent and eternal Being? In connection with this question the principal passages to be considered are as follows: "I am the first and the last, and the Living one" (i. 17, 18; *cf.* i. 8); "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (xxii. 13; *cf.* xxi. 6); "These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the

beginning of the creation of God" (*ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως τοῦ θεοῦ*, iii. 14); "And he hath a name written, which no one knoweth but he himself. . . . And his name is called The Word of God" (*ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ*, xix. 12; *cf.* iii. 2). Certain it is that the passages first mentioned apply to Christ language which the Old Testament uses to describe the absolute eternity of God. See Isa. xlv. 6: "I am the first and the last; and beside me there is no God." In such a connection "the Living one" (*ὁ ζῶν*) can hardly refer to anything less than an absolute life.¹ Like God, he "liveth for ever and ever" (iv. 9, 10; x. 6). The phrase: "The beginning of the creation of God" (iii. 14), reminds one strongly of Col. i. 15, 18: "The first-born of all creation" (*πρωτότοκος πάσης κτίσεως*) . . . "who is the beginning" (*ὅς ἐστιν ἀρχή*), and, in the view of some, is a reminiscence of these Pauline expressions.² The principal question of interpretation is, whether Christ as *ἡ ἀρχὴ τῆς κτίσεως* is meant to be included in the *κτίσις* or not. Some would render the phrase "the principle of the creation," and would interpret it in the sense in which wisdom is depicted in Prov. viii. 22 as possessed or formed by the Lord in the beginning of his way. In that case Christ would be regarded as the first *κτίσις* of God, "that production of God in which all others are implied, and by which everything further is accomplished."³ Others regard *ἡ ἀρχή* as a logical *prius* of *ἡ κτίσις*, and thus as not included within it.⁴ It seems to me probable that this view is correct, although the context does not so clearly require the interpretation which makes the relation of Christ to the creation original as it does in the case of the similar phrases in Colossians.⁵ Grammatically considered,

¹ Beyschlag says that it "cannot be understood merely of the resurrection life, which is afterwards described by *ἰδοῦ ζῶν εἰμί, κ.τ.λ.*, but is to be understood of the essential life, which not merely continues in eternity, but also springs from eternity." *N. T. Theol.* II. 380 (Bk. V. ii. ch. iii. § 4).

² So Bousset, *Offenbarung Johannes* (Meyer Series), *in loco*.

³ Beyschlag, *N. T. Theol.* II. 381 (Bk. V. ii. ch. iii. § 4).

⁴ So Weiss, Gebhardt, Düsterdieck, Bleek, Lechler, Bousset, Briggs.

⁵ See p. 394.

the words may have either meaning. The interpretation for which I have expressed a preference rests mainly upon the general representation of Christ as the "first and the last" and the absolutely Living one. Since the view of the Apocalypse is that he is the beginning and goal of human history, it is unlikely that the phrase in question means to include him within the created universe. This view is strongly confirmed if we suppose that the passage under consideration is dependent upon Colossians. The question turns chiefly upon the doctrine of the book as a whole. Christ is one who calls God Father in a unique sense (i. 6; ii. 27; iii. 5, 21; xiv. 1); the designation "our Father" does not appear. He is one to whom the mystic sevenfold perfection of God is ascribed (iii. 1; v. 6; *cf.* i. 4; iv. 5). He possesses the secret of Jehovah, and writes his mysterious name upon the foreheads of the saints (ii. 17; iii. 12; xiv. 1).

What now is "his own new name" (iii. 12), "the name which no one knoweth but himself" (xix. 12), which he will also write upon the faithful? Some suppose that the answer is given in xix. 13: "And his name is called the Logos of God."¹ Others think that it is vain to search for an answer to this question, since the mysterious name is expressly said to be unknown to any except Christ himself.² Still others, finding an inconsistency between the statements that the name is unknown, and that it is the Logos, conclude that the latter assertion is an interpolation supplied by a later writer from the prologue of the fourth Gospel.³ We should probably seek no definite answer to the question: What is this incommunicable name? It appears to be a symbol for the secret of the Messiah, the incomparable majesty and power which belong to him as the vicegerent of God, the King of kings and Lord of lords. The glory of his person and the triumph of his Kingdom are mysteries which no mind can fully fathom. The terms used denote the transcendence of Christ, his

¹ So Gess, Gebhardt, Weiss, Beyschlag, Weizsäcker.

² So Bleek, Düsterdieck, Bousset.

³ So Völter, Vischer, Spitta, Pfeiderer, and, apparently, Briggs.

unique and absolute superiority. Doubts as to the originality of the title "the Logos of God," and the fact that its meaning is left wholly unexplained, preclude us from building too confidently any conclusion upon it. Interpreters who treat it as genuine are quite divided in opinion as to the aspect of Christ's person and work which it is intended to emphasize.¹

Making all allowance, then, for the uncertainties which attach to individual passages and phrases, the question recurs: Does the Apocalypse represent Christ as a pre-temporal, eternal Being — as one who is, in the proper sense, divine? In answering this question affirmatively, I will cite the verdicts of several writers of various schools. "We must recognize without hesitation that Christ, in the Apocalypse, is elevated to the plane of God (au niveau de Dieu). He is named the first and the last, the beginning and the end, and these same formulas are employed to designate the Supreme Being."² "The fact that the Messiah is an originally divine Being (göttliches Wesen) is taken for granted."³ "We find some statements of a Godlike character which cannot be explained by a divine glory won on earth."⁴ The last-named writer, however, attributes this deification of Christ (as in the case of Paul, John, and the Epistle to the Hebrews) to the naive confusion by the Biblical authors of a person with an idea.⁵

¹ Weiss: "The executor of the divine (judicial) will," *Bibl. Theol.* § 134, *d* 5; Gebhardt refers it to Christ's preëxistence and creative activity, *Doct. of Apoc.* p. 94 *sq.*; Beyschlag: "The reappearing heavenly Victor," *N. T. Theol.* II. 382 (Bk. V. ii. ch. iii. § 4); Lechler: "The personal bearer of divine wisdom and power, the Mediator of all divine self-revelation," *Apos. u. nachapos. Zeitalt.*, p. 449.

² Reuss, *Hist. Théol. Crét.* I. 461.

³ Weiss, *Bibl. Theol.* § 134, *d*.

⁴ Beyschlag, *N. T. Theol.* II. 379 (Bk. V. ii. ch. iii. § 4).

⁵ "Here, then, we have essentially the same idea of preëxistence as we have in Paul and in the Epistle to the Hebrews, the application of the idea of the eternal self-revelation of God to the person of the Messiah. But there as here we have a gap in thought; by personifying an idea we may hide from ourselves the fact that, in recognizing the idea in the person of Jesus, a historical person is coördinated with something which, however realistically conceived, is not a person but an idea." *Op. cit.*, *ut supra.*

This august personage, who sits on a throne of splendor, clothed with all knowledge and power, is able to read the riddle of the future and actually to solve it (v. 2). "The Lion that is of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, hath overcome to open the book and the seven seals thereof" (v. 5). The seer is bidden to look and behold the victorious Lion, the all-conquering Messiah, who can unlock the secrets which the future holds in store, and guarantee success to the persecuted cause of truth and righteousness. And he looked, and "behold, in the midst of the throne stood a Lamb, as though it had been slain" (v. 6). He looked to see a Lion and beheld a Lamb. He looked to see power and force, whereby the foes of his faith should be destroyed, and he saw love and gentleness by which they should be conquered by being transformed into friends. The might of Christ is the power of love. The captive train which he leads in his triumphal march is composed of those who are bound to him by the golden chains of love and gratitude. The Lamb, as though it had been slain, stands in the midst of God's throne. At the heart of God's sovereignty is sacrificial and suffering love. The almighty will of God is a will of love. The power of God serves the ends of his grace, and it is to the God who gives his Son in sacrificial and suffering love that the swelling chorus of praise is uplifted: "Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain to receive the power, and riches, and wisdom, and might, and honor, and glory, and blessing. And every created thing which is in heaven, and on the earth, and under the earth, and on the sea, and all things that are in them, heard I saying, Unto him that sitteth on the throne, and unto the Lamb, be the blessing, and the honor, and the glory, and the dominion, for ever and ever" (v. 12, 13).

CHAPTER III

THE CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

THE Apocalypse speaks only of individual churches, although it has the idea of a collective community of believers which is called "the bride or wife of the Lamb" (xix. 7; xxi. 2; xxii. 17). Christians are usually designated as "saints," or as those who worship, fear, and serve God (xi. 18; xix. 2-5). As such they constitute a holy priesthood unto God (i. 6). These phrases have a Jewish sound, but they are easily matched by others which bear a more universalistic character. The community of the redeemed is gathered from "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation" (v. 9). Jewish forms of thought, derived from prophecy, or from current apocalyptic language, are common, but they are so blended with Christian conceptions as practically to receive a new meaning. If, on the one hand, the Lamb stands with his elect on Mount Zion (xiv. 1), and the descending city of God is a new Jerusalem (xxi. 2); if the Kingdom has its capital for a time in the holy city (xx. 9), and the kernel of the Church is pictured as 144,000 — an equal number from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (vii. 4-8); yet, on the other hand, all believers are priests (v. 10); the book makes no mention of circumcision and shows no trace of regarding the ceremonial law as valid; the Church is composed of an innumerable multitude gathered out of every nation (vii. 9). As with Paul, Christians constitute the true Israel (ii. 9); Jews who revile Christ and persecute his followers are "a synagogue of Satan" (iii. 9). If the book is a composite of Jewish and Christian elements, as some critics suppose, the materials have been so blended as to yield a distinctly Christian and universal gospel. In its

language and symbolisms the Apocalypse is, indeed, the most Jewish book in the New Testament; but that is only to say that it is an apocalypse. It is not a Judaizing book. To find in the reproofs directed against the heretics and "false apostles," who had invaded the churches of Asia, attacks upon the apostle Paul is preposterous. A tone of universalism runs through the whole book. "The author knew no people of God but the Christians, and no Judaism but that of the gospel."¹

The messages to the seven churches of Asia furnish us an outline picture of the conditions which obtained in that part of the Christian world where the Apocalypse took its rise. The church at Ephesus had patiently suffered persecution for the cause of Christ, and had repudiated the false teachers who had sought to lead it astray from the truth. These Nicolaitans seem to have been libertines and antinomians who tempted the Christians to idolatrous and licentious practices, as Balaam tempted the Israelites (ii. 6, 14, 15). The prophecy of Paul spoken to the Ephesian elders at Miletus (Acts xx. 29, 30) has come true, and the church is now warned again to beware of the corrupt teachers, and to renew the love and zeal which they had formerly shown in the service of Christ (ii. 4-7).

The poor church of Smyrna (ii. 8 *sq.*) and the small one of Philadelphia (iii. 7 *sq.*) receive unqualified praise. The former has suffered bitter persecutions at the hands of the hostile Jews; some of them are facing the prospect of imprisonment, but it will be short; if their sufferings terminate in death, the crown of life is just beyond. The feeble but faithful little congregation of Philadelphia shall triumph over all their foes in the day of Messiah's coming. Then their faithfulness will have its reward, and upon their foreheads the triumphant Messiah will write the name of God, and of the new Jerusalem which cometh down from God out of heaven, and his own new name (iii. 12); that is, he will seal them for his own and assign them to a place in God's eternal Kingdom.

The churches at Pergamum and Thyatira (ii. 12-29)

¹ Weizsäcker, *Apostolic Age*, II. 199 (orig. p. 526).

have both fallen a prey, in part, to the seductions of the false and corrupt teachers. In Pergamum Satan has his throne (ii. 13); that is, some form of fanatical and corrupting heathen worship is there practised. Some of the believers have yielded to the influence of libertinism and a great danger threatens the church; but the majority are still loyal and one, at least, has attested his fidelity by martyrdom (ii. 13). In Thyatira a pretended prophetess — symbolically called Jezebel — has seduced some into idolatry and fornication. She and her followers are threatened with destruction. As a whole the church has made progress. They are counselled to cease to cultivate the so-called deeper knowledge of those who regard themselves as free from the ordinary requirements of Christian morality — a knowledge which apprehends only the “deep things” of Satan (ii. 24), not those of God; and are assured that only the commands of Christ to live a pure and holy life, not the demands of the Jewish law, are laid upon them (v. 24).

The churches at Sardis and Laodicea are addressed in terms of severe reproof. To the former there remains hardly more than the semblance of the Christian life. Their zeal is but a smouldering ember, but it may yet be fanned into a flame of devotion. There is a nucleus of faithful ones who have kept themselves unsullied amid the prevalent corruption. The church is warned of its peril and is urged to repentance and reform (iii. 1-6). The condition of the Laodicean church is even more deplorable. It is composed of “lukewarm” people, who have accepted the truths of the gospel with a passive acquiescence. They are not interested enough in it to defend it or to suffer for it; nor do they even concern themselves about it sufficiently to repudiate it. They are neither “cold nor hot.” Christ, therefore, rejects them from his fellowship. He chides them for their trust in riches, and declares that they are blind to their utter spiritual poverty. Yet even this lifeless church is not beyond recovery. The Saviour stands before these selfish and benighted professors of his name in pleading love, and offers them

the white robes in which they may clothe themselves, promises them blessed fellowship with himself, and speaks the assurance of victory to him who will rouse himself from his lethargy and strive and conquer in the good fight of faith (iii. 14-22).

The book lays stress upon the necessity of works of righteousness. "Do the first works" (ii. 5); "I know thy works" (ii. 19); "I will give unto each one of you according to your works" (ii. 23); "Their works follow with them" (who die in the Lord, xiv. 13); "My reward is with me, to render to each man according as his work is" (xxii. 12) — such are some of the expressions of the idea. What is the nature of these "works"? They cannot be observances of the Mosaic law, since the book nowhere recognizes its obligation. They are rather regarded as deeds of fidelity and devotion to Christ, such as the endurance of affliction for his sake and the preservation of purity under stress of temptation. To "keep Christ's works" is "to overcome" (ii. 26), that is, to triumph in the moral conflict of life; it is to be steadfast amidst sufferings, even to the point of forfeiting life itself (xii. 11). In ii. 19 the "works" of the saints are explained by the words: love, faith, ministry, and patience, and in iii. 4 the heavenly reward is given to those who have lived an undefiled life. The "righteous acts (*δικαιώματα*) of the saints" (xix. 8), in which they clothe themselves as with a robe, consist in "keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (xiv. 12). Thus we see that the works which are so richly rewarded are regarded as having their source and spring in fidelity to Christ. They are the "works of Jesus" (ii. 26). No obligation beyond obedience to the requirements of his gospel is laid upon the Christian (ii. 24). To keep the commands of God is synonymous with holding the testimony of Jesus (xii. 17). Hence the song of the redeemed is at once the song of Moses and of the Lamb (xv. 3), and "the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (xix. 10). The truth of Jesus is the touchstone by which to measure the value and determine the import of law and prophecy.

It is evident, then, that we have in the Apocalypse no Judaizing doctrine of works. Let us now turn to its teaching concerning faith. From the very nature of the book we should expect that, as in Hebrews, faith would take on a heroic quality and be especially shown in steadfastness and patience under suffering. Hence faith is associated with *ὑπομονή*, steadfast endurance (xiii. 10; xiv. 12). It is viewed as a devoted attachment to Christ's person, which persecution is powerless to break: "Thou holdest fast my name, and didst not deny my faith" (ii. 13), that is, faith in me (*πίστις μου*). Hence the writer speaks of "keeping the commandments of God and the faith of Jesus" (*πίστις Ἰησοῦ*, xiv. 12), that is, devotedly adhering to confidence in Jesus. But this faith is not a mere passive acquiescence or intellectual belief. It is the motive of effort and achievement; it is fidelity even unto death (ii. 10, 19). In it the "works of Jesus" (ii. 26) have their root, and when it is said that men will be judged according to their works (xx. 12), the meaning is not that outward actions as such determine destiny, but that the whole character, in all its motives and issues, carries over into the life beyond and brings forth fruit after its kind. "Works" are not meritorious deeds entitling the doer of them to salvation as a reward. Salvation is a free gift: "I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely" (*δωρεάν*); "He that is athirst, let him take the water of life freely" (xxi. 6; xxii. 17). Although the saved have "overcome," that is, achieved a moral victory by effort and struggle, yet this victory is not regarded as due to their own power or as founding a claim to heavenly blessedness; they have rather "overcome because of the blood of the Lamb" (xii. 11); they have "washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb" (vii. 14); that is, their salvation is ascribed to the divine grace as revealed and applied through the redeeming work of Christ. Here, as elsewhere in the New Testament, the correlation between grace and faith — as opposed to debt and works — is preserved. Salvation is by faith because it is of grace.

Although the book emphasizes so strongly the necessity of suffering and of purity, it does not give these ideas an ascetic application. It does not discountenance marriage, as some have thought. The "virgins, who were not defiled with women" (xiv. 4), may either refer to those who have abstained from all unchastity, or be taken as a figurative designation of those who have remained faithful to God, in contrast to such as have fallen into idolatry, which the Old Testament so often describes as adultery. It is quite impossible that the whole company of faithful believers, here referred to, should be said to have renounced the married state. This is the less likely since the blessedness of the Messianic Kingdom is represented by the figure of a marriage feast (xix. 7-9), and the favorite metaphor to denote Christ's relation to his Church is that of a bridegroom and a bride (xxi. 2; xxii. 17).

The Apocalypse reflects but in a very slight degree the organization, customs, and observances of the early Church. The frequent references to elders as representatives of the Christian community imply the office of the eldership, but throw no light upon its nature and function at the time of writing. "The Lord's day" (*ἡ κυριακὴ ἡμέρα*, i. 10) probably refers to Sunday, and is doubtless so called because the Lord rose from the dead on that day. The special mention of this day as the time when the seer saw his vision would seem to imply that it was recognized as a specially sacred day. Whether the designation here employed was already in use, or originated from this passage, we have no means of knowing. The earliest use in extra-canonical literature is in the *Didache*.¹ The "angels of the churches," as we have already observed, are probably not church officers, but the guardian angels or genii of the several churches who are addressed under the names of the congregations which they represent. Apostles, prophets, and martyrs are several times mentioned with special honor (xviii. 20; xxi. 14; ii. 13; vi. 9; xvii. 6); but it is improbable that the writer refers especially to these classes when he speaks of "the small and

¹ Section 14; cf. *Epistle of Barnabas* xv.; *Gospel of Peter*, v. 50 et al.

the great" (xi. 18; xix. 5) in the community of believers. All believers are kings and priests unto God. They are priests because they offer up to him at all times the grateful incense of praise and prayer (v. 8; viii. 3), and they are kings because they are unsubdued by hostile powers and are destined to reign with Christ (v. 10; xx. 6). Over suffering, persecution, and death God will make his saints victorious, "and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages" (xxii. 5).

CHAPTER IV

THE ANTICHRISTIAN WORLD-POWER

IT was a fixed conviction in the apostolic age that some special manifestation of wickedness would precede Messiah's coming. In the Synoptics we read of false Christs and false prophets who should arise and deceive, if possible, the very elect (Mt. xxiv. 24). The Pauline Apocalypse speaks of an apostasy and of a man of sin who, with blasphemous pretensions, should exalt himself above all that is called God or is worshipped (2 Thess. ii. 4). We have seen reasons for believing that this "mystery of lawlessness" (v. 7) was regarded as a Jewish antichristian fanaticism which, it was expected, would break out in a hostile demonstration against the Gospel. If this view is correct, the Roman power is viewed as a restraint upon Jewish hostility. In the Epistles of John Antichrist is an incipient Gnosticism which denies that Jesus is come in the flesh (I. iv. 3; II. 7). In the Johanneine Apocalypse, however, this antichristian power is seen in the Roman Empire. The hostility of Judaism to Christianity is, indeed, recognized, but this representation is quite overshadowed by the description of "the beast" — the gigantic might of the Roman world-empire. We note in this description a widely different attitude towards the existing civil power from that expressed by Paul in Rom. xiii. The apostle had counselled submission to the constituted authority because the civil government was God's minister for the good of its subjects (v. 4). But by its cruel abuse of its power the empire had ceased to be the benefactor and had become the enemy of mankind. It was no longer viewed as the representative of divine order and law on earth, but as a brutal and blas-

phemous monster whom God should slay with the thunderbolts of his wrath.

Throughout the earlier chapters of the Apocalypse we meet with references to hostile powers which we may generically designate as Antichrist. Sometimes these powers are of Jewish, sometimes of Roman, origin. At length in chapters xii., xiii., and xvii. the symbolism derived from the Book of Daniel is employed to portray these evil forces in all their cruel and blasphemous wickedness. Here, as before, the powers in question are partly Jewish, though chiefly Roman. However various may have been the literary sources of our present Apocalypse, all its parts have this characteristic in common: they all depict and protest against some signal form of opposition to the Christian faith. Even the salutations and messages to the churches contain allusions to the foes of Christ. When he comes in glory, they that have pierced him shall see him, and "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn because of him" (i. 7). According to the traditional interpretation of i. 9, the seer himself is a victim of persecution, and has been banished to the island of Patmos because he has preached the word of God and testified to the truth of Christ.¹ Heresies have invaded the churches. False apostles have seduced believers from their first love (ii. 3, 4). The Christians are summoned to a deadly conflict with evil forces. "Overcome" is the watchword of the Christian life. Fidelity, involving, if need be, submission to suffering and death, is the price of the promised heavenly blessedness. An hour of fearful trial is coming upon the whole world; the believer must be steadfast and watchful "that no one take his crown" (iii. 11). Satan has taken possession of Judaism and established within it his throne (ii. 13). The trial and imprisonment of Christians have already begun (ii. 10, 13). Idolatry

¹ So Gebhardt, Trench, Simcox, Bousset. Two other interpretations are possible: (1) The seer was in Patmos for the purpose of preaching the word of God. (2) He was there to receive the revelation of God's word in vision. So Bleek, Lücke, DeWette, Düsterdieck, Weiss. I regard this interpretation as more probably correct.