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THE  
MISCELLANEOUS WORKS  
OF  
ARCHIBALD M'LEAN.

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VOL. II.

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PARAPHRASE AND COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS:

WITH

TREATISES

ON THE MERITORIOUS GROUND OF JUSTIFICATION, AND THE  
CALLS AND INVITATIONS OF THE GOSPEL.

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IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. I.



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## P R E F A C E.

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It has been usual in a Preface to this excellent epistle, to make some enquiry concerning its author; the people to whom it was addressed; the time when, and the language in which, it was originally written. I do not profess to throw any additional light on these particulars, which have been fully discussed by the learned. The commonly received opinions respecting these things are well known, and with these I fully agree. But as many adopt current opinions without examining into the grounds of them, it may be useful to such persons to lay before them the evidence on which the received opinions respecting these particulars are founded.

I. As to the **AUTHOR** of this epistle, though his name is nowhere mentioned in it, yet it is very clear from the epistle itself, that the Apostle Paul was the writer of it.

1. It can admit of no doubt that those to whom it was more immediately directed must have known the author of it. Indeed, the writer himself plainly supposes this; for he writes to them as one whom they knew, and of whom they had compassion in his bonds, chap. x. 34; and he beseeches them to pray for him, and that they should the rather do this, that he might be restored to them the sooner, chap. xiii. 18, 19. A request of this nature from an unknown person would be very strange indeed. But these things exactly agree with the account we have of

Paul, who was kept a long while prisoner at Cesarea, Acts xxiv. 27, where his christian friends were permitted to come and minister to him, ver. 23, from whence he was afterwards carried a prisoner to Rome to be tried before Cæsar, chap. xxviii. 16; so that as he was sent bound from Judea to Rome, his return from Rome to Judea was properly a *restoring* of him to them; and it is for this that he requests their prayers. Again, he says, "Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty, with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you," Heb. xiii. 23. Whether the word *apolelumenos* be translated, *is set at liberty*, or, *is sent away* on some errand, as some think it means, it makes no difference as to the present point. Timothy was well known to be Paul's intimate companion and fellow-labourer, whom he sometimes calls his *son* and often his *brother*, as here, and is also joined with him in several of his epistles, see 2 Cor. i. 1; Colos. i. 1; 1 Thess. iii. 2; Philem. ver. 1; so the Hebrews could be at no loss to see that Paul was the writer. Farther, he sends them the salutations of the saints of Italy, ver. 24, where he must have been when he wrote this epistle; and he concludes it with Paul's usual benediction, ver. 25, which, when written with his own hand, was the token in every epistle, 2 Thess. iii. 17, 18. So that the exact agreement of these particulars with what we find in the history of Paul, clearly shews that he was the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. This farther appears,

2. From the author's manner of reasoning, and the method of handling his subject in this epistle, such as, his overflowing sentiment briefly expressed—abrupt transitions and returns to his subject—reasonings addressed to the thoughts and latent objections of his readers—his practical exhortations subjoined to the doctrinal part, &c.

All which are perfectly in Paul's manner of writing in his other epistles.

3. From sentiments and expressions in this epistle similar to those in Paul's other writings; compare Heb. i. 2, 3, with Col. i. 15.—Heb. ii. 7, with Phil. ii. 8, 9, 10; Eph. i. 20, 21, 22.—Heb. v. 12, with 1 Cor. iii. 2.—Heb. viii. 1, and chap. xii. 2, with Eph. i. 20.—Heb. x. 1, with Col. ii. 17.—Heb. x. 33, with 1 Cor. iv. 9.—Heb. xii. 14, with Rom. xii. 18.—Heb. xiii. 16, with Phil. iv. 18.—Heb. xiii. 18, with Acts xxiii. 1, chap. xxiv. 16; 2 Cor. i. 12.—Heb. xiii. 20, with Rom. xv. 33, chap. xvi. 20; 2 Cor. xiii. 11; Phil. iv. 9; 1 Thess. v. 23; 2 Thess. iii. 16.

4. From the interpretation of some Old Testament passages in this epistle, which are to be found nowhere else but in Paul's discourses and writings. Thus, Psal. ii. 7, is applied to Jesus, Heb. i. 5, and v. 5, as it is also by Paul in Acts xiii. 33.—Psal. viii. 4, and cx. 1, is explained and applied to him, Heb. ii. 7, 8, and x. 12, 13, even as Paul does in 1 Cor. xv. 25, 27.—The covenant made with Abraham, Gen. xii. 3, and xxii. 16—19, as explained in Heb. vi. 13—19, is nowhere else to be found but in Paul's epistle to the Galatians, chap. iii.

5. There are also some doctrines and terms in the epistle to the Hebrews, which are not to be found in the New Testament except in Paul's writings; such as Christ's entering into heaven to minister and make intercession there, Heb. vii. 25, viii. 2, ix. 12, which is mentioned by Paul in Rom. viii. 34. And though in 1 John ii. 1, Christ is termed an *Advocate* with the Father, yet the title of *Mediator* is nowhere given him but in this epistle, Heb. viii. 6, ix. 15, and xii. 24, except in Paul's first epistle to Timothy, chap. ii. 5.\*

\* See Macknight's Preface to this epistle, p. 10, 11.

These arguments, which are all drawn from the epistle itself, compared with Paul's other writings, appear to me sufficient proof that he was the author of this epistle.

If Peter wrote his two epistles to the believing Jews who were dispersed throughout the different places mentioned, 1 Pet. i. 1, it will furnish us with another proof that Paul was the author of the epistle to the Hebrews. His words are, "and account that the long-suffering of our Lord is salvation, even as our beloved brother Paul also, according to the wisdom given unto him, hath written unto you; as also, in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to be understood," &c. 2 Pet. iii. 15, 16. Now, we have no epistle written by Paul to the Jews in particular, if this to the Hebrews be not it. Besides, Peter mentions some things in the epistle he refers to, which are to be found in this, such as that the long-suffering "of our Lord is salvation," Heb. vi. 12, 15, chap. ix. 28, chap. x. 36, 37, and also some things which "are hard to be understood," and which the author of this epistle acknowledges, chap. v. 11. But as Peter's epistles do not appear to be addressed solely to the Jews, as the epistle to the Hebrews evidently is, I do not insist on this passage as a conclusive proof that he refers to that epistle. Yet the passages in Peter's epistles, by which some attempt to shew that they were written only to the Gentiles, such as 1 Pet. i. 14, ii. 9, 10, iv. 3, will not prove this; for as to 1 Pet. ii. 10, it is taken from Hos. i. 10, iii. 23, and is spoken of the ten tribes; and with respect to 1 Pet. iv. 3, it is also applicable to the same people, who, during their dispersed and unconverted state among the heathen, wrought the will of the Gentiles, by conforming to them in their vices, and even in their abominable idolatries, according



to the threat denounced upon them Deut. xxviii. 36, 64.

We shall now briefly enquire what evidence we have that Paul was the author of the epistle to the Hebrews, from ancient tradition and the writers of the first four centuries. The want of the author's name has been the chief cause of any demur among the ancients on this subject, and of their framing different conjectures about it. Some have ascribed it to Barnabas, some to Luke, and others to Clement of Rome.\* There are but four writers mentioned who, during the first four centuries, are said to have denied that Paul wrote this epistle, namely, Irenæus of Lyons, Tertullian of Carthage, Gaius a presbyter of Rome, and Hyppolytus a disciple of Irenæus.† But it may be justly doubted if Irenæus was of that opinion; for as none of his writings now extant give the least hint of this, so the truth of this story rests entirely upon the testimony of Stephen Gobar, and (as Hallet observes) seems to be contradicted by Jerome, an earlier writer, who says that "the epistle to the Hebrews had been received as Paul's by ALL the Greek writers," of whom Irenæus was one.‡ Tertullian, indeed, ascribes it to Barnabas, but for this he produces no authority, and is altogether singular.

We are informed, that the church of Rome, and many of the Latins, did not receive this as one of Paul's epistles.§ But Jerome says, "The epistle to the Hebrews has been received as the apostle Paul's, not only by the *eastern* churches, but also by *all* the *ancient* churches."

\* Tertull. de Pudicitia, cap. xx. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. v. cap. 25.

† Photii Cod. 282. Euseb. Hist. Eccles. lib. vi. cap. 20.

‡ Epist. 129, Dardano.

§ Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iiii. cap. 3, and lib. vi. cap. 20.

He indeed adds, "It is not the custom of the Latins to receive it among the canonical Scriptures; yet we receive it, because we are not influenced by the customs of the *present* age, but submit to the authority of the *ancient* writers, who frequently cite it as a canonical and sacred epistle."\* From which it appears that this epistle was at first received as Paul's by *all* the *ancient* churches, and cited as canonical by *all* the *ancient* writers, as well Latin as Greek; but that afterwards, or by the time that Jerome wrote, (which was in the fourth century) many of the Latins not only denied it to be Paul's, but had rejected it as not canonical. Their reason for doing so (if we may credit Philastrius) was, because the 6th and 10th chapters of this epistle seemed to favour the Novatian arguments against receiving lapsed penitents into the church.

But the different conjectures of two or three writers concerning the author of this epistle, and the rejection of the epistle itself by the church of Rome in Jerome's days, can never balance the more ancient and universal tradition, by which it has been handed down as canonical, and the work of the apostle Paul.

Clement of Rome (a companion and fellow-worker with Paul, Philip. iv. 3), hath, in his first epistle to the Corinthians, as Eusebius observes, "inserted many sentences taken out of the epistle to the Hebrews, and sometimes made use of the express words of it."† And though this does not prove that Paul was the author of it, as Clement does not mention his name; yet it sufficiently shews its antiquity, and that it was used as a canonical book even in the age of the apostles. Clement's words

\* See note (c.)

† Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. 38. See Epist. Clemen. ad Corinth. § 12, 17, 36, 43.

are these—"Jesus Christ—being the brightness of his Majesty, is so much greater than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name. For thus it is written, Who maketh his angels winds, and his ministers a flame of fire: But, concerning his Son, the Lord thus speaks, Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee. Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the utmost parts of the earth for thy possession. And again he saith to him, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." Hallet thinks that these words are not borrowed from the epistle to the Hebrews, but quoted directly from the book of Psalms; and that, as to the thoughts wherein they agree, it is as possible that Clement often heard Paul express them in his private conversation and public preaching, and afterwards used them as his own. But, though this is possible, there is no evidence that it actually was the case, or that ever Clement heard Paul utter these express words; whereas we find in fact, that the very same quotations, thoughts, and even express words, are in Heb. i. 3, 4, 5, 7—13, from whence it is more probable Clement hath taken them, as Eusebius affirms, than from any verbal communication of Paul; yet, if even that were certain, it would be a strong proof that Paul was the writer of this epistle.

Clement of Alexandria, who lived in the second century, quotes many passages *verbatim* from the epistle to the Hebrews, and acknowledges them to be the words of the divine apostle Paul; such as Heb. v. 12, x. 32—39, xi. 1, 6, xii. 1, 2.\*

Origen, who flourished about the beginning of the third century, frequently cites this epistle as Paul's. He

\* Strom. lib. vi. p. 644, lib. iv. p. 514, 515, lib. ii. p. 362.

expresses himself thus, "The same Paul, in an epistle to the Hebrews, says, In these last days he hath spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things," &c. Heb. i. 2.\* Many other citations from this epistle are to be found in his writings.† Eusebius informs us, that he wrote homilies on the epistle to the Hebrews, from which he quotes the following words, "Again, the sentences of this epistle are admirable, and nothing inferior to these books which are acknowledged to be apostolic. And this, every one will assent to as true, who gives attention to the reading of the apostle's writings. If any church, therefore, accounts this to be Paul's epistle, let it be commended for so doing; for (*oi archaioi andres*) *the ancients* did not inconsiderately declare it to be Paul's epistle."‡ The *ancients*, in respect of Origen, must have been those who lived in, or immediately after, the days of the apostles; and as such persons had the best opportunity of satisfying themselves as to who was the author of this epistle, so, he says, they did not (*eike*) *inconsiderately*, or upon slight evidence, declare it to be Paul's.

In the fourth century, all the writers of any note in Europe, Asia, and Africa, who mention at all the author of this epistle, agree in ascribing it to the apostle Paul. Mr. Joseph Hallet has industriously collected the testimonies of twenty-eight of them during that period.§ Seventeen of them cite passages from this epistle, and name the author; three of them maintain it to be Paul's in opposition to some who denied this; two of them in citing passages from this and Paul's other epistles, ascribe

\* Comment. in Joann. p. 56, Edit. Huetii, 1668.

† Comment. in Joann. p. 22, 58, 416. Orig. contra Celsum. p. 143. Philocal. p. 10. De Orat. p. 89, 97. Oxon. 1686.

‡ Hist. Eccl. lib. vi. cap. 25.

§ See his Introduc. to Peirce's paraphrase and Notes on the Hebrews.

them to the same apostle; and six of them reckon up fourteen epistles of Paul, that to the Hebrews included.

To the testimonies of these particular writers, Hallet adds, that of the councils in their days, viz. the council of Laodicea, A. D. 364, and the third council of Carthage, A. D. 397; also the 85th Apostolical Canon, as it is called; all of which ascribe fourteen epistles to Paul, including that to the Hebrews. So that, from the whole, it clearly appears, that the most ancient, and by far the most universal tradition, hath constantly ascribed this epistle to the apostle Paul.

But, it must not be thought, that the divine authority of this epistle depends on its being written by Paul. Though it had been written by Barnabas, Luke, or Clement, it would have been of equal authority as are the gospels by Mark and Luke, or the book of the Acts, none of which were written by any of the select apostles. It may also be observed, that Paul does not rest the truth of his doctrine in this epistle on the credit of his apostleship and inspiration, but on testimonies taken from the Old Testament, on the propriety of his application of these testimonies, and on the justness of the conclusions he hath deduced from them. And, as he did not assume his apostolic character in writing to the Hebrews, (he being the apostle of the Gentiles, Rom. ii. 13; Gal. ii. 7—10); this also might be a reason why he did not prefix his name to this as to his other epistles; especially as he well knew that a great number of the believing Hebrews were all zealous of the law, and suspicious of him as opposed to it, Acts xxi. 20—25; he might therefore think it prudent to conceal his name, lest it should prejudice them against the important doctrine contained in this epistle. None of John's three epistles bear his name;

yet there is no reason to doubt that he was the author of them.

II. As to the PEOPLE to whom this epistle was immediately sent, several of the early writers, such as Clement of Alexandria, Jerome, Euthalius, Chrysostom, Theodoret, Theophylact, and others, were of opinion that it was sent to the Jews living in Judea, who, in the apostle's days, were called *Hebrews*, to distinguish them from the Jews living in the Gentile countries, who were termed *Helenists* or *Grecians*, Acts vi. 1; ix. 29; xi. 20. It was only in Judea, and particularly in Jerusalem, that the Levitical service, and all the parts of the Jewish worship was performed, which are referred to in this epistle. There the Jewish Christians had been first, consequently longest, favoured with the gospel, chap. v. 12. There they first suffered persecution for the cause of Christ, chap. x. 32, 33; Acts viii. 1. And there they were under the strongest temptations to apostatize from the faith through persecution on the one hand, and the arguments of the scribes, together with their own attachment to the temple worship, on the other: So that there are several things in this epistle which are more suitable to the Jewish Christians in Judea and Jerusalem, than to those of them in any other part of the world. Yet there can be no doubt that it was intended to be circulated also among the Jews of the dispersion: And indeed the sublime doctrines, instructions, and admonitions which it contains are of the highest importance, not only to the Jews, but also to the Gentiles.

III. With respect to the LANGUAGE in which this epistle was originally written, many of the ancients were

of opinion that it was written by the apostle Paul in Hebrew ; and this is still the opinion of several learned moderns. The ancient pure Hebrew of the Old Testament had not been in common use among the Jews ever since the Babylonish captivity. Their common language, from that period, was the Syro-chaldaic, which had a kind of resemblance of it, and was called Hebrew in the days of the apostles.

Those who imagined that Paul wrote this epistle originally in Hebrew, grounded their opinion chiefly on the supposed propriety of writing to the Hebrews in their native language : But, was it not equally proper that he should have written the epistle to the Romans in Latin, which was the native language of Rome ? yet we know that he wrote it in Greek. If the apostolical epistles were designed for the instruction of Christians in all nations and ages of the world, and not merely for the benefit of those to whom they were at first directed, then it was surely more proper that they should be written in Greek than in any provincial dialect, as it was more universally understood, especially in the extensive eastern provinces of the Roman empire ; and as there were many books written in it of all kinds of literature and science, it was the more likely to be studied, and so preserved in all succeeding ages. True indeed, there were many Christian churches then, in which the common people did not understand the Greek language ; but they had among them those who were endowed with the gift of tongues and the interpretation of tongues, who could, in the public reading, readily turn the apostle's Greek epistles into the language of the churches to which they were sent.

None of those ancient Christian writers who affirm, that this epistle was originally written in Hebrew, such as

Clement of Alexandria, Origen, Eusebius, and Jerome, (though they were diligent collectors of all fragments of antiquity in the primitive times), could say, that they themselves ever saw, or were ever informed by any who had seen, so much as one ancient Hebrew copy of it; yet many such copies must have been found in Judea, and in the adjacent countries, had any such thing ever existed. Instead of this, they grounded their opinion on the supposed propriety of the thing, and on the superior style of what they supposed to be a translation of this epistle, compared with the Greek of Paul's other epistles: Yet, while they affirm, on such grounds, that the Greek is only a translation, they are not agreed as to the person who translated it, some ascribing it to Luke, others to Clement of Rome.\* But that the epistle to the Hebrews was not originally written in Hebrew, but in Greek, appears farther evident from this, That the citations in it from the Old Testament are not taken from the Hebrew original, but mostly from the Greek version of the LXX. as are also the citations in Paul's other epistles; which could not be supposed to have happened had it been a translation immediately from a Hebrew original: Compare the Hebrew text in Jer. xxxi. 33, with Heb. viii. 9.—Psal. xl. 6, with Heb. x. 5.—Gen. xlvii. 31, with Heb. xi. 21. I shall only add that in this epistle we find an explanation of some Hebrew words, as in chap. vii. 2, which would have been perfectly needless had it been originally written in Hebrew, or even in Syro-chaldaic, which is little else than a dialect of the Hebrew. I therefore agree with the commonly received opinion, that the Greek is the language in which the apostle Paul originally wrote the epistle to the Hebrews.

\* Euseb. Hist. Eccl. lib. iii. cap. 38.



IV. The common account of the DATE of this epistle is A. D. 64, but others have placed it two or three years earlier. It is needless, however, to detain the reader with their respective reasons for these small differences.

V. With respect to the CHIEF DESIGN of this epistle, and the author's manner of prosecuting it, it will be necessary to observe, That though the Jewish Christians believed the great fundamental article of the faith, namely, that Jesus of Nazareth was the promised and expected Messiah; yet many of them did not properly understand that Messiah's kingdom was to interfere with, far less to abolish the Mosaic establishment, which their fathers had received from God by the ministry of angels, and was confirmed by the most striking interpositions and sensible manifestations of the divine power and presence among them. And as they could not conceive that God would ever abrogate any of his own positive laws and appointments; so they naturally imagined that the Messiah had come to restore their political freedom, and to reform their nation, both in Church and State, according to the Mosaic institution, which they considered as unalterable. And though Christ by his death had abolished the Mosaic law of commandments contained in ordinances; yet, out of regard to the scrupulous consciences of the Jewish converts, they were hitherto indulged in observing the peculiarities of that law, while they did not seek justification by it, or urge it upon the Gentile converts as necessary to that end, or make it a term of communion with them. But this temporary indulgence had no good effect on many of them; for instead of growing in the knowledge of Christ as the end of the law for righteousness, they continued in their zealous adherence to the

law, Acts xv., chap. xxi. 20, 21, which hindered their progress in the knowledge of the gospel, Heb. v. 12—14, weakened their attachment to Christ, and endangered their reverting to Judaism.

Now the chief design of this epistle to the Hebrews was, to bring them off from their attachment to the Mosaic establishment, to carry them forward to perfection in the knowledge of the gospel, and thus to establish them in the Christian faith, and prevent their apostacy from it.

In prosecution of this important and complicated design, he sets out with a sublime description of the divine dignity of the Person by whom God hath in these last days revealed his mind in the gospel, namely, his own Son, whom he hath constituted heir of all things, who is described as the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, by whom also he made the worlds and upholds all things; and so is infinitely superior in nature and office to all God's former ministers, by whom he revealed his will of old, whether they were the most eminent prophets, such as Moses, or even angels, by whose ministry the law was delivered at Mount Sinai, chap. i. iii. 2—7. From this he exhorts them to give the more earnest attention to the gospel, as being spoken by the Lord Jesus in person, and was confirmed to them by those who heard him; to the truth of whose testimony God also bore joint-witness by signs, wonders, miracles, and distribution of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, chap. ii. 1—5. That the gospel kingdom is not subjected to the government of angels, but to that of the Son of God alone, who is also the Son of man, to whom all things, without exception, are subjected, and under whose feet all his enemies shall finally be subdued,

chap. ii. 5—9. That though he was for a little while made less than angels, by assuming the same mortal flesh and blood with the children which God had given him, and so became subject to sufferings and death ; yet it was for such glorious purposes as were everyway worthy of God, namely, that by his death he might expiate their sins, defeat their enemies, sympathize with and succour them under all their trials and afflictions, and, as the Captain of their salvation, conduct them to the glory of the heavenly country, chap. ii. 9—17. This was suited to remove all objections to his sufferings and death.

As the Hebrews were much attached to the legal priesthood and sacrifices, the apostle expatiates at great length upon the superior excellence and efficacy of the priesthood and sacrifice of Christ. The Levitical priests were made according to the law, after the order of Aaron ; but Christ was made a priest by the word of the oath which was since the law, and after the superior order of Melchisedec, who was both a king and a priest. They were mortal men, and not suffered to continue by reason of death, and so were many priests succeeding one another ; but he is a priest for ever, after the power of an endless life ; and so his priesthood does not pass from him to a successor. They had sinful infirmities, and so had to offer for their own sins as well as for the sins of the people ; but he was without sin, being holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. They were priests on earth, ministers of a worldly sanctuary, and of the holy places made with hands, which were only figures of the true ; but Christ, having risen from the dead, is not a priest on earth, but hath passed through the heavens with his own blood, and is an High Priest who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens,

where he officiates as a minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man; and there he ever lives, a merciful and faithful High Priest, making intercession for his people, and so is able to save to the uttermost them that come unto God by him, chap. iv. 14, 15, vii., viii. 1—6, ix. 11, 24.

With regard to the sacrifices and purifications prescribed by the law, the apostle shews that, though by virtue of God's appointment they sanctified to the purifying of the flesh from ceremonial defilements, and to obtain a discharge from temporal punishments, yet they were but figurative institutions and carnal ordinances, imposed upon the Israelites until the time of reformation, when they should be all set aside. They had no intrinsic worth or virtue in themselves to procure a real and everlasting remission of sins; for it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins, or cleanse the conscience of the worshipper from the guilt of them, otherwise they would have ceased to be offered; whereas in the repetition of these sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year, which shews that they were not really expiated. With these ineffectual sacrifices the apostle contrasts the sacrifice of Christ, and proves, from Psal. xl. 6—9, that as God was not pleased with those sacrifices which were offered according to the law, Christ came into the world to do his Father's will by offering the one sacrifice of himself, by which he hath set aside all the legal sacrifices, made at once a complete atonement for sin, and hath for ever perfected them that are sanctified: And that his sacrifice is not to be repeated, it having procured an everlasting remission of sin, as is evident from this, that when he had offered it, he "for ever sat down on the right hand of God," and

from God's promise in the new covenant, "their sins and iniquities will I remember no more;" from which he concludes, "Now, where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin," chap. ix. 9, 10, 13, x. 1—19.

Moreover, he shews that Christ hath now obtained a more excellent ministry than that of the Levitical high priests, in as much as he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises than the Sinaitic covenant, of which they were mediators. For this he cites, Jer. xxxi. 31—35, where the Lord promises to make a new covenant altogether different from the former; and he argues from God's calling it *a new covenant*, that he hath antiquated the first, which must of course vanish away to give place to the latter; consequently, that the making of this new covenant must have abrogated the whole Mosaic establishment, chap. viii. 6, to the end.

To guard the Hebrews against unbelief and apostacy, to which some of them had shewn a disposition, he on the one hand sets before them the awful consequences of it in the punishment of their fathers in the wilderness, who came short of the earthly rest through unbelief; and in the more dreadful punishment which will infallibly be inflicted on those who neglect or despise the gospel, or apostatize from the faith after they have been enlightened, chap. ii. 1—5, iii. 7—19, iv., vi. 4—10, x. 26—32, xii. 25. On the other hand, he encourages them to persevere and to hold fast their profession with boldness under all their trials, by the example of the faithful ancients, and particularly of their pious ancestors, who all lived and died in the faith of good things to come, as held forth to them in the promises, chap. vi. 11—16, xi., and especially by the more eminent example of Christ

himself in his suffering obedience and consequent reward ; and farther, to support their minds under their sufferings for the name of Christ, he shews them that they were tokens of God's love to his children, were really for their profit, and would have a glorious issue, chap. xii. 1—12. He then concludes with various exhortations and instructions, all suited to his main design.

In taking a view of the doctrine and arguments contained in this epistle, we cannot fail to perceive how admirably they are calculated to promote the end the apostle had more immediately in view, namely, to bring the Hebrews off from their remaining attachment to Judaism, and to confirm and establish them in the Christian faith. But we must also be sensible that the matters contained in it are of the greatest importance and universal usefulness to all christians. For here we find the chief articles of the christian faith clearly stated ; the most confirming arguments in support of them, and such sublime discoveries as are suited to bring believers to perfection, and make them skilful in the word of righteousness. Here also we are taught both the distinction and connection between the Old and New Testament revelations, their unity of design, and the subserviency of the former to the latter.

It has already been observed, that the apostle does not rest the proof of what he advances in this epistle upon his apostolic authority or inspiration, but upon the authority of the citations he brings from the Old Testament scriptures ; yet I cannot fully agree with those who affirm that he uses ALL these citations in the sense in which the Jewish doctors at that time commonly understood them. It is said, “ that if he had offered any novel interpretations, either literal or typical, of the Jewish scriptures, his

arguments, built on these interpretations, would have had no weight whatever, either with the believing or unbelieving part of the nation.\* But it does not appear to me that any of the Jews who understood the Scriptures in the same sense in which the apostle cites and applies them, could be considered as unbelievers. Their condemning and crucifying the Lord of glory is attributed to their ignorance of the true sense of the Scriptures, Acts iii. 17, 18, xiii. 27, 28; 1 Cor. ii. 8. Paul had to reason with them out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging, that the Messiah must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, Acts xvii. 2, 3, which shews that they had not understood the Scriptures in that sense. In this epistle the apostle makes much use of Psal. cx. 1, which we know the Pharisees and lawyers did not understand in its true sense, see Matt. xxii. 44, 45, 46; and we have reason to believe that they were equally ignorant of the true sense of the 4th verse of that Psalm. They indeed understood many passages as applicable to their expected Messiah, several of which the modern Jews apply otherwise; but they were in general ignorant of the divine dignity of his person, of the true design of his coming into the world, and of the spiritual nature of his kingdom, and so had no true understanding of the Scriptures relating to him. Besides, it should be observed, that our apostle refers the Hebrews to the doctrine of our Lord and his apostles, the truth of which had been abundantly confirmed among them by miraculous attestations from heaven, chap. ii. 1—5, and as he gave no interpretations of Scripture but what perfectly corresponded with that doctrine, and were fully supported by it, as well as by the true sense of the passages themselves, his interpreta-

\* See Macknight's Preface to this epistle, p. 24.

tions ought to have had weight both with the believing and unbelieving part of the nation, although their blind guides should hitherto have explained them otherwise.

With respect to the execution of the following work, I need not say much, as my readers must judge for themselves. To commend it would be rather indecent in an author, and to discommend it would be to say that it ought not to have been published. Several good and learned expositions of this epistle have long ago appeared, and it cannot reasonably be expected that every succeeding expositor should strike out many new thoughts upon it which have never occurred to any before him. I have done my best to come at the sense of the apostle, by keeping the connection and scope constantly in view; and have neither rejected the assistance of commentators, nor followed them implicitly; but have sometimes differed from those whose judgment and accuracy I upon the whole highly esteem. I am far from thinking that I have fallen into no mistake respecting the sense of any particular phrase or passage; but hope that none such will be found that may lead the reader into any material error, either as to the apostle's doctrine or main design.

I have followed the common division of the chapters, though some of them have been improperly placed. Before each chapter I have placed copious *Contents*, giving also a view of the *scope* and *connection*. Next follows what I call a *Paraphrase*, and which contains a literal translation, distinguished by the Roman character, and interspersed with connecting and explanatory supplements in Italics. Last of all comes the *Commentary*, the text of which is the common English translation, which, though divided into clauses to suit the commentary, is inserted entire.



A

PARAPHRASE AND COMMENTARY

ON THE

EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

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CHAP. I.

CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

THE inspired penman of this Epistle enters directly upon his main design, which was to bring the Hebrew converts entirely off from their attachment to the peculiarities of the Mosaic economy, and to confirm and establish them in the Christian faith. With this view he observes, that the same God who had formerly revealed his will to their ancestors by the prophets, was also the author of the gospel revelation, in which he had communicated his mind more perfectly, and by an infinitely more excellent and dignified Person than any of those whom he had formerly employed, namely, his own Son, ver. 1, 2. To exalt their conceptions of this divine prophet and founder of the new economy, he sets forth his original character and greatness as the Maker and Upholder of all things, the splendour of his Father's glory, and the express image of his

person or substance, ver. 2, 3. He then briefly states, that this divine Person, in consequence of his having, by the sacrifice of himself, expiated our sins, is now seated at the right hand of the Divine Majesty in the highest heavens, being constituted heir of all things, and highly exalted in dignity and dominion above the angels, ver. 3, 4. And to prove this last particular, together with his original dignity, he cites various passages from the Old Testament scriptures, ver. 5—14.

In these particulars, the inspired writer touches at the chief doctrinal points, which he afterwards illustrates at large, and from which he draws the most of his arguments and exhortations throughout this epistle.

#### P A R A P H R A S E.

CHAP. I. 1. God, who in sundry parts and in various manners spake of old to the fathers by the prophets,

2. Hath *now* in these last days of the *Jewish dispensation, and beginning of the gospel age*, spoken to us by his Son, whom he hath constituted heir of all things, by whom he also, *in the beginning*, made the worlds :

3. Who, being the effulgence of *his* glory and express image of his person (substance), and sustaining all things by the word of his power, having by *the sacrifice* of himself made purgation of our sins, sat down *enthroned* at the right hand of the *Divine* Majesty in high places, *namely, in the highest heavens*.

4. Being made so much superior to the angels *in dignity and dominion*, by how much he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.

5. For to which of the *highest* angels did he (God) at any time say *what he said to Christ, with reference to his resurrection and exaltation*, chap. v. 5; Acts xiii.

33. "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Psal. ii. 7. And again *he says*, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son," 2 Sam. vii. 14.

6. *Never did he address any of the angels in this manner; but on the contrary*, when he bringeth again the First-born into the world, *by raising him from the dead, and exalting him above the angels*, 1 Pet. iii. 22, he saith, "And let all the angels of God worship him," Psal. xcvi. 7.

7. And of the angels indeed, *by David*, he saith, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire," Psal. civ. 4.

8. But to the Son *he speaks very differently, saying*, "Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."

9. "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; therefore, O God, thy God hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy associates," *namely, the angelic rulers*, Psal. xlv. 6, 7.

10. And, *which fully proves the natural and original greatness of the Son above all the angels, he is thus addressed*, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thy hands:

11. "They shall perish, but thou *the Creator* remainest; and they all shall wax old as doth a garment.

12. "And as a mantle shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed. But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail," Psal. cii. 25, 26, 27.

13. Moreover, *as to the government of the world, and*

particularly as it relates to the gospel economy, to which of the angels said he (God) at any time, as he said to his Son, "Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies the footstool of thy feet"? Psal. cx. 1.

14. *Instead of the angels being thus vested with sovereign dominion, are they not all represented as ministering spirits, subject to the Son (ver. 6, 7), and by him sent forth to minister for them who shall inherit salvation?*

#### COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. I.

Ver 1. *God, who at sundry times and—*] This shews the manner in which God formerly revealed his will: it was at *sundry times*. The original, *polumeros*, signifies, in several parts or parcels, which must also imply at sundry times. He did not formerly reveal his purpose fully, nor all at once, but partially and by degrees—part of it by one prophet and part of it by another, and that at different and distant periods; so that there was still room left for new and farther discoveries of his mind. The difference implied is, that God hath now given a complete revelation, and, as it were, at once. Farther, God formerly spake

*—in divers manners—*] He revealed his mind to the prophets by dreams, visions, voices, impulses, angels, &c. But the apostle chiefly intends the manner in which God spoke by the prophets, which was frequently in dark speeches, similitudes, typical representations, and significant actions; but seldom without a figure, or some degree of obscurity. And though he spake to Moses in a more familiar and apparent manner than ever he did to any of the ancient prophets (Num. xii. 6—9, Deut. xxxiv. 10), yet the Mosaic revelation respecting good things to come was veiled by types and shadows, 2 Cor. iii. 13; Heb. x. 1. So that what is opposed to this, must

be the superior plainness of the gospel revelation, see 2 Cor. iii. 12, to the end. God in this manner

—*spake in time past*—] The word *palai* signifies of old, or in ancient time. It includes all that space of time which began with the calling of Abraham, and ended near four hundred years before Christ, when the spirit of prophecy ceased in the Jewish church: for it is that space of time during which God spake

—*unto the fathers*—] That is, the ancestors of the Hebrews. It was to them that God spake of old in the promises, in the giving of the law, and in the succeeding revelations; and to them he committed his oracles, Rom. iii. 2, chap. ix. 4. And he thus communicated his mind to them

—*by the prophets*.] The prophets were men divinely inspired, whom God raised up in successive generations, and commissioned to reveal his will: "For the prophecy came not of old time by the will of man, but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Spirit," 2 Pet. i. 21. They were also the penmen of the Old Testament Scriptures, all of which are given by inspiration of God, 2 Tim. iii. 16. And the Spirit by which they testified before hand the sufferings of Messiah and the glory that should follow, is expressly declared to be the Spirit of Christ, 1 Peter i. 11. Yet the revelation given by their ministry was but like a lamp shining in a dark place, when compared with the clearer light of the gospel, 2 Peter i. 19. Thus we see how and by whom God revealed his will to his church of old: But now he

Ver. 2. *Hath in these last days spoken to us*—] The *last* or *latter days*, is an expression frequently used by the prophets, to signify the age of Messiah, or some remarkable period of it, as distinguished from the age of the law; but here, if it means any thing more than *lately*, it may signify the *last days*, or close of the Jewish age, as distinguished from the time past of it. It was before the end of the Jewish Church and State that God spake to

the Hebrews by his Son, whom he sent last of all to them, Mat. xxi. 37; and his personal ministry, and, for some time, that of his apostles, was restricted to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, Mat. x. 5, 6, chap. xv. 24. And though by his death he virtually abrogated the Mosaic establishment, yet it was not actually set aside till about forty years after, when the Romans destroyed their city and temple. But the main thing to be attended to here, is the person by whom he spake to them, namely, —by his Son.] As the arguments throughout this epistle are chiefly founded on the superior dignity and authority of Christ to all God's former messengers, by whom he revealed his will, it was necessary, in the first place, to establish that important point; and here the apostle intimates his superiority, by terming him *the Son*. Angels and men are indeed sometimes called sons of God, in a certain sense; but the person here spoken of is termed *the Son*, in such a peculiar and exalted sense, as will apply to none but himself. All God's former messengers were only his creatures and servants; but Christ is distinguished from them all, by being called *his Son*. By this name, the apostle evidently means to express his divine dignity, and as being infinitely superior, not only to the most distinguished prophets and rulers, but to the highest order of angels, as we shall afterwards see.

Of this person, who is emphatically termed *the Son*, it is elsewhere declared, that he is the Word, who in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made, John i. 1, 2, 3; that he possessed glory with the Father before the world was, chap. xvii. 5; that he was before all things, Col. i. 17; that he existed in the form of God, and thought it not robbery to be equal with God, Phil. ii. 6. And, in his incarnate state, he is declared to be the Word made flesh, John i. 14; to be God manifest in the flesh, 1 Tim. iii. 16; and to be over all, God blessed for ever, Rom. ix. 5. There are other passages which ascribe to him the titles, attributes, works,

and worship, which belong exclusively to the only true God, who will not give his glory to another. Therefore, whatever else is imported in his name, *Son of God*, by which he is distinguished to us from the Father, it always supposes and implies the divine dignity of his person, in which he is infinitely superior to all created beings, and is truly God.

It has been objected that his being called *the Son of God*, seems to imply that his original existence was derived from God by generation, and so depended on the divine will, which appears inconsistent with his proper Deity. To this it may be answered—

1. That though the doctrine of his being originally begotten of the Father by an act of generation, seems liable to this objection yet; if he existed eternally and necessarily in and of the Father, it cannot be shown that this is inconsistent with his true Deity. But not to insist on this inexplicable mystery, I observe—

2. That though the Sonship of Christ always supposes and includes his Godhead, in which the natural, original, and essential dignity of his person consists, yet it does not appear from Scripture that he is called the *Son of God* merely *as God*, or to teach us the origin and manner of his personal existence in the Godhead, but seems applicable to him only as Emmanuel, or God manifest in the flesh. The name of *Son* is indeed used when speaking of him previous to his having assumed human nature; but so are the names *Jesus* and *the Christ*, which yet we know properly belong to him only as united to humanity.

Let it be farther observed, That in the covenant which God made with David respecting his Seed, it is promised, "I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son," 2 Sam. vii. 14. This promise our apostle applies directly to Christ, verse 5; and it implies—1st, His *incarnation*; for otherwise he could not be of the seed of David according to the flesh. The angel, foretelling his birth, says to the Virgin, "The Holy Spirit shall come

upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee; therefore, also that holy thing which shall be born of thee, shall be called THE SON OF GOD," Luke i. 35. This he assigns not only as the *cause* of her conceiving without a man, but as the *reason* why the holy child which was to be borne of her was to be called God's Son; and thus "the Word was made flesh," or became personally united to human nature; and his person thus constituted, is declared to be "the only begotten of the Father," John i. 14. 2d, His *resurrection* from the dead is also included in the promise made to David. So David understood that promise as God's "oath to him—that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before, spake of the RESURRECTION of Christ, that his soul was not left in hades, neither his flesh did see corruption," Acts ii. 30, 31, compared with Psal. cxxxii. 11, and xvi. 10. It is in proof of his resurrection that Paul cites the promise in Isa. lv. 3, which refers to the covenant made with David: "As concerning that he RAISED HIM UP FROM THE DEAD, now no more to return to corruption, he saith on this wise—I will give you the sure mercies of David," Acts xiii. 34. Now his resurrection is one sense in which he is termed *the Son of God*, and is said to be *begotten*; for so the apostle explains Psal. ii. 7, where the Father is represented as saying to Christ, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee;" which begetting is explained to be his RAISING UP JESUS AGAIN, Acts xiii. 32, 33. Hence he is called the *First-born*, or *First-begotten* from the dead, Col. i. 18; Rev. i. 5, by which he was determined the Son of God, with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. 3d, His Sonship also imports his *supreme power* and *dominion* as Heir or Lord of all. A kingdom, inheritance, and dominion, are always connected with his filial character, both in the promise made to David, 2 Sam. vii. 13, 14, and in all the references made to it, see Psal. ii. 6, to the end, lxxxix. 36, 37;



Isa. ix. 6, 7. And so the angel, referring to that promise, says, "He shall be great, and shall be called the SON OF THE HIGHEST, and the Lord God shall give unto him the THRONE of his father David; and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever, and of his KINGDOM there shall be no end." Luke i. 32, 33.

Now, if this be the scripture account of Christ's Sonship, then it does not seem to relate to the particular mode of his personal existence in the Godhead, but to his incarnate state in the economy of redemption. And it is in this sense that the apostle terms him *the Son*, when he says, that God hath in these last days spoken to us by him, and adds

—*whom he hath appointed heir of all things.*] An heir, among men, commonly signifies one who succeeds in the right, title, and estate of the deceased: but this cannot be the meaning of the word here; for as the father dieth not, so neither does he divest himself of his natural, necessary, and unalienable property in, and dominion over, all things. In Scripture, it frequently signifies one who, either by right of birth, or by special appointment, is Lord of the family, and hath a title to the inheritance. Isaac, in giving Jacob the peculiar blessing of the heir, made him his brother's *lord*, Gen. xxvii. 37. Paul describes the heir to be *lord of all*, Gal. iv. 1. So Peter declares, that God, by raising up and exalting Jesus, had made him both *Lord and Christ*, Acts ii. 36; and that he is *Lord of all*, chap. x. 36, which is the same as his being made *Heir of all things*, and imports his supreme dominion as lord, proprietor, ruler, and disposer of all persons and things.

This heirship was given him as the Son of God, or the Word made flesh of the seed of David, and the first-begotten from the dead. Our apostle infers heirship from sonship, Rom. viii. 17, Gal. iv. 7; and it was evidently suitable to Christ's filial character, as being the only begotten of the Father, that he should have the

inheritance and dominion as heir. The Father is said to have *constituted* or *placed* him heir, which imports his solemn investiture, and his being put in actual possession of the inheritance and kingdom, with all the powers, dignities, and honours pertaining to it; but this did not actually take place till he was raised from the dead, and seated at the Father's right hand; for it was conferred upon him not only as a filial right, but also as a reward of his obedience unto death, Rom. xiv. 9; Philip. ii. 9—12.

As to the *extent* of his heirship, he is heir (*panton*) of *all things*. This must be understood, in the most extensive and unlimited sense, as comprehending all persons and things. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand," John iii. 35. "All power," says he, "is given unto me in heaven and in earth," Mat. xxviii. 18. All the angels of God are made subject to him, and commanded to worship him, 1 Pet. iii. 22; Heb. i. 6. The *saints* whom he hath redeemed are his special heritage—his peculiar people, 1 Pet. v. iii; Tit. ii. 14. They are his many brethren to whom he stands related as the first-born among them, Rom. viii. 29. He is their Head, Lord, and Lawgiver, and the object of their love, worship, and obedience. He is the heir and dispenser of *all spiritual blessings*: "For it hath pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell," Col. i. 19; and it is out of his fulness that all his people have received, and grace for grace, John i. 16. He is heir of the *heavenly inheritance*, and it is in his right and as joint-heirs with him, that all his redeemed brethren obtain it, Luke xxii. 29; Col. iii. 24; Rom. viii. 17. But who can describe the unsearchable riches of Christ, since all things that the Father hath are his? John xvi. 15.

We may also notice, that he has dominion over *all the nations of the world* with their kings and rulers; for he is "the Prince of the kings of the earth," Rev. i. 5. "King of kings and Lord of lords," 1 Tim. vi. 5; Rev. xvii. 14. Hence they are admonished to acknowledge, fear, and

serve him, under pain of his highest displeasure, Psal. ii. 10, 11, 12. He has power over all the *enemies* of his government, whether wicked men or devils. They are all under his control, so that he makes their very opposition to subserve his designs; and he will at last judge and punish them, Jude ver. 6; Rev. xx. 10, 14, 15; Mat. xxv. 41; "for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet," 1 Cor. xv. 25.

When we contemplate this heirship of the Son of God, it must strike us at once that it is infinitely too high for any mere creature to receive, and vastly too great and extensive for the possession and management of any limited being or power. But the next clause gives full satisfaction on this head, by informing us, that the Son, whom God hath constituted heir of all things, is the very same person,

—*by whom also he made the worlds.*] This is a clear proof of the divinity of Christ; yet the opposers of that important truth have employed all their skill in criticism to set aside the sense of these words. Some wish to substitute *di on* for *di ou*, and so would have the sense to be, that God made the worlds *for* Christ, but not *by* him. But this alteration is without any authority or example, contrary to the exposition of all the Greek fathers, and altogether arbitrary. *Dia*, with 'a genitive, as here, never denotes the cause or end *for which*, but always the efficient or instrumental cause *by* or *through* which any thing is effected; and, to dismiss this alteration at once, let it be observed, that our apostle in a parallel passage declares, that all things were created both *by* and *for* Christ, Col. i. 16.

It has also been alleged, that *tous aionas*, translated *the worlds*, signify *the ages*; and so the apostle is made to say, "for whom also he made the ages." But the sense of this, or how it suits the apostle's purpose, is not very obvious. Whenever the word *aionas* is used absolutely, as here, it always signifies the whole system of the universe, as

mentioned, Gen. i. 1. In Scripture, the whole creation is distributed into the heavens, the earth, the sea, and all created things contained in them, Exod. xx. 11; Acts iv. 24. The Jewish doctors divided the creation into several parts, calling them so many worlds, such as the upper world of angels and spirits, the world of sun, moon, and stars; and the lower world of earth, air, and sea. Our apostle, therefore, in the Jewish style, uses the plural word *worlds*, to express the whole creation in the most extensive sense, as he does also in chap. xi. 3.

Farther, it is affirmed, that *the worlds* must here be understood in a metaphorical sense, denoting the gospel dispensation, and so signifies, that God effected the moral creation or renovation of the world by the doctrine and example of his Son. But the gospel dispensation is never in scripture termed *the worlds* in the plural; and though it is once termed *the world* in the singular, yet not absolutely, but with the limitation of *to come*, chap. vi. 5. They admit that the same word signifies the material system of the universe in chap. xi. 3; and indeed they cannot deny this, for it is there explained by "the things which are seen." To suppose that the apostle should use it here in a different sense—a sense altogether singular and metaphorical, without giving the least explanatory hint to prevent mistakes on a point of such importance—is a groundless imagination, which nothing but strong prejudice could have suggested. Besides, according to this metaphorical sense, it might with equal propriety be said, that God made the worlds by the apostles, whose ministry was more extensive and successful than Christ's personal ministry was while on earth. This is not the only place in Scripture where the creation of all things is ascribed to Christ. We are told that "All things were made by him, and without him was not anything made that was made," John i. 3; that "God created all things by Jesus Christ," Eph iii. 9; and that "by him were all things created that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible

and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers ; all things were created by him, and for him ; and he is before all things, and by him all things consist," Col. i. 16, 17.

There are many who maintain that God made the worlds by his Son as an *instrument*, or as a *created inferior agent*. The Scriptures indeed intimate a certain order in which the Father and Son act both in creation and redemption. All things are said to be (*ex*) of or *from* God the Father, and (*dia*) by or *through* Jesus Christ, 1 Cor. viii. 6 ; 2 Cor. v. 18 ; Eph. iii. 9. This seems to hint, that, in order of operation, the Father is the great First Mover, and that the Son seconds the Father's designs, and brings them into effect ; but does not prove that he is a separate or inferior kind of power, but rather that he is the Father's effective Word and power, by whom he performs every divine work in relation to his creatures. It is said that God "by his Spirit hath garnished the heavens," Job xxvi. 13 ; yet, from this manner of speaking, we cannot infer, that the Spirit of God is a created and inferior agent. We may distinguish first and second causes in other works ; but the work of creating, or bringing all things at first into existence, admits of no such distinction. An instrument or second cause may operate upon materials already existing ; but its agency can have no place in bringing things that are not into being. Omnipotence alone can effect this. Accordingly, the Scriptures always represent creation as the peculiar, exclusive, and immediate work of the Deity : " Thus saith Jehovah, I am Jehovah, that maketh all things ; that stretcheth forth the heavens alone ; that spreadeth abroad the earth BY MYSELF," Isa. xlv. 24. By this work, the living and true God is distinguished from all that is not God, and held forth as the sole object of trust, and of all religious worship, see Psal. cxxi. 2, cxxiv. 8, cxxxiv. 3, cxlvi. 6 ; Isa. xxxvii. 16 ; Jer. x. 11, ch. xxxii. 17 ; Acts iv. 24, ch. xiv. 15, ch. xvii. 24 ; Rev. x. 6, ch. xiv. 7.

It is a first principle in natural religion, and obvious to the reason of mankind, that the author of those visible works which they behold with their eyes must necessarily be possessed of eternal power and godhead: so that the heathen are without excuse in their idolatry. Since, therefore, the creation of all things is repeatedly ascribed to Christ, his eternal power and godhead must be clearly seen or understood by that work, according to the apostle's argument in Rom. i. 20; and it would be the height of absurdity to suppose a created or inferior eternal power and godhead.

Ver. 3. *Who being the brightness of his glory—*] The Son is here declared to be (*apaugasma tes doxes*) the brightness or an effulgence of glory, *i. e.* of his Father's glory. The expression is metaphorical; and some imagine that it is used to illustrate what is called his eternal generation, as if that were similar to the emission of light from a luminous body; and from this idea it is argued, that as a ray is not of the same substance with the luminous body from which it proceeds, so neither is the Son of the same essence with the Father.

But this, I apprehend, is wide of the apostle's design. He is neither describing the generation of the Son, nor speaking directly of his abstract nature or essence; but is representing him as the splendour or brightest manifestation of the glory of the invisible God. The *brightness of glory* evidently alludes to the visible emblem of the divine presence of old, which was a bright shining light or flame of fire, and was called *the glory of Jehovah*. This visible glory of the divine majesty appeared to Moses in the bush, Exod. iii. 2—4; resided in the cloud, and conducted Israel out of Egypt, chap. xiii. 21; appeared on Mount Sinai at the giving of the law, chap. xix. 18, chap. xxiv. 16; took possession of the tabernacle, Exod. xl. 34, 35, where it sometimes appeared to all the people, Lev. ix. 23, Num. xiv. 10; but more ordinarily within the veil, enthroned upon the mercy seat, between the

cherubim, Lev. xvi. 2. From thence the Lord spake to Moses, Exod. xxvi. 21, 22, Num. vii. 89; and to him, as dwelling there, all religious worship was directed, Psal. lxxx. 1. This glory of the Lord resided also in the first temple, 2 Chron. vii. 1—4; and the apostle enumerates it among the peculiar privileges of old Israel, that to them belonged the glory, Romans ix. 4. The Jewish writers termed this visible glory SHECHINA IKRA, or CHABOD, which imports the majestic splendour of the divine glory, and is much the same with the apostle's expression in this place. The Hebrews, therefore, would naturally understand him as alluding to that visible glory of Jehovah which appeared unto their fathers of old, and to be affirming that Jesus Christ is the truth, spirit, or substance of it.

The glory of God is his character or divine perfections, as displayed or shining forth. In this sense, Christ is the splendour of the Father's glory, for God gives the light of the knowledge of his glory in the face of Jesus Christ. It is in him that all his glorious attributes are displayed to the highest advantage. But this is not perceived merely by the bodily eye, as was the *Shechina*, but by his shining into the heart, 2 Cor. iv. 6. The apostle adds —and the express image of his person.—] The word *charakter* rendered *express image*, imports such a complete and exact likeness, as is betwixt a die and its coin, or betwixt a seal and its impression, in which nothing of the original is lost or diminished in the representation. The word *uposasis*, translated *person*, occurs five times in the New Testament; thrice it is translated *confidence*, as in 2 Cor. ix. 4, chap. xi. 17, Heb. iii. 4; once *substance*, Heb. xi. 1; and here, *person*. *Confidence* would make no tolerable sense in this place. *Substance* comes nearer the etymology; but this, it is thought, does not well admit of an express image; and we are told that *uposasis* was not used to signify *person* till after the council of Nice, about the year 325. But whatever critics may make of this

word, the apostle evidently means to express by it the Father *himself*, as personally distinguished from the Son; and the sense is, that the Son is the exact likeness or image of the Father. This sense is clearly expressed in 2 Cor. iv. 4, Col. i. 15, where he is termed the *eikon, image of God, the image of the invisible God*; from which it is plain, that the invisible God is the HYPOSTASIS of which the Son is the express image; and so perfectly is the Father represented in him, that he says himself, "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father," John xiv. 9.

We have observed above, that Christ is termed *the brightness of glory*, in allusion to the *Shechina*; but that was not an *express image*, or personal likeness; for though Israel of old saw the glory of the Lord at the giving of the law (Exod. xix. 11), yet Moses, referring to that appearance, says, "ye saw no manner of similitude," *i. e.* personal form or likeness, "on the day that the Lord spake unto you in Horeb;" and this he uses as an argument to dissuade them from making any image, form, or likeness of God, Deut. iv. 10—19. There was, however, a similitude of the Lord, a sight of which was promised to Moses, Num. xii. 7, 8; and upon one occasion, at least, he and the elders of Israel were favoured with that sight." "They saw the God of Israel; and there was under his feet, as it were, a paved work of sapphire, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness," Exod. xxiv. 10. Isaiah also had a vision of this majestic likeness of the God of Israel, chap. vi. 1, 5, and so had Ezekiel, chap. i. 26, 27, 28. In these appearances there was not only a brightness of glory, but the likeness of a person enthroned as a Sovereign in royal majesty, as the substance or *hypostasis* of that glory. And this is probably what the apostle alludes to in these words, *the express image of his person*.

Christ had a glory with the Father before the world was, John xvii. 5, and existed in the form of God before



(*ekenose*) he emptied himself of that form, and took upon him the form of a servant in his humbled state, Philip. ii. 6, 7. This form of God, I apprehend, was not his divine nature, though it implies it; for of that he cannot be said to have emptied himself, nor was he in that respect any more visible than the Father; but it seems to be that visible form of divine majesty and glory in which he formerly appeared; that similitude of God which Moses and the prophets saw, and which is said to be the glory of Christ, Isa. vi. 1—6, compared with John xii. 40, 41. So that the most glorious visible manifestation of the invisible God that was ever given to mortal men under the Old Testament, was in that form of divine majesty in which Christ appeared as the God of Israel.

But here we must observe, that the divine appearances under the law, however glorious, had something shadowy or typical in them, answerable to the nature of that dispensation, and so referred to a still more glorious and satisfying manifestation of God in the person of Christ under the gospel. Moses, who saw the similitude of the Lord, did not consider it as the highest manifestation of him, and therefore prays, "I beseech thee shew me thy glory;" by which he must have meant something beyond all that he had yet seen, or indeed could see while in this mortal body, as the Lord's answer to him implies, "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live," Exod. xxxiii. 18, 20. God is absolutely invisible to mortals, dwelling in the light inaccessible, whom no man hath seen, nor can see, 1 Tim. vi. 16. Therefore though Moses saw the similitude of a personal appearance of the God of Israel, Exod. xxiv. 10, even as Isaiah saw the King, the Lord of Hosts, sitting on a throne high and lifted up, Isa. vi. 1, 5; yet this appearance was not fully realised in its truth and substance till the Son of God in human nature entered into his glory and sat down on his heavenly throne. There all the Father shines in him, he being the brightness of his glory, and the express image

of his person. This Moses and the prophets could not see but in a similitude.

Though New Testament believers have now a clearer and more spiritual manifestation of the character of God in the person and work of Christ presented to their faith and contemplation in the gospel revelation, which is termed (*ton photismon*) "the illumination of the good news of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God," 1 Cor. iv. 4, 6; yet while they are in this mortal body, they do not see the glory of the Lord by immediate and direct vision, but as it were through a glass obscurely, 1 Cor. xiii. 12; for flesh and blood can no more endure that sight than it can inherit the kingdom of God. But when their earthly tabernacle is put off or changed, and they are with Christ where he is, then shall they directly behold his glory, John xvii. 24; they shall see him as he is, 1 John iii. 2, not as through a glass, or any intervening medium, but face to face.

It was much to the apostle's purpose to set forth Christ in this view. The Mosaic law derived its divine authority from the majestic glory of Jehovah which appeared at the delivery of it; and this, no doubt, was a strong argument with the Hebrews for their attachment to it in all its peculiarities. He therefore informs them, that the Person by whom God hath now spoken to them, is the truth and substance of all the former appearances of the Divine Majesty. He adds,

—*and upholding all things*—] The word *pheron* properly signifies *upholding*, *bearing*, or *sustaining*, though sometimes, in conformity to the Hebrew, it imports, *ruling*, *governing*, or *disposing*. The former sense seems chiefly intended here, though not exclusive of the latter. The apostle had said, ver. 2, that God made the worlds by his Son, and here he represents the Son as sustaining or upholding the whole creation in its existence and order. Both these divine works he also ascribes to the Son in Col. i. 16, 17. "All things were created by him—and

by him all things (*suneseke*) consist." He not only made all things at first, but continues to uphold and preserve them from dissolution and disorder. He sustains everything severally in its particular being, nature, and operations, and all things collectively in their order, connection, and consistency with relation to the universal system; and he also governs and directs the whole in a subserviency to his own great designs. All this he effects

—*by the word of his power.*] The phrase is expressive of divine power—that almighty power by which the Divine Being created all things, and which is frequently represented as exerted by a word spoken, a word of command, saying, *Let it be*, and it was, Gen. i.; Psal. xxxiii. 6, 9. So that the same divine power which at first spoke all things into existence, is exercised by the Son in upholding and preserving them in their present state during the time appointed.

Here, again, we have a clear proof of the divinity of Christ. But some contend that the pronoun (*autou*) *his*, refers to the Father, not to the Son; so that, according to them, the sense is, that the Son upholdeth all things by his Father's power. It is indeed true that the power which upholdeth all things is the power of the Father; but it is equally true, that the same power resides in and is exerted by the Son: "My Father worketh hitherto," says Jesus, "and I work," John v. 7, and therefore this power is properly called *his*. It is plain from the connection, that the Son is the subject of the whole of this sublime description, and it is quite unnatural to suppose, that the apostle, after having represented him as upholding all things, should immediately intimate, that he had no power of his own, nor any other hand in that work than his apostles had in working miracles, which was neither by their own power nor holiness. If divine power is not his own—if it is not inherent in him, so as to be exercised by him in upholding all things—with what propriety is that work ascribed to him at all? The Hebrews

did not need to be told that God Almighty upholds all things; but they needed to have more exalted conceptions of the divine dignity, authority, and almighty power of Christ; and this is what the apostle is here instructing them in, and concerning whom he immediately adds, —*when he had by himself purged our sins*—] Gr. “by himself having made a cleansing of our sins,” *i. e.* expiated them. *Katharismos* signifies purification or cleansing of any kind; but here it has a relation to *sin*, which in Scripture is represented as filthiness, uncleanness, or pollution. Sometimes it signifies the purification of the heart and life from depravity and moral disorder, as in 2 Cor. vii. 1. But this cannot be its meaning here; because this purification is represented as effected by Christ without us, and at once, before he sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; whereas moral purification is a change produced upon existing subjects, and is gradually carrying on by the word and Spirit of God in all ages. It must therefore in this place (and indeed throughout the greater part of this epistle), signify such a cleansing of sins as is made by an atonement, or expiatory sacrifice offered unto God for them, so as to procure a deliverance from their guilt and punishment.

To confirm this sense of the word, let it be observed, That our apostle throughout this epistle, when treating of Christ's sacrifice and its effects, uses the phraseology of the Greek translation of the Old Testament respecting the legal sacrifices. In this version the Hebrew *Copher*, which signifies *atonement*, is sometimes translated *katharismos*, that is *purification* or *cleansing*, as in Exod. xxix. 36, chap. xxx. 10. The verb *katharizo*, to *purify* or *cleanse*, is also frequently used to express the *act* of making atonement by offering a sacrifice for sin, as in Exod. xxix. 37, chap. xxx. 10, Lev. ix. 15; and it is also used to express the *effect* of this action in cleansing the people from the guilt of sin, see Lev. xvi. 30. The apostle observes in general, that “almost all things are by the law (*katharizetai*)

purified with blood, and without shedding of blood is no remission," Heb. ix. 22. Now, as the Hebrews were well acquainted with the sacrificial terms of their law, they must have understood the apostle to mean, that Christ expiated our sins, or made an atonement for them by the blood of his sacrifice.

This sense is farther evident from the *means* by which he accomplished this purification. It was (*di eautou*) by *himself*; which is afterwards explained by a variety of the clearest expressions, such as "by his own blood," chap. ix. 12—"by means of death," ver. 15—"by offering himself unto God," ver. 14—"by the sacrifice of himself," ver. 26—"by the offering of his body once," chap. x. 10. This plainly imports that he was not only the sacrifice, but the priest who offered it, as he shews at large; for it was to the priestly office alone that the work of expiating sins by sacrifice belonged; and there seems to be here a tacit comparison of him with the Aaronical high priests. Two things are mentioned wherein he excels them.—1. He purged our sins, viz. effectually, at once, and for ever, chap. x. 14. This the legal high priests could not do by all their repeated sacrifices.—2. He did this *by himself*, or by his own blood, chap. ix. 12; whereas the Aaronical high priests offered the blood of others, ver. 25, the blood of bulls and goats, which could not possibly take away sin, chap. x. 4. When Christ had entered in once into the heavenly holy place with his own blood, and completed the work of atonement, he

—*sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*] By the *Majesty on high*, some understand certain bright and glorious beings who represent the Divine Majesty in heaven in a visible manner, and may be said to have a right hand or side: Agreeable to this, they make *en upselois* (which is plural, though in our translation rendered *on high*) to signify, *among the high beings*. But the *Majesty on high* evidently signifies God the Father; for Christ had said that he was to ascend to his Father, John

xx. 17, and afterwards declares that he was set down with his Father on his throne, Rev. iii. 21, and his exalted state is frequently described by his sitting at the right hand of God, see Mark xvi. 19; Acts ii. 33, 34; Heb. x. 12; 1 Pet. iii. 22. The title of *Majesty* imports supreme greatness, dignity, and authority; and so in chap. viii. 1, (which is exactly parallel to this), the Divine Majesty is represented as having a throne; for Christ is said to be "set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." And this also explains the plural *en upselois* to signify *in the heavens*, and not *among the high beings*, as some conjecture. And as Jesus "ascended up far above all heavens," Eph. iv. 10, that is, above all the visible heavens, so the place here meant must be the highest heavens. The *Majesty on high*, therefore, is God the Father seated on his glorious throne in the highest heavens; and here Christ is represented as having sat down at his right hand. To be placed in state at the right hand of sovereigns, has always been considered as the highest mark of esteem, and the greatest honour that kings can confer upon any without renouncing the crown itself. With regard to Christ, it imports that he is exalted as mediator to the highest, the most glorious and honourable station and place in heaven, next to his Father, and far above every, the highest created being in dignity, power, and glory, see Eph. i. 20, 21, 22; Philip. ii. 9; 1 Pet. iii. 22. This is what had long before been promised him, as mentioned in Psal. cx. 1, which our apostle frequently cites on this subject.

This glory and honour was conferred on him as High Priest, and in consequence of his having purged our sins. And here we may observe a wide difference as to the consequence of his ministration, and that of the high priest under the law. The holy of holies on earth was a type of heaven, Heb. xi. 24, and it contained the patterns of things in the heavens, the emblems of God's presence, throne, and glory, ver. 5, 23. On the great day of

atonement the high priest expiated the sins of the people, by entering alone into this most holy place with the blood of the slain animals, and sprinkled it upon and before the mercy-seat, or typical throne of the Divine Majesty, Lev. xvi. 14. This service he performed *standing*, with the most profound reverence and awe in the presence of God; and when he had finished it, he did not presume, nor was he permitted to *sit down* in the meanest place there, far less on the right of the mercy-seat between the cherubim, but immediately retired. Now, in opposition to this, we are told, that when Christ had by himself purged our sins, (namely, by presenting the blood of his sacrifice before the throne of God in heaven), he did not retire from thence, but "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," as an abiding priest there. And the Father also gave the highest evidence of his full and everlasting satisfaction in his sacrifice, by thus advancing him to a participation of his throne, dominion, and glory, Rev. iii. 21, chap. vii. 17.

We may farther notice, that God's throne in heaven was not only typified by the mercy-seat, but also by the throne of David and Solomon, which is expressly termed the *throne of Jehovah*, 1 Chron. xxix. 23. The thing typified by that earthly throne was promised to Christ, who is David's Son and Lord, Isa. ix. 6, 7; Luke i. 31, 32, 33; Acts ii. 30. And as he is both a king and a priest, Zech. vi. 13, a royal priest after the order of Melchisedec, Psal. cx. 4, so the throne and power to which he is advanced must correspond to his twofold character.

It may perhaps be thought that the last clause of this verse has been explained too literally: That as God is an invisible and immense Being, who is everywhere present, he cannot properly be said to appear in heaven, to have a local throne there, or a right hand at which Christ is placed; and that therefore such expressions are altogether metaphorical, and accommodated to the gross and circumscribed conceptions of men. That there is something of

metaphor in the words may be admitted ; but yet they are certainly the fittest to convey the ideas intended. The Scriptures were written to make the simple wise unto salvation ; and such as affect to be wise beyond what is written on this sublime subject, are in danger of losing every idea of it whatever, by too much refinement. God is indeed immense and invisible as to his omnipresence and essence ; but it does not appear that our apostle is speaking of him in that view ; nor can it be shewn, that his invisibility and omnipresence are such as to admit of no visible and local manifestation of his Majestic and glorious presence in heaven. There is no inconsistency in this any more than in the divine appearances of old, which serve to illustrate and confirm it. Though the heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain him, 2 Chron. vi. 18, yet he had a local throne on earth in the holy of holies between the cherubim, Exod. xxv. 22, where he is said to dwell and sit, appear and speak, 1 Sam. iv. 4, Psal. xcix. 1, Lev. xvi. 2, Num. vii. 89 ; and as this was a pattern of things in the heavens, Heb. viii. 5, chap. ix. 23, 24, so the truth and antitype of it must be in heaven itself, where God hath prepared his throne, Psal. ciii. 19 ; Rev. xxii. 3.

Jesus Christ has ascended into heaven in his human nature, which is necessarily limited, and therefore must be in some place there ; and as the word of God repeatedly represents him as at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where Stephen in his last moments declared that he actually saw him, Acts vii. 55, 56, what more just or elevated conceptions can we form of this subject than what the words naturally suggest ? Farther, the happiness of the glorified saints in heaven is described by their being WITH Christ WHERE he is, John xiv. 3, chap. xvii. 24, their BEHOLDING his glory, and SEEING him as he is, 1 John iii. 2, and by their SEEING God, Matt. v. 8, SEEING his face, Rev. xxii. 4. Now, as the saints are limited creatures, they must necessarily be in some place ; and if



they are to see Christ and God, it must be in some local visible manifestation ; for it is not spoken of as a mere mental or intellectual contemplation of an invisible object, but is distinguished from that, as sight is from faith, and described as the sight of a present object face to face, 1 Cor. xiii. 12. No doubt these things far transcend our present conceptions ; but if they were entirely different from the representation given of them in the language of Scripture, we could have no conception of them at all.

Ver. 4. *Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.*] The Scriptures represent the angels as spiritual beings, and the highest order of creatures in nature, dignity, and power. Their general name is expressive of their office as God's messengers or ministers, whom he employs as instruments of his providence, to execute his will either in the way of mercy or judgment ; and some of them are represented as having the superintendency of certain kingdoms and empires committed to them.

Many of the Jews had a kind of superstitious, or rather idolatrous respect for angels, because they had received the law and other intimations of the divine will, by their ministry, and were in some measure subjected to their administration. They looked upon them as mediators between God and men ; and some of them went so far as to pay them a kind of religious homage. The Judaizers, and other heretics among the Jews, seem to have been assiduous in propagating these sentiments, the direct tendency of which was to seduce men from the regards due to Christ, the alone mediator and head of the church, see Col. ii. 18, 19. Nay, some of the Jews held, that the angels had been co-workers with God in the creation of the world and formation of man, which vain opinion they grounded on Gen. i. 26. It was therefore highly necessary that the apostle should particularly insist on Christ's dignity and pre-eminence above the angels, not only as being the Creator of all things, consequently of angels

themselves, but as being the risen and exalted Messiah in human nature, to whom angels, authorities, and powers are made subject.

To prove this, he produces several passages from the Old Testament Scriptures, which the Hebrews acknowledged to be of divine authority. The first thing he takes notice of, is the more excellent name which (*kekleronomeke*) he hath inherited, viz. the SON OF GOD. We have already considered the import of that name as it is peculiarly and properly applied unto him, (see note on ver. 2); and as it is not a nominal title nor a mere term of office, but implies both the divine dignity of his person, and the power and dominion he possesses as Heir and Lord of all things, so the apostle justly infers from it, that the degree of power and glory to which he is advanced, as far transcends that of angels, as the name by which God hath distinguished and owned him, is more excellent than any name or title that he ever gave to any of the angels.

Ver. 5. *For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?* This citation is from Psal. ii. 7, which is undoubtedly a prophecy concerning the Messiah. Some of the later Jewish writers have indeed applied it to David; but acknowledge that in this they differ from their predecessors, who have explained this Psalm of the dominion and kingdom of the Messiah, and their Targum expressly applies it to him.

But the following considerations may satisfy every sincere Christian on this head—1. Christ himself explains the 8th and 9th verses of this Psalm, of the power which he had received of his Father over the nations, Rev. ii. 26, 27, and which is also alluded to, chap. xii. 5, chap. xix. 15.—2. The inspired apostles have uniformly applied this Psalm to Christ in all the places of the New Testament where they have cited it, see Acts iv. 25—28, chap. xiii. 33; Heb. i. 5, chap. v. 5; and as they had the promise of the Spirit to guide them into all truth, they

must have explained it agreeably to its true intent.—3. This Psalm will apply to no other person but Christ; for when did the Gentiles, with the people of Israel, and their respective rulers, consult and join together against David or Solomon, as they really did against Christ? compare ver. 1, 2, 3, with Acts iv. 25—29. When did the Lord say to David or Solomon, “Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee,” as in ver. 7. Nay, we may ask with our apostle, to which of the angels did he ever speak in this manner? When did he give to David the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession, with absolute power to crush all opposers, as in ver. 8, 9. Lastly, When were all the kings and judges of the earth admonished to submit unto David lest they should perish in his wrath, or were encouraged to do so by the blessedness of trusting in him? as in ver. 10, 11, 12.

The New Testament informs us, that all these particulars are verified in Christ, but we shall only take notice of the words here cited. They are part of the Father’s decree, determination, or purpose, declared by Christ, or rather by the Spirit of Christ speaking in David: “I will declare the decree; the Lord hath said unto me, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee.” This *begetting*, as has been shewn, cannot refer to what is called the *eternal generation* of the Son, for it is said to have taken place *this day*; an expression which never signifies eternity, but frequently a single solar day, and always a limited time, as in Psal. xcv. 7; Heb. iv. 7. Though Christ was the only begotten of the Father during his humbled state in this world, John i. 14, chap. iii. 16, 18, yet if we regard the *order* of the particulars in this prophetic Psalm, the begetting here mentioned must be something which took place *after*. “Herod, Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel had done to him whatsoever God’s hand and counsel had determined before to be done,” *i. e.* condemned and crucified him; compare ver. 1, 2, 3, with

Acts iv. 25—29. Our apostle cites this 7th verse of the Psalm to prove that Christ was made higher than the angels when he had by himself purged our sins, and therefore the begetting of the Son, by which he proves this, must have been *posterior* to his death. Accordingly, he elsewhere explains it of God's raising him from the dead;—"he hath raised up Jesus again, as it is written in the second Psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," Acts xiii. 32, 33.

It will perhaps be asked, how his name, THE SON OF GOD, proves him to be superior to angels, since angels, and even men, are termed *sons of God*? Besides, he possessed this name while he was in the form of a servant, and made lower than the angels. How then can it prove him superior to them? To this it may be answered—

1. That though angels and men are sometimes called *sons of God*, in respect of their creation and adoption; yet none of them are emphatically and by way of eminence called *the Son—God's own Son—the only begotten Son of God*. This manner of speaking plainly intimates, that he is the Son of God in such a high, peculiar, and distinguished sense as will apply to no other being whatever; no, not to the highest angel, he being exclusively God's only begotten Son.

2. Though for a little while he took upon him the form of a servant, and was made lower than the angels, by assuming our flesh in its mortal state; yet this is represented as the voluntary and amazing condescension of him who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, Philip. ii. 5—9; and, therefore, though he was then in a humbled state as to his humanity, yet, as to his person, being God manifest in the flesh, he must have been termed the Son of God in a higher sense than could be applied to angels; for God never conferred such glory and honour on any of the angels as he did on him, when he declared from the excellent glory, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased,"

Matt. iii. 17; 2 Pet. i. 17. But it must be particularly noticed,

3. That our apostle, in citing the passage under consideration, is not speaking of Christ during his humbled state in this world, or in those respects in which he was made for a time less than angels; but he is speaking of him as raised from the dead, and exalted far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come, Eph. i. 21. His being the Son of God was a controverted point during the days of his flesh; and though he gave sufficient proofs of his being the Son of God, yet his enemies put him to death as a blasphemer for affirming it, Mark xiv. 61—65; John xix. 7. This, for a little time, seemed to determine the controversy in their favour, and staggered the faith even of his friends, Mat. xxvi. 31; Luke xxiv. 11, 20, 21. But by his resurrection from the dead, he was declared the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, Rom. i. 4. It was then that this grand truth was fully demonstrated and finally decided; so that the import of his resurrection is the same with the Father's declaration, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee." It was then that God so highly exalted him, and made him as much superior to the angels as he hath inherited a name more excellent than they.

—*And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.*] This is another proof that Christ is superior to angels, founded on his distinguished relation to God as his Son. This promise imports, that God would not only be a Father to him, but that he would treat him as such by advancing him to the kingdom as his Son and Heir, and by establishing and protecting him in it—a promise which he never made to any of the angels.

The words are taken from 2 Sam. vii. 14, and are part of the covenant of royalty which God made with David. But it has been objected that this passage is not to the

apostle's purpose, since it is frequently applied to David's natural posterity who should succeed him on the throne, and particularly to Solomon, see 1 Chron. xxii. 7—11, chap. xxviii. 2—8; 2 Chron. x. 16, chap. vii. 18. To this it has been answered by some commentators, that God made two different covenants with David, and at different times: One respecting his Seed the Messiah, mentioned 2 Sam. vii. 4—17, and repeated 1 Chron. xvii. 4—15, from which this citation is taken; the other respecting Solomon and his successors, recorded 1 Chron. xxii. 7—10, and often referred to in other places. But the arguments in support of this opinion do not appear to me to be satisfactory. The words in 1 Chron. xxii. 7—10, seem to be only repeated by David from the original promise in 2 Sam. vii. 4—17, and which he applies to Solomon, to encourage him in fulfilling the charge he there gives him. I apprehend that this promise cannot be properly explained without admitting that it has a twofold sense, viz. a literal sense relating to Solomon, as a type, and a spiritual or mystical sense relating to the Messiah, as the great anti-type in whom it has its main and ultimate accomplishment. And as there are several other prophecies and promises which cannot be explained upon any other principle, I have stated my view of this matter in the APPENDIX, No. 1, which the reader may consult.

Ver. 6. *And again, when he bringeth in the First-begotten into the world, he saith, &c.*] Our translators have understood the bringing him into the world to be his incarnation, and so they make the word *again* to connect with *he saith*. But the original runs literally thus, “and when again he bringeth the First-begotten into the world, he saith,” &c. These words do not refer to the time of Christ's birth, which was celebrated by angels in songs of praise, Luke ii. 13, 14, for he was not then brought *again*, or a second time, into the world, nor was he then exalted above angels, but made a little while lower than they, Heb. ii. 9, which does not suit the apostle's argument, in

this place : But the time referred to is, when God raised him from the dead. To *go hence*, or *go out of the world*, are common expressions for dying, Psal. xxix. 13, 1 Cor. v. 10, and so to *bring again into the world* is to restore to life. And as Christ is here termed (*o prototokos*) the *First-begotten* or *First-born*, it points out his pre-eminence, and imports not only his resurrection, but advancement to the kingdom, as Lord and heir of all. Accordingly it is connected with his having in all things the pre-eminence, Col. i. 18, and his being the Prince of the kings of the earth, Rev. i. 5. It was, therefore, when God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to his throne, that he said,

—*And let all the angels of God worship him.*] Though the LXX. have these precise words in Deut. xxxii. 43, yet, as they are not found there, either in our present Hebrew copies, or in any other version, there is no evidence that they were originally written there by Moses. The words are evidently taken from Psal. xcvi. 7, where we find them with a little variation thus, “Worship him all ye (*elohim*) gods.” The Jewish writers apply this Psalm to the reign of the Messiah, and some of them explain *elohim* of the heathen gods ; but by the LXX. it is translated, or rather explained, *his angels*, and by our apostle, *angels of God*, which doubtless is the true sense ; for how could the heathen gods, which are mere nonentities, be commanded to worship him ?

The word *proskunein*, which signifies to *bow down before*, or to *worship*, though sometimes used in the Old Testament for civil homage, is always (as Dr Owen observes), in the New Testament, expressive of religious worship, and when given to a mere creature, is marked as idolatry, see Acts x. 25, 26 ; Rev. xiii. 12, 15 ; chap. xix. 10 ; chap. xxii. 8, 9. At any rate, it must necessarily signify divine worship in this place.—1. Because in the Psalm it is opposed to false religious worship, “Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of

idols; worship him all ye gods," ver. 7. Now that which is opposed to the worship of idols is the worship of the living and true God.—2. Because the object of the worship here enjoined is throughout the whole Psalm termed Jehovah in the original, see ver. 1, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12; and surely Jehovah is the proper object of religious worship. It must also be particularly noticed, that it is Jehovah in the person of the Son that is intended, otherwise this citation would not answer the apostle's purpose; for he is not proving that the Divine Being, absolutely and essentially considered, is higher than the angels (a point never disputed by any), but he is proving that the incarnate and glorified Messiah is exalted above them, from their being commanded to worship him. He had an original claim to their worship as their Creator, Col. i. 10, but there is a new and additional ground for it in his being exalted as head over all principalities and powers, Phil. ii. 9, 10, 11; 1 Pet. iii. 22, and this is what the apostle has immediately in view.

The apostle's explanation of this verse gives us a key to the whole of the 97th Psalm, which contains a grand description of the dignity and majesty of Christ, and of the extensiveness of his dominion. "The Lord" (*i. e.* the Messiah) "reigneth, let the earth rejoice; let the multitudes of the isles" (*i. e.* the Gentiles isles) "be glad thereof. Clouds and darkness are around about him: righteousness and judgment are the establishment of his throne," ver. 1, 2. And having represented him as Lord of the whole earth, and all nature as moved at his presence, ver. 3, 4, 5, it is added, "The heavens declare his righteousness; and all the people see his glory," ver. 6. Then follows an awful denunciation against idolaters—"Confounded be all they that serve graven images; that boast themselves of idols," while at the same time the command is given, "Worship him all ye gods," ver. 7; and the reason is given ver 9. "For thou, Jehovah, art high above all the earth; thou art exalted" (*viz.* at the



Father's right hand) "far above all gods," all the angels of God being made subject to him. From this consideration, and the saving power he exerciseth in behalf of his people, the saints are exhorted to hate evil, to rejoice in him, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness, ver. 10, 11, 12.

This passage, therefore, not only proves the divinity of Christ, without which he could not be the object of religious worship, since it is written, "Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve," Mat. iv. 10; but it also proves, that the power and dominion given him in the economy of redemption, as the King, Messiah, and First-born from the dead, is a reason why both men and angels should pay him religious homage under that character. So Christ himself says, "The Father hath committed all judgment" (*i. e.* all rule and authority) "to the Son; that all men should honour the Son, even as they honour the Father," John v. 22, 23.

Ver. 7. *And of the angels he saith, "Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire."*] These words are taken from Psal. civ. 4, to shew that angels are inferior to Christ, from the inferior designations given them, and ministry assigned them. They are termed *his angels* or messengers, and *his ministers* or servants; and God is said to make them *spirits*. The original word, both in Hebrew and Greek, signifies either spirits or winds. In favour of our translation it is alleged, that their being made spirits, best agrees with their being immaterial intelligent beings, and with their being afterwards termed ministering spirits, ver. 14. On the other hand it may be observed, that their being made *winds* agrees best with their being made *a flame of fire*; that by neither of these expressions is meant the substance or essence of angels, but what they are made by office; and as fire and stormy wind are represented as God's servants fulfilling his word, Psal. cxlviii. 8; and the same thing is affirmed of angels, Psal. ciii. 20, 21; so they may here

be compared to winds for their swiftness and alacrity in performing their messages, Dan. ix. 21; and to a flame of fire, on account of their ardour, power, and efficacy, in executing their commission. Or perhaps it may signify their power over winds and fire in fulfilling God's purposes; and so the delivery of the law by the ministration of angels was attended with a flaming fire and a tempest, Exod. xix. 16, 18; Heb. xii. 18.

Ver. 8. *But to the Son he saith,—*] The words which follow are taken from Psal. xlv. 6, 7. This Psalm contains the things which the inspired penman had written concerning the King, ver. 1; and this King, the apostle informs us, is the Son, or Messiah, as the Jewish writers acknowledge. The address is conceived in terms too high for Solomon or any mere man, and is quoted by the apostle to shew the superiority of Christ to angels. The Psalm is entitled, *A Song of loves*; and as the latter part of it greatly resembles the Song of Solomon, it may serve as a key to that mysterious book. The words addressed to the Son are these,

“*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever—*] The Son is here called (*o Theos*) *God*. The Hebrew is *Elohim*, a name which is never given to any individual angel, or human ruler, but to the Divine Being alone; yet the direct design of the apostle in citing this passage, is to set forth Christ's superiority to angels, in respect of power and dominion as the King Messiah, whom God hath exalted, as appears from the different particulars here affirmed of him. When it is said, “*Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever,*” it refers to the promise made to David concerning him, “*I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever,*” 2 Sam. vii. 13, 16; Psal. lxxxix. 36, 37; see also Isa. ix. 7; Dan ii. 44. His throne, as the King Messiah, will continue for ever and ever, or throughout all ages to the end of time, without being succeeded by any other, till it ushers in that perfect state of things, when his enemies shall be made his footstool, and God

shall be all in all; and then the present manner of his administration shall cease, having obtained its end; see 1 Cor. xv. 24—29. In the supremacy and perpetuity of his government, he is incomparably superior to the angels; for though they had a kind of rule and dominion formerly assigned to them (as we shall afterwards have occasion to notice), yet that came to an end when Christ was raised from the dead, and exalted to his throne, for then they were made subject to him, Eph. i. 20, 21; 1 Pet. iii. 22. And with regard to the rectitude of his administration it is said,

—“*a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.*”]

A sceptre, rod, or mace, when joined, as here, with a throne and kingdom, is the well-known emblem of rule. His is said to be a sceptre (*eutheutos*) of *straightness* or *rectitude*, denoting the justice, faithfulness, and grace of his reign. Its full meaning may be gathered from other prophetic descriptions of his government, see Psalm lxxii. Isa. ix. 7, chap. xi. 1—6, chap. xl. 11; Jer. xxiii. 5, 6. His worthiness to receive this kingdom is next taken notice of.

Ver. 9. “*Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity,*—] This is a description of his holy character and perfect obedience previous to his exaltation to the throne. Some are of opinion that it refers to his government of the church of Israel before he came in the flesh; but I do not recollect that this is ever assigned as the reason of his being anointed or exalted to his heavenly throne. The words evidently refer to his spotless character and meritorious work during his humbled state in this world. His love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity appeared throughout the whole of his life here below. The divine law, which requires perfect love to God and man, was within his heart. He not only preached, but fulfilled all righteousness; and his meat was to do the will of his Father, and to finish his work. But this appeared most eminently in his voluntarily laying down his life for the

sheep at the command of his Father, John x. 17, 18. Never did his love and submission to his Father, his regard to his honour, and to the just requirements of his laws, his hatred of iniquity, and his love and compassion towards guilty sinners, appear so strikingly as in that extraordinary act of obedience whereby many are made righteous, Rom. v. 19. And this, I apprehend, is what the Spirit of God in David chiefly assigns as the meritorious cause of his exaltation, in the words which follow :

—“ *Therefore (dia touto) God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.*”] The nature of his obedience, and its connection with the consequent reward, is clearly set forth by the apostle: “ He emptied himself, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men ; and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. WHEREFORE (*dio kai*) God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name,” &c., Philip. ii. 7, 8, 9. Never did any of the holy angels discover such love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity as this, nor “ dwelt there, in all heaven, charity so dear.” In his meritorious obedience, Christ as far excelled the angels as he is now exalted above them in the reward of it.

The words *o Theos, o Theos sou*, should be rendered *O God, thy God*, the nominative being frequently put for the vocative, as in ver. 8, Rom. viii. 15. It is an address to Christ as *God*.

He is said to be *anointed*. He was anointed, while on earth, with the Holy Spirit, to qualify him, as a prophet, to preach the Gospel to the poor, &c., Luke iv. 18, and to confirm his mission by miracles, Acts x. 38. But the anointing here intended respects his exaltation to the kingdom, and is of the same import with his being crowned ; and so it is said (Psal. ii. 6), “ Yet have I set (Heb. *anointed*) my king upon my holy hill of Zion.” It alludes to the anointing of the kings and high priests

of Israel with the holy oil, when setting them apart to their office; and it is here termed *the oil of gladness*, because the anointing of kings was a solemnity of great gladness and rejoicing, and in this 45th Psalm is represented, as connected with a marriage solemnity, ver. 14, 15; see also Song iii. 11. Besides, the Holy Spirit was then conferred on the exalted Redeemer without measure, filling his soul with unspeakable joy, and making him exceeding glad with his Father's countenance, Acts ii. 28, 33; Psal xxi. 3—7.

He by whom he was thus anointed is called his God; *thy God hath anointed thee*. It was God in the person of the Father who conferred this high reward upon his incarnate Son, now begotten from the dead. He is called his God, not to point out the original superiority of the Father to the Son in the Godhead, but in relation to the economy of redemption, in which Christ is constituted the King and federal Head of the Church. In this view the Father is his God, and is frequently termed "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," and in him the God and Father of all his brethren, whom he represents; see John xx. 17; 2 Cor. xi. 31; Eph. i. 3, 17; 1 Peter i. 3.

But the chief design of the apostle in citing this passage is, to set forth Christ's pre-eminence in his exalted state above all that were ever employed in the service and rule of the Church, whether angels or men, and who are here termed his (*metochous*) *fellows, associates, or partners*—"thy God hath anointed thee above thy fellows." By this term the apostle must chiefly have understood angelic rulers, for he is proving Christ's superiority to these. But in what sense can they be termed his *fellows* or *partners*? Not in respect of his natural and original dignity, for they are his creatures, Col. i. 16. Nor are they his partners in the power and dominion conferred upon him at his resurrection, for then he was anointed *above* them, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him, 1 Peter iii. 22. But as angels were for-

merly vested with power and authority as God's ministers, particularly in the affairs of the Church and kingdom of old Israel, so they may be termed Christ's *fellows*, not in point of equality, but similarity of office; and in this sense their prophets, priests, and kings may also be so called.

Verses 10, 11, 12, contain a citation from Psalm cii. 25, 26, 27. The learned Mr Peirce has given a very singular view of this passage. He explains it not as an address to the Son, but to God the Father; nor as relating to the original creation of the heavens and the earth, with the change they are to undergo, but as metaphorically setting forth God's ancient appointment of earthly and heavenly or angelic rulers, whose government was to be entirely changed or set aside. So that according to this gloss the Son is not spoken of at all in this passage; and if not, how does it suit the apostle's purpose, or prove that Christ is superior to the angels?

That the 102d Psalm contains a prophecy of the kingdom of the Messiah, is evident from what is there said of the Lord's appearing in his glory, when he shall have mercy upon and build up Zion, ver. 13, 16; when he shall regard the prayer of the destitute, and hear the groaning of the prisoner, to loose the children of death, ver 17, 20, compared with Luke iv. 18; and from the clear prediction of the calling of the Gentiles, when the heathen shall fear the name of the Lord, and all the kings of the earth his glory—when a people shall be created to praise him, and when the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms to serve him, ver. 15, 18, 20. The Jewish writers themselves refer these things to the world to come, or the reign of Messiah. But we shall consider the particular passage which the apostle cites from it, and shew how it suits his purpose.

Verse 10, "*And thou Lord*"—] Our apostle had introduced the foregoing testimony from Psalm xlv. with these words, "But to the Son he saith;" and, without

any alteration of the form of address, or the least intimation of a change of the person addressed, he adds this other testimony to it, by the copulative (*kai*) *and*; which, being connected (the psalm also being prophetic of Christ), must undoubtedly import what is expressed in the paraphrase, viz. "And he also addresseth the Son thus."

The person addressed is termed LORD; and though this term is not in any of our present Hebrew copies yet, as it is to be found in the Septuagint and Vulgate versions, and especially as our inspired apostle has used it, it is reasonable to think that it was originally in the Hebrew. Be this as it may, it can admit of no doubt that the address is to JEHOVAH, who is so often mentioned in the preceding part of that psalm; and as it has been shewn that the person addressed is the Son, it follows that the Son is termed JEHOVAH, which is the incommunicable name of the true God; see note on ver. 6. Indeed the works here ascribed to him sufficiently demonstrate his eternal power and Godhead; see note on ver. 2.

—"in the beginning—] This *beginning* can be no other than that mentioned by Moses (Gen. i. 1), viz. the beginning of the creation of all things; for it is here connected with his laying the foundation of the earth, and with the heavens being the works of his hands, even as it is there with his creating the heavens and the earth.

—"hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands."] Rulers are indeed sometimes termed the foundations of the earth, as in Psalm lxxxii. 5; Isa. xxiv. 18, 19. Governments and kingdoms are also sometimes spoken of under the metaphor of the heavens and the earth; but neither the psalm from which the words are taken, nor the scope and connection of the apostle's argument require that these expressions should be understood here in a metaphorical sense. To *lay the foundation of the earth*, is a common Scripture expression for creating it, see Job xxxviii. 4, 6; Psal. civ.

5; Isa. xlvi. 13, chap. li. 13; Zech. xii. 1. And when it is said, *the heavens are the works of thine hands*, it must be understood literally of his making or creating them; see Gen. ii. 4; 1 Chron. xvi. 26; Neh. ix. 6; Psal. viii. 3, xxxiii. 6, xcvi. 5, cxxxvi. 5; Isa. xlii. 5, ch. xlv. 18.

This quotation was much to the apostle's purpose. He had in ver. 2 affirmed, that God had not only appointed the Son *heir of all things*, but that he had *by him also made the worlds*; it was therefore proper that he should prove both these assertions from the Scriptures. Accordingly, in proof of the former, he adduces Psal. ii. 7; 2 Sam. vii. 14; Psal. xcvi. 7, xlv. 6, 7; and afterwards Psal. cx. 1, viii. 4, &c. And in proof of the latter assertion, he cites Psal. cii. 25, 26, 27; which, though it does not directly prove that he is by *special appointment* exalted above angels; yet, as it shews that he was originally and naturally their superior as the Creator of all things, so it proves that it was fit and becoming that he should be exalted above them in the economy of redemption as the risen and glorified Messiah. The same argument is used, Col. i. 15, 16, where the apostle, having asserted that Christ is *the first-born of every creature* (which is the same with his being heir of all things), he adds, *For by him were all things created, &c.* But none of these great and admirable works can be compared with their adorable Author; for of the heavens and the earth it is said,

Ver. 11, 12. "*They shall perish, but thou remainest, and they all shall wax old as doth a garment; and as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed;—*]

Though I do not think that the expression *they shall perish—wax old—be folded up—and changed*, import an annihilation of the substance of the heavens and the earth, yet they certainly intimate an exceeding great or total change. They are represented as *waxing old*; and the apostle says, "that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to (*aphanismou*) disappear," chap. viii. 13. They



are to be *folded up* and *changed* like an old (*peribolaion*) mantle or upper garment which is become unfit for use : Nay, it is said that *they shall perish*, which imports, at least, a dissolution of their present form. This is more particularly described by the apostle Peter in his 2d Epistle, chap. iii. There will, he says, scoffers come in the last days, saying, "Where is the promise of his coming? for, since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as *they were* from the beginning of the creation." This the apostle denies as being contrary to matter of fact; for "that by the word of God the heavens were of old, and the earth standing out of the water, and in the water; whereby the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished;" which destruction of the old world happened 1656 years after the beginning of the creation. And with respect to the present heavens and earth, he says, "But the heavens and the earth which are now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire, against the day of judgment, and perdition of ungodly men—in which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, the earth also, and the works that are therein, shall be burnt up—all these things shall be dissolved," ver. 4, 5, 6, 7, 10, 11. This is a good comment upon the words of the Psalmist, and we cannot avoid taking it in a literal sense, unless we venture to allegorize the history of the deluge also. As the dissolution of the present heavens and earth by fire is ascribed to Christ, and connected with the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men, it must be a judicial act of his administration as judge of the world, "when he shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire, taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel," 2 Thess. i. 7, 8. But whatever change the heavens and the earth shall undergo, it is said of Christ himself

—*but thou remainest—thou art the same, and thy years*

*shall not fail.*] This sets forth his eternity and immutability, as contrasted with the works of his hands. They shall perish; but he remains. They shall be changed; but he is the same. They shall wax old; but his years shall not fail. Eternity and immutability are essential and distinguishing properties of the divine nature. The highest angels were created, and so not eternal; and many of them kept not their first estate, which shews that they are not immutable. As all things, angels not excepted, were created by him, he must have been before all things, Col. i. 16; and as he will remain immutably the same, when he shall have put an end to the present frame of this world, he must be from everlasting to everlasting the unchangeable God, the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever, Heb. xiii. 8.

Ver. 13. *But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy foot-stool ?*] This is taken from Psal. cx. 1, and it will admit of no doubt that it is a prophecy concerning the Messiah. The Jews themselves acknowledge this, as appears from both their Targums, and other writings of their Rabbins. But what is infinitely more to be depended on is, that Christ applies it to himself, Mat. xxii. 43—46; and it is repeatedly applied to him by his inspired apostles, as in Acts ii. 34, 35; 1 Cor. xv. 25; Eph. i. 20—23; Heb. v. 10, chap. vii., chap. x. 12, 13. Indeed, it is impossible to explain it of any other; for if God never addressed any of the angels in this manner, much less did he thus address any creature of an inferior order. What other person besides the Messiah could David acknowledge as his Lord? and to whom else did Jehovah swear that he should be a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec, as in verse 4?

The apostle had said, verse 3, that Christ, in consequence of having purged our sins, had “sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; and here he proves it from Psalm cx. 1, with a view to set

forth his dignity above angels. The words are represented as spoken by Jehovah the Father, to David's Lord. His inviting him to sit at his right hand, imports his exalting him in human nature, to the highest dignity, honour, and authority next to himself, as his only Son and Heir of all things (see note on ver. 3); and the apostle Peter informs us, that this was accomplished when God, having raised him from the dead, exalted him to his heavenly throne, and made him both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 32, 37. He is to sit at the Father's right hand until he make his enemies his footstool, that is, until he have completely subdued them; alluding, perhaps, to a custom of eastern conquerors of treading upon the necks of their vanquished enemies, Josh. x. 24. He must reign till he shall have put down all rule, and all authority and power, and have destroyed death itself, the last enemy, 1 Cor. xv. 24—27. But this will not be completely accomplished till he come to raise the dead and judge the world; and so he is represented as having "for ever sat down on the right hand of God, FROM HENCEFORTH EXPECTING till his enemies be made his footstool," Heb. x. 12, 13. Now, though angels were constituted principalities and powers, which imports rule and authority; yet God never invited any of them to sit in royal state at his right hand. This is an honour peculiar to the Son, who is constituted Lord of all. The description of their rank and condition is very different.

Ver. 14. *Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?*] All the angels, without exception, are *ministering* or *servicing* spirits. Their rank and office is that of messengers, servants, or ministers of God, Psal. ciii. 20, 21, civ. 4, and their proper posture is to stand and wait before him, hearkening to the voice of his word, and to be in readiness to execute his will, 1 Kings xxii. 19; Dan. vii. 10; Zech. vi. 5; Luke i. 19; Rev. vii. 14. And as angels are made

subject to the Son, and commanded to worship him, so they are his ministers, sent forth by him to minister for the benefit of them who shall inherit salvation as heirs of God. Of their ministry, for the benefit of such, we have many instances both in the Old and New Testaments.

## CHAP. II.

## CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

THE apostle, by way of practical inference from what he had said respecting Christ's being superior to angels, exhorts the Hebrews to pay the greater attention to the doctrine of the gospel on that account. This he urges by the impossibility of their escaping the severest punishment, should they neglect so great salvation; the publication of which was begun by the Lord in person, and the truth of which had been so abundantly confirmed to them by chosen witnesses of all that he did and taught, and whose testimony was also confirmed by God himself with signs, wonders, and miracles, and with distributions of the supernatural gifts of the Spirit with which he furnished them, ver. 1—5.

He then resumes his argument respecting the exaltation of Christ, even in his human nature, above the angels, and proves, from Psal. viii. 4, 5, 6, that the gospel economy is not put under the management of angels as the former economy was, but that angels, and everything else, are subjected to the government of the Son, ver. 5—9. He anticipates the chief objections that might be brought against this; such as, that Jesus was a man, in mean and low condition in this world, exposed to sufferings, and at last brought to an ignominious death. These things were a stumbling-block to the Jews, and would no doubt be urged by the Scribes as altogether inconsistent with his being the promised Messiah, and superior to the

angels, from whom they had received the law. To obviate such objections, he shews them that the gracious design of God in the incarnation, sufferings, and death of his Son, by which he was made a little while less than the angels, was to bring many sons to glory; and that this method of accomplishing his design was such as became him who is the end and author of all things, ver. 10. That Christ's taking part of the same flesh and blood with the children whom God had given him, was necessary to constitute a proper union and relation between him and them, as their brother and representative; to his being capable of dying for them, and thereby defeating the devil, and overcoming death; and also to his being qualified, through experience of sufferings, to be a merciful and faithful high priest, to manage all their concerns with God, and to sympathize with, and afford them seasonable assistance under every trial, ver. 11—18.

PARAPHRASE.

CHAP. II. 1. Therefore, *since the Son, by whom God hath now spoken to us, is so vastly superior in nature and office, not only to all the former prophets, but even to the highest angels,* we ought the more earnestly to attend to the things which were heard *spoken by him,* lest at any time we should run out *like leaky vessels.*

2. For if the word of *the law which was spoken by the ministry of angels from Mount Sinai* was firm, and every *wilful transgression and disobedience* received a just recompense of reward *in a corresponding punishment;*

3. How shall we escape *a still severer punishment,* if we neglect or *disregard* so great salvation as *is declared in*

*the gospel?* which having at its beginning been spoken by the Lord *Jesus himself*, was confirmed to us by those *chosen witnesses, his apostles and others*, who heard him;

4. God also bearing joint-testimony to the truth of what they declared, both with signs and wonders, and divers miracles, and distributions of the supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will;

5. We ought therefore more especially to regard the things which were spoken by the Son, under whose administration we are placed; for whatever power and authority God had conferred upon angelic rulers in the former dispensation, to the angels he hath not subjected the world to come, or gospel economy, concerning which we speak.

6. But he hath put all things under the sole government of the Son, as one in a certain place (Psal. viii. 4—7) hath testified, saying, “What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man, that thou visitest him?”

7. “For, to save fallen man from perishing, Thou madest him, who is thine own Son, a little while lower than angels; and, in consequence of his humiliation, thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.

8. “Thou hast subjected all things under his feet.” For in that he subjected all things to him, he hath left nothing unsubjected to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him, in respect of their being fully and finally subdued, as they shall all be at last.

9. But we see Jesus, who for a little while, or during the days of his flesh, was made lower than angels, that so, by the grace of God, he might taste of death for every one; him we see, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour (Philip. ii. 9—12) at the Father’s right

*hand, where he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet, 1 Cor. xv. 25.*

10. For, *however offensive his sufferings and death may be to carnal men, who savour not the things that be of God; yet it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons into the heavenly glory, to perfect the Captain of their salvation through sufferings; and that they, through his sufferings, might also be sanctified and perfected (chap. x. 14; John xvii. 9), as he stands in the closest union and relation to them:*

11. For both he who sanctifieth, and they who are sanctified, *are all of one father; for which cause he is not ashamed to call them his brethren,*

12. Saying to his *Father*, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren; in the midst of the congregation will I sing praise unto thee," Psalm xxii. 22.

13. And again *he says*, "I will put my trust in him," Psal. xviii. 2. And again, "Behold, I, and the children whom God hath given me," Isa. viii. 18.

14. Since therefore the children *whom God gave him to redeem*, did partake of flesh and blood, he also in like manner partook of these, *in becoming the seed of the woman, that he might be capable of dying for them, and that through his death he might defeat him who, by introducing sin, had established the power or reign of death, that is, the devil;*

15. And deliver them who, through fear of death *and its consequences*, were all their *previous* lifetime subject to bondage.

16. For verily he took not hold of *fallen* angels, *by assuming their nature to save them*, but of the seed of Abraham he *thus* took hold; *and so became that seed pro-*



*mised to Abraham in whom all nations are blessed, Gen. xii. 18.*

17. Hence it behoved him in all things to be made like his brethren, that *having experience of their temptations and afflictions, and being capable of dying for them*, he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining* to God, in order to expiate the sins of the people.

18. For in that he hath himself suffered, being tempted, he is able, *and inclined from experience and sympathy*, to succour them who are tempted.

#### COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. II.

From the beginning of this chapter to ver. 5, the apostle makes a practical digression, by way of inference, from what he had said in the foregoing.

Ver. 1. *Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard—*] Since Christ, by whom God hath spoken to us in these last days, is greatly superior both in nature and office to all his former messengers, and even to the angels themselves, by whom the law was delivered; for this reason we ought (*perissoteros*) more abundantly to attend to the things which we have heard, namely, the doctrines of the gospel which had been first published among the Jews by our Lord and his apostles. This earnest attention to the things revealed in the gospel, was necessary to prevent apostacy, or *—lest at any time we should let them slip.*] The words *me pote pararruomen*, literally signify, lest at any time *we run out* or *flow by*, and may import their falling away and perishing. But there seems to be an allusion here to leaky vessels, which are said to *run out*, though it is meant of their contents. In this view, it must respect the truths of the gospel. These flow away from us, if we do not give earnest attention to them, so as to retain them in

our memory, our belief, and affections, without which they will soon lose all their influence upon us. Matters do not generally come to this issue all at once with backsliding professors. The words intimate a gradual and imperceptible progress towards apostacy, even as water oozes from a leaky vessel.

In the three following verses he enforces the exhortation to give the more earnest heed to the gospel, from its excellency above the legal economy, in respect of the dignity of its publisher, the salvation which it reveals, the evidence by which it is confirmed, and consequently the severer punishment which will be inflicted on those who neglect it.

Ver. 2. *For if the word spoken by angels was stedfast—*]  
 The *word* here signifies the law of Moses. This law was spoken by angels. We are indeed told, that God spake all these words," Exod. xx. 1; but from this and other passages, it appears that he spoke them by the ministry of angels. Stephen informs us that Moses was "with the angel who spoke to him in the Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, who received the lively oracles to give unto us," Acts vii. 38; and, complaining of the Jews, he says, "Who have received the law by the disposition of angels, and have not kept it," ver. 53; our apostle also says, that the law "was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator," Gal. iii. 19. It is certain that the Lord was in a most remarkable and sensible manner present at the delivery of the law at Sinai, and that he was attended with a multitude of angels on that occasion, Psal. lxxviii. 17. Some of these might be employed in causing the thunders, the lightnings, the smoke, the earthquake, and the sound of the trumpet; and with respect to the voice of articulate words delivering the law, some suppose that God himself pronounced the words first, and that an angel was employed to repeat them after him with a loud voice, in the hearing of the people; and thus, they think, the word may be said to be spoken both by God himself and

his angelic ministers. I do not positively object to this, though I cannot fully accede to it, as it seems, in some degree, to enervate the apostle's argument; but of this afterwards. This word, which was spoken by angels, was *stedfast*; that is, it was firm, ratified, and valid, established by divine authority, and backed with an awful sanction to enforce obedience;

—*and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.*] The word *parabasis* signifies any *transgression*, whereby we step over the bounds which the law hath set, by doing what it prohibits. *Parakoe*, rendered *disobedience*, is a refusal to attend to, so as to obey what it commands, and imports contumacy, stubbornness, or rebellion. Though all sins were not punished with death under the law, yet the sacrifices appointed to expiate them, shewed that death was their due. But the sins here intended are chiefly those wilful and contemptuous violations of the law in direct rebellion against God their King, for which no sacrifices were provided, but were punished with death as their just recompense of reward. What answers to these sins under the gospel, is not every transgression or act of disobedience, but apostacy from the faith, or sinning wilfully after having received the knowledge of the truth, and thus despising or rejecting the only remedy. If then such was the just punishment of those who presumptuously violated the law which was spoken by angels,

Ver. 3. *How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?*—] By the great salvation, is generally understood the gospel, which is termed the word of salvation, Acts xiii. 26, the gospel of salvation, Eph. i. 13, and because it is here opposed to the word spoken by angels, and represented as spoken, heard, and confirmed. Yet, I think, it may strictly signify salvation itself, which is the subject of the gospel, and which is neglected when the gospel testimony concerning it is disbelieved and disregarded. It is termed a *great salvation*, in comparison of any deliver-

ance which Israel obtained by the ministry of angels, and of all the earthy and temporal blessings which they enjoyed by virtue of the Sinai covenant. It is a deliverance from the wrath to come, and consists in the enjoyment of all spiritual and eternal blessings, in heavenly things in Christ Jesus. As the sin of neglecting so great a salvation is highly aggravated, so its punishment will be proportionably severe. The apostle asks, "how shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" which imports not only that the punishment of such is certain and unavoidable, but that it will be much more severe than the punishment inflicted on the transgressors of the Mosaic law. This the comparison plainly suggests; and our apostle, in a parallel passage, expressly terms it a *much sorer punishment*, chap. x. 29. Even in this world, the Jews as a nation were more severely punished for their rejection of the Messiah than ever they had been on account of all their former national transgressions. They were cast off from being God's people; their city and temple were destroyed; they were disinherited, slain with the sword, and the remainder of them have been scattered among the nations as outcasts unto this day; so that the wrath is come upon them to the uttermost, 1 Thes. ii. 16, as was foretold, Luke xxi. 22, 23, 24. But the apostle here chiefly intends the punishment which shall be inflicted in a future state, when all who neglect the great salvation "shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power," 2 Thess. i. 8, 9. The guilt of neglecting so great salvation, is also heightened in proportion to the superior dignity and authority of him by whom it was published. It is that salvation

—*which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord*—] As the great salvation is opposed to the word of the law; so Christ, as the publisher of that salvation, is contrasted with the angels by whom the law was spoken. God is the *original Author*, both of the law and Gospel; but the com-

parison here is between the *chief ministerial publishers* of them; the one angels, the other the Son. And the apostle's argument for giving more earnest heed to the gospel, and by which the sin of neglecting it is greatly aggravated, rests chiefly upon the dignity of the Son, by whom it was spoken, above the angels who delivered the law. Now, if the law had been spoken immediately by God himself to the people, as many conceive, it will be hard to perceive the force of this argument. The great salvation "at the first began to be spoken by the Lord." He was the first publisher of it; for though it was before obscurely intimated in promises, prophecies, and types, and though the ministry of John the Baptist was introductory to it, and announced it as at hand, yet the gospel dispensation was brought in by our Lord himself, and had its beginning in his personal ministry. Farther, the guilt of rejecting so great salvation, is increased in proportion to the abundant evidence by which the truth of it is confirmed; therefore the apostle adds,

—*and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him.*] A vast number of the Jewish nation occasionally heard his doctrine, and saw his miracles, which left them without any cloak or excuse for their sin in rejecting him, John xv. 22, 24. But by them that heard him, we are here to understand his apostles and disciples, who accompanied him during his public ministry, and were eye and ear-witnesses of all that he did and taught, see John xv. 27 Acts i. 21, 22. These he chose to be his witnesses unto: the people, and farther qualified them for that purpose, by giving them the Holy Spirit to teach them all things relating to the subject of their testimony, and to bring all things to their remembrance, whatsoever he had said unto them, John xiv. 26. Thus, the gospel, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, was farther carried on and confirmed by them that heard him. When our apostle says it was confirmed *unto us*, he does not mean to include himself among those who learned the gospel from

the other apostles, for he declares the contrary, Gal. i. 1, 12, &c., chap. ii. 6 ; but he frequently uses the first person plural *us* and *we*, when not himself, but those to, or of whom he speaks are intended ; see chap. x. 25, chap. xii. 1 ; 1 Cor. x. 8, 9, 22 ; 1 Thes. iv. 15, 17. So by *us* here, he means the Hebrews, to whom the gospel was first preached, and confirmed by the apostles and others after Christ's resurrection.

The apostles and first publishers of the gospel had every qualification necessary for confirming the truth of it which can be desired in witnesses. They had the most certain knowledge of the facts and doctrines which they testified, and declared that which they had often, and for a course of time, seen and heard, and attentively considered, 1 John i. 1—4 ; and they could appeal to the knowledge of the Jews, among whom those things were transacted, for the truth of many of the facts which they testified, Acts ii. 22. Their number was more than sufficient to confirm any truth, and they all united in testifying the same things without the least disagreement. Their character was that of simple, undesigning men, incapable of concerting any deep-laid scheme, and whose veracity and integrity were unimpeachable. They had no worldly interest to promote or expect by bearing such a testimony, but everything the reverse. They endured severe trials, and many of them death itself, rather than retract, or even conceal the truth which they testified. We may add, that no shadow of counter-evidence was ever adduced by their opponents, though they felt themselves much concerned to invalidate their testimony, had it been in their power. Witnesses so qualified and circumstanced certainly deserve the fullest credit ; and far less evidence is usually sustained in determining the most important affairs among men. But this is not all ; they had

Ver. 4. *God also bearing them witness—*] The word *sunepimarturontos* signifies his joining or adding his testimony to theirs. He furnished them with sufficient

credentials of their mission, and fully attested the truth of their doctrine ; and this he did

—*both with signs and wonders,*] That is, with signal and astonishing effects of his own immediate agency ;

—*and with divers miracles,*] A great variety of the operations of divine power, which were altogether beyond, and even contrary to, the ordinary course of nature, such as ejecting demons, making the blind to see, the lame to walk, instantaneously healing all manner of diseases, and even raising the dead ;

—*and gifts of the Holy Ghost,*] Or, with (*merismois*) distribution of the Holy Spirit, *i. e.* the internal and supernatural gifts of the Holy Spirit, such as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, faith of miracles, prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kinds of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, &c. These gifts God divided or distributed to each of them,

—*according to his own will.*] The apostle Peter, speaking of the evidence of prophecy, says, “The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man ; but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost,” 2 Peter i. 21. So we are here told that the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were distributed, not according to the will of those who received them (for then they might be acquired by human industry, and so not miraculous), but according to the sovereign good pleasure of God, dividing them to every man severally as he will ; see 1 Cor. xii. 11.

The Mosaic institution was indeed confirmed by the most striking and awful signs and wonders, many of which were calculated to excite terror, Deut. iv. 33—37, chap. vi. 22, chap. xi. 2—8. But the Divine attestations to the truth of the gospel were of a more benign and excellent kind, and so more congenial to the great salvation. The distributions of the Holy Spirit did not attend the publication nor the works of the law, but were promised to be conferred in the latter days, Acts ii. 17, 18, and were peculiar to the gospel, Gal. iii. 2, 5 ; which, in distinction

from the law, is termed "the ministration of the Spirit," 2 Cor. iii. 8, and was preached "with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," 1 Peter i. 12. Add to all this, that great and convincing body of evidence which the gospel receives both from the law and the prophets, and to which our Lord and his apostles so often appeal. Since, therefore, the gospel was published by the Lord himself in person, and the truth of it so abundantly confirmed, the guilt of those who neglect so great salvation must be exceedingly heightened; consequently their punishment must be the more certain and severe.

The apostle having finished his practical digression, resumes, in the next verse, his discourse respecting the exaltation of Christ above the angels, which he had broken off at the end of the foregoing chapter.

Ver. 5. *For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.*] Some think, that by *ten oikoumenen ten mellousan, the world to come*, whereof the apostle speaks, is meant the heavenly country which was promised to Abraham and his spiritual seed, and which may properly be termed *the world to come*. But it should be observed, that *e oikoumene*, rendered *the world*, frequently signifies the habitable world; and it sometimes means the universal monarchies of the world, such as the Assyrian, Babylonian, and Roman; see Isa. xiii. 5, 9, and xiv. 26; Luke ii. 1; Rev. iii. 10. In this place it evidently signifies that kingdom which the God of heaven was to set up, and which, from a small beginning, was to consume and succeed all the former kingdoms, and fill the whole earth, Dan. ii. 44, and vii. 26, 27. And it is termed *the world to come*, conformably to the Jewish manner of styling it while it was yet future. This is the kingdom of God, the kingdom of the Messiah, and primarily signifies the gospel state; but in order to his managing all the concerns of his peculiar subjects, he is possessed of universal dominion, of all power in heaven and on earth, all things being given into his hand. This



reign or kingdom of Christ began at his resurrection, and will continue till the consummation of all things, when all his redeemed subjects shall be glorified, and all his enemies finally subdued, chap. i. 3, 13; 1 Cor. xv. 24, 25, 26.

This world to come God hath not subjected to the angels. He hath given them no rule or dominion over the gospel, kingdom, or church. This, however, implies, that the former economy or state of things was in some sense subjected to angelic government. (SEE APPENDIX, No. II.) But whatever was their former power and authority, the apostle here informs the Hebrews, that the new covenant kingdom is not subjected to angels, but only to the government of the Son of God himself. In proof of this, he cites the following passage from Psal. viii. 4, 5, 6.

Ver. 6. *But one in a certain place testified, saying, "What is man that thou art mindful of him? or the Son of man that thou visitest him?"*

This eighth Psalm might very plausibly be explained of Adam and his posterity, as setting forth man's eminent rank in the scale of creation, and the dominion conferred upon him over all the other creatures in this lower world, Gen. i. 28; but in this view it does not suit the apostle's argument. That it respects Christ the second Adam, is put beyond all doubt, not only from the apostle's application of it to him in this and other places, 1 Cor. xv. 27, Eph. i. 22, but from Christ's own application of ver. 2, to the children who proclaimed his royal dignity and praise in the temple, Matt. xxi. 16.

There is indeed some difficulty in applying the first part of this citation to Christ; and therefore, in the Paraphrase I have taken the expressions *man*, or *the son of man*, to signify mankind in general, as they often do. But as the following part of the citation, on which the apostle's argument chiefly rests, must undoubtedly be meant of Christ, and of him only, and being so closely connected with this 6th verse, without the least intimation of a change of

person, it seems probable that he is intended here also. There is nothing in the words *man* and *son of man*, but what fitly applies to the nature of man in the person of the Messiah. When he assumed human nature, he became truly a *man*; and not only so, but an afflicted and mortal man, in a poor, humble, and mean condition in this world, Isa. liii. 2, 3, Matt. viii. 20; and being made of the seed of Abraham and of David, according to the flesh, he was really *the son of man*, which was the usual title he took to himself, and had been before given to him by the prophet Daniel, chap. vii. 13. So far then the words are clearly applicable to Christ.

But when we take into consideration the divine dignity and worthiness of his person, how shall we account for the Psalmist's admiration that God should remember and visit him? It will not be easy to solve this difficulty, unless we understand the Psalmist to be speaking of him *merely as a man*. In this view, it is indeed wonderful beyond all conception, that such a creature as man, and that too, in the most humble and afflicted condition, should be personally united to the Divine Logos, and that having been numbered with transgressors, and having suffered death as a malefactor, he should be raised from the dead, and exalted as head of the whole creation, both in heaven and on earth, angels, authorities, and powers being made subject to him.

Ver. 7. *Thou madest him a little lower than the angels—*] This is translated more properly in the margin of our Bibles, "Thou madest him a little while inferior to the angels;" *brachu ti* respects *time*, not *degree*. Thus *brachu* is rendered a *little while*, Luke xxii. 58, and *brachu ti*, a *little space*, viz. of time, Acts v. 34. Christ was made for a little while less than angels, by being clothed with mortal flesh, and subjected to death, which angels are not subject to. A state of mortality, subject to affliction and death, is not a *little*, but a *great* degree inferior to that of angels. Christ, however, was but for a little while in that humbled

condition, namely, during the days of his flesh; for, in consequence of his becoming obedient unto death, it is said,

—“*thou crownedst him with glory and honour, and didst set him over the works of thy hands.*”] These words evidently import, that God raised him from the dead, and exalted him to a state of honour, glory, and dominion, the reverse of his former state of abasement, and succeeding it. When God set him at his own right hand in the highest heavens, he is said to have crowned him with glory and honour, that is, constituted him absolute and universal Lord and Sovereign of the whole creation, as well as head of the Church, see Eph. i. 20, 21; and so it is said, “*thou didst set him over the works of thy hands.*” And as to the *universality* of his power and dominion, it is said,

Ver. 8. “*Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.*”] The apostle comments particularly on these words, as containing a direct proof of his assertion, viz. that God hath not put the world to come in subjection to angels, but to the man Christ Jesus alone. Now the proof of this depends upon the extent of the expression (*panta*) *all things*, which he takes in the fullest and most unlimited sense, as comprehending every creature whatever, in heaven and on earth, not excepting the highest angels; and so he argues,

—*For in that he put ALL THINGS in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.*] None are exempted from being put in subjection to Christ, but He that put all things under him, 1 Cor. xv. 27. As therefore the universal expression *all things* must be taken in its proper and unlimited sense, it fully proves that the world to come is subjected to Christ the Son of man, and not to the angels, who are themselves included in the all things that are subjected to him, Eph. i. 21, 22; 1 Peter iii. 22.

From this view of the passage, it is evident that it does

not respect Adam or his posterity. Adam was not originally made *lower than the angels*, as being created mortal, but was in that respect made equal to them; and when, by his transgression, he became subject to death, and so lower than the angels, it was not for a *little while*; for death hath ever since reigned over him and all his posterity in their successive generations. Man's first state was honourable and happy, but it continued only for a little time. In his succeeding state, he was not crowned with glory and honour, but on the contrary, was subjected to affliction and mortality. Nor was he ever, even in his best state, made universal lord over all God's works, having all things without exception put in subjection to him. Therefore, this prophetic Psalm was properly and literally verified in Christ alone, who was *first* humbled for a little while lower than the angels, and *afterwards* exalted for ever above them; see Philip. ii. 8—12. Our apostle having concluded, from the universal expression *all things*, that God has left nothing that is not put under Christ, adds,

*But now we see not yet all things put under him:]* Many consider the pronoun *Him* here, as referring to man in general, in distinction from JESUS, who they think is named in the next verse to mark that distinction; as if he had said, "The Psalmist cannot mean that all things are subjected to man, for in fact that was never the case, but is accomplished only in the dominion given to Jesus." This sense might be admitted, were it not that it supposes a change of persons, of which there is not the least intimation given. The apostle surely means Jesus, when he says, "For in that he put all things under HIM, he left nothing that is not put under HIM:" and who else can he mean when he immediately adds, "But now we see not yet all things put under HIM." This last HIM appears plainly to mean Jesus, as well as the two foregoing, and who is expressly mentioned by name in the next verse. Perhaps it will be asked, If

all things are subjected to Christ, with what consistency can it be said, that we see not *yet* all things put under him? To this it may be answered, That all things are already put under Christ, in respect of his having obtained absolute power and dominion over them; all things being given into his hands. But all things are not yet put under him in respect of their being actually, fully, and finally subdued to him. His people are not all as yet brought in and subjected to him; his enemies are not yet destroyed, but are still opposing him; sin is still in the world; Satan is continually stirring up rebellion against him; and death, the last enemy, is making as much havoc among the human race as ever. So that "now we see not yet all things put under him;" but, by the word (*oupo*) *yet*, he plainly intimates, that the time is coming when all things shall be actually subdued under him. When the father exalted Christ to his throne, he said unto him, "Sit on my right hand, UNTIL I make thine enemies thy footstool," chap. i. 13; and there he reigns, "FROM HENCEFORTH EXPECTING till his enemies be made his footstool," chap. x. 12, 13, being vested with full power, "whereby he is able even to subdue all things to himself," Philip. iii. 21; "for he must reign till he hath put all enemies under his feet." But this is a work of time, to be carried on during his whole reign, and will not be actually and fully accomplished till the end; see 1 Cor xv. 24—29.

Ver. 9. *But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour, that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man.*] As if he had said, "Though we see not as yet all things actually put under the feet of Jesus, according to the full sense of this prophetic psalm; yet we see by his resurrection, ascension into heaven, and the down-pouring of the Spirit, with its wonderful effects, that he is, for the suffering of death, already crowned with glory and honour at the Father's right hand, which

affords sufficient proof that all his enemies shall be finally subdued by him, as is promised, Psal. cx. 1. And as to his having been made a little while lower than the angels, even to the suffering of death, let not that cause you to stumble; for it was by the gracious appointment of God, and from his highest good will to men, that he thus tasted of death for every one."

The common translation of this verse, by following too closely the order of the original, has reversed the sense; for it represents Jesus as crowned with glory and honour, that he might taste of death; whereas he first tasted of death, and was afterwards crowned with glory and honour. The words must therefore be differently arranged, as in the paraphrase; or they may be placed in the following order:—"But we see Jesus crowned with glory and honour, for the suffering of death, who was made a little while lower than the angels, that he, by the grace of God, might taste of death for every one."

Commentators are not agreed as to whether the clause, "for the suffering of death," should be joined in construction with his being "crowned with glory and honour," or with his being "made a little while lower than the angels." If it connects with the former, the sense must be, that he was crowned with glory and honour, *for, i. e.* on account of his having suffered death, or as the reward of it, according to Philip. ii. 8, 9. But if it be joined with the latter, then the meaning is, that he was made a little while lower than the angels, *for, i. e.* in order to his suffering death, or that he might be capable of it. But as this seems to make the last clause of the verse a tautology, in which the same reason is assigned for his being made a little while lower than the angels, viz. "that he, by the grace of God, might taste death for every one," I prefer the former sense.

To *taste of death*, is an Hebrew phrase, which signifies simply *to die*; see Matt. xvi. 28; John viii. 52. It cannot mean that Jesus suffered an easier death than

other men do : for he endured the most dreadful agonies in his soul, and the most excruciating tortures in his body, before he actually expired on the cross. It was then he suffered the curse of the law, and that his soul was made an offering for sin, Gal. iii. 13 ; Isa. liii. 10. Some, however, are of opinion, that as he was only for a *little while* lower than the angels, so he is said to *taste of death*, to intimate that he continued but a little while in the state of the dead.

It was *by the grace of God* that he tasted death, that is, by the gracious appointment of God, from his free favour and good will to men. His delivering up his only begotten Son to die for sinners is always represented as the highest and most wonderful display of his grace ; see John iii. 16 ; Rom. v. 6, 8, chap. viii. 32 ; 1 John iv. 9, 10.

He tasted death (*uper pantos*) for or on account of every man. This shews that he died as a substitute. It was not on his own account, nor for his own sins, for he knew no sin ; but it was for the sins of others that he suffered death, and in their room and stead. The Scriptures, by a variety of the clearest expressions, hold forth this important doctrine, declaring, That he was wounded for our transgressions, Isa. liii. 5 ; died for our sins, according to the Scriptures, 1 Cor. xv. 3 ; was made a sin-offering for us, 2 Cor. v. 21 ; that he once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, 1 Peter iii. 18 ; and gave himself a ransom for all, 1 Tim. ii. 6.

But when it is said that he tasted death for *every man* or for *all*, it cannot in this connection signify every individual of mankind. The apostle had before mentioned the *heirs of salvation*, chap. i. 14 ; and the connection of this verse with what follows clearly shews, that *every man* here must intend them and none else ; for they are termed *many sons*, ver. 10—they who are *sanctified*—Christ's *brethren*, ver. 11 ; *the church*, ver. 12 ; the *children* which God had given him, ver. 13 ; with whom he took part in

flesh and blood, that through death he might deliver them, ver. 14, 15; and as their high priest, make reconciliation for their sins, ver. 17. From all which it is perfectly clear, that *all* or *every man* in this place, means *every son* of God who shall be brought unto glory.

Some affirm "that the blessings of nature, of providence, and of grace, are bestowed on all mankind through the death of Christ; and that therefore he is with great propriety said to have *died for all*, notwithstanding *all* shall not be justified and saved by him." It is true that the blessings of nature and of providence are bestowed on, and dispensed in various degrees among all mankind; for "the Lord is good to all, and his tender mercies are over all his works," not excepting the brute creation; but that these things are enjoyed by those who perish on account of Christ's having *died for them*, is a point not so easily settled, as the Scriptures nowhere affirm it. As to the *blessings of grace* (if by these are meant the spiritual blessings of the gospel), it is not easy to conceive how they are bestowed on all mankind, if notwithstanding *all* shall not be justified and saved through Christ's death. If by the blessings of grace be meant the outward privileges of the gospel, which are no doubt the effects of grace and of Christ's death, these are not as yet bestowed upon *all*, nor indeed on the greater part of mankind; besides, many who are favoured with these, reap no saving benefit from them, because of their unbelief. And though all mankind shall be raised up at the last day, yet to such of them as have done evil, and come forth unto the resurrection of damnation, it cannot be called *a blessing of grace*. There are many universal expressions in Scripture which must be limited or extended according to the nature of the subject, and scope of the passages where they occur. Those of them which relate to the extent of Christ's death, are plainly opposed to the contracted notion of the Jews, who imagined that salvation by the Messiah was to be confined



to their nation, exclusive of the Gentiles ; which was expressly contrary to the promise made to Abraham respecting them, viz. "In thy seed shall ALL THE NATIONS OF THE EARTH be blessed," Gen. xxii. 18. This promise is explained of God's justifying not only the Jews, but also the heathen through faith, Gal. iii. 8 ; so that though it is expressed in terms as unlimited as any of those used by the apostles in reference to it, yet it respects only those of all nations who shall be *blessed* in Christ, or *justified by faith* in him. These are they whom he hath redeemed to God by his blood, out of every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation—a great multitude, which no man can number, of all nations, Rev. v. 9, chap. vii. 9.

The apostle having assigned the reason why Christ was made a little while lower than the angels, namely, "that he, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man," proceeds to shew, that this method of salvation was every way worthy of God, and perfectly adapted to the fallen condition of guilty mortals whom he intended to save.

Ver. 10. *For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.*]

Christ is here termed *ton archegon* which our translators have rendered *the Captain*, and elsewhere *the Prince*, Acts iii. 15, chap. v. 31, and *the Author*, Heb. xii. 2, which are all the places where it occurs in the New Testament ; in all which it is applied to Christ, and literally signifies *the Leader*. But as Christ is not merely their Leader by his doctrine and example, or as going before them through the path of affliction to glory ; but is also the procurer of their salvation, by his meritorious sufferings in their stead, and by his resurrection from the dead, and entering into heaven as their forerunner, thereby opening the way for them through death unto glory ; so the word here may import his being *the Author* of their salvation, which seems best to agree with the scope, and with the

parallel passage in chap. v. 8, 9, where the apostle, having said that the Son "learned obedience by the things which he suffered," adds, "and being made perfect, he became (*aitios*) the AUTHOR," or CAUSE "of eternal salvation to all them that obey him."

God is said (*teleiosai*) to *perfect* him through sufferings. This may signify in general, that he fitted or qualified him, by means of sufferings, to be a complete and effectual Saviour for bringing many sons to glory; for he learned obedience by the things which he suffered, and was qualified to sympathize with and succour his brethren under all their trials and temptations, ver. 17, 18, chap. v. 9. Through these sufferings he made an atonement for their sins, and was also perfected in respect of his being raised from the dead and crowned with glory and honour, with power to give eternal life to as many as the Father hath given him. But the word rendered to *perfect*, signifies also to *consecrate* to an office, or to *invest* in it, and it is likely that this is the sense which is more directly intended here; for in the verse immediately following, he speaks of what was proper to Christ as a priest. Aaron was vested in the office of high priest by the blood of the ram of consecration, Lev. viii. 22, 25, which in Hebrew is termed *the ram of fillings*, and in the Greek version, *the ram of perfections*. Hence, to consecrate a priest, is, in Hebrew, to *fill his hand*, and in Greek, to *perfect* him, Exod. xxviii. 41, chap. xxix. So that the priests were consecrated to their office by applying sacrificial blood to them, and filling their hands with samples of the offerings, Exod. xxix. 20—26, and by these and other ceremonies they were *perfected*, or thoroughly fitted and qualified to appear before the Lord in behalf of the people, and to minister to him on their account with acceptance. The apostle, therefore, alluding to this, uses the style of the Septuagint, and says, that Christ was *perfected* through sufferings, or consecrated to the office of high priest by the blood of his own sacrifice, in which he was brought again

from the dead, and so was fitted to enter with it into the holiest of all, even heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for his brethren. This appears also to be the sense of the word in chap. v. 9, 10. "And (*teleiotheis*) BEING PERFECTED," *i. e.* consecrated, "he became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey him, called," or styled, "of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec." The same word is translated *consecrated*, chap. vii. 28.

In this 10th verse, we are taught the following important truths.—1. That the gracious design of God in the plan of redemption was *to bring many sons unto glory*; that is, to bring an innumerable multitude of fallen mankind, whom he had predestinated unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself (Eph. i. 5), unto the glory and eternal felicity of the heavenly state.—2. That the method in which he saw meet to accomplish this, was *by making the Captain, or Author, of their salvation perfect through sufferings*.—3. That this method of bringing many sons unto glory was such as *became him for whom are all things, and by whom are all things*. Though the doctrine of salvation, through the sufferings and death of the Messiah, was a stumbling-block to the Jews, and to the Greeks foolishness; yet the apostle here declares, that it was a method every way worthy of the great God, who is the ultimate end, as well as the first cause of all things, highly becoming his infinite wisdom, holiness, justice, and goodness, and illustrative of all his divine perfections.

Some would have the apostle here to be simply affirming "that it belonged entirely to the sovereignty of the Deity to determine that mankind should be saved by the death of his Son; that our duty is to rest satisfied with the knowledge of the fact, and thankfully to acquiesce in the appointment; although God hath neither made known the *reasons* which induced him to save mankind in this, rather than in any other method, nor explained to us *in what manner* the death of his

Son as a sin-offering, hath accomplished our salvation." See *Whitby* and *Macknight* on this place.

I think we may warrantably say, that it belonged to the sovereignty of God to determine whether he should save *all, some, or none*, of fallen mankind; but if he has determined to save any of them, something more than mere absolute sovereignty must have been consulted in determining the *method* of accomplishing this. We have the strongest *reason* to believe, that the method he has chosen, was of all others the most consistent with, and becoming his moral perfections, and the best adapted to accomplish the gracious ends he had in view. To insinuate that God might have saved men by any other method than that which he has adopted and revealed, has a tendency to lessen men's esteem of the atonement, as it makes the necessity and whole saving efficacy of Christ's sacrifice to depend, not on any *intrinsic worth or fitness in itself*, more than in any other means, but solely on *sovereign appointment*. It is also said, that "God hath not explained to us in what *manner* the death of his Son, as a sin-offering, hath accomplished our salvation." But if the death of the Son of God was a proper sacrifice, propitiation, or atonement to God for our sins; if he suffered for us, the Just for the unjust, and has redeemed us from the curse of the law by being made a curse for us; does not this explain in what *manner* his death hath accomplished our salvation? Does it not shew, that it was by making *satisfaction* for our sins, so as fully to demonstrate the righteousness of God in the remission of them? And if any other method, or sacrifice of less dignity and worth could have answered that purpose, or been becoming God to appoint and accept, is it not reasonable to suppose, that in that case he would have spared his own Son, instead of delivering him up for us all?

The connection between Christ's being perfected through sufferings, and his bringing many sons unto glory, is founded on the intimate union and near relation

which, by the constitution of grace is established between him and them, as set forth in the following verses.

Ver. 11. *For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified—*] He that sanctifieth is Christ, and they who are sanctified are the *many sons* whom he conducts to glory, and are afterwards termed his *brethren*. To *sanctify* (*agiazein*) or *make holy*, does not, in this epistle, directly signify to produce internal sanctification or holiness of heart, though that is a consequence of it; but is used in a sacrificial sense, with reference to the legal purifications whereby the Israelites were consecrated to God, cleansed from their political guilt and ceremonial defilements, and so fitted to approach to God in his worship; which sacrifices, after all, sanctified only to the purifying of the flesh. But the sacrifice or blood of Christ sanctifies his people by cleansing them from the guilt of sin, and purging their conscience from dead works, to serve the living God, chap. ix. 13, 14; and, in this sense, the word *sanctify* is also used in chap. x. 10, 14, chap. xiii. 12. Now, the sanctifier and the sanctified it is said

—*are all of one:—*] The words (*ex enos*) of *one*, have been explained to signify, of one nature, of one blood, of one family or stock, &c. All these are no doubt implied; but I think the supplement ought to be *father*; that is, he and they are both of *one father*; for it is assigned as a reason why he is not ashamed to call them *brethren*. Christ and they are certainly of one father, namely, God, John xx. 17; but it should be observed, that God is also the father of angels, yet they are not included in the fraternal relation here meant, for he assumed not their nature; nor can Christ, considered merely in his divine nature, be said to have a father in common with many brethren. To be their brother required that he should be a man, and, in order to his sanctifying them, it was necessary that he should be truly of the same nature with those who are sanctified by him; and so we are afterwards told that he took part of the same flesh and blood with the children,

and that it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, to make reconciliation for their sins, ver. 14, 17. Farther, it must be noticed, that Christ, by becoming a man, does not stand in the relation of brother to all mankind as the seed of Adam, but only to the many sons whom he sanctifies by his blood and brings unto glory; and so he and they must be all of that one family who were early distinguished from the serpent's seed, as the *seed of the woman*, Gen. iii. 15, and afterwards as the seed of Abraham, chap. xxii. 17, 18, who is the father of all believers, both Jews and Gentiles, Rom. iv. 16, 17, 18, chap. ix. 7, 8; Gal. iii. 26—29, chap. iv. 22—31. And as Christ, in becoming man, took hold of the seed of Abraham, ver. 16, and so was that notable Seed promised to him, Gal. iii. 16; so all who are the children of God by faith in him, are also Abraham's seed and Christ's brethren, ver. 29, he and they being *all of one father*, viz. Abraham.

—*for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren.*] Since he and they are all of one Father and family, he is not ashamed to own their relation to him by calling them his brethren. Considering the divine dignity and infinite holiness of his person, the glory and honour for which his human nature was designed, and which it now actually possesses, it might naturally be thought that he would be ashamed to own such mean, guilty, and depraved creatures for his brethren. Yet such is his infinite condescension, that he is not ashamed of the connection, nor disdains to own them; but on the contrary, openly acknowledges their relation to him, and calls them his brethren. This is a ground of unspeakable consolation to believers, who, notwithstanding the humble sense they have of their own unworthiness, and notwithstanding the wicked world should disown and despise them as the offscourings of all things, yet Christ owns them as his brethren, and will at last openly acknowledge them as such before angels and men.

Christians ought also to learn from his example, not to be ashamed to own their brethren in Christ, on account of any natural weakness or difference of worldly circumstances, but to acknowledge and treat them in all respects as such. Christ does not despise or disown the meanest of his brethren, though he is the Lord of glory; and he cautions his disciples against offending or despising one of these little ones that believe in him; Mat. xviii. 6, 10.

To prove that Christ and his people are all of one Father, and that therefore he is not ashamed to call them his brethren, the apostle produces several testimonies from the Old Testament Scriptures. The first is from Psal. xxii. 22, where Christ is represented as

Ver. 12. *Saying, "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee."*] The whole of this 22d Psalm is spoken in the person of the Messiah. Many passages in it are applied to him in the New Testament; and will apply to none else; compare ver. 1, 7, 8, 16, 18, with Matt. xxvii. 46, ver. 43, 35, 39, 40; John xx. 25. The ancient Jewish doctors also explained this Psalm as prophetic of the Messiah.

In the verse cited above, Christ expressly calls the Church his *brethren*. The national church of Israel were no doubt the brethren of Christ according to the flesh, and he, as a minister of the circumcision, by teaching publicly in the temple and in the Jewish synagogues, declared unto them his Father's name; yet, as a nation, they were not the *Church* or his *brethren*, in the sense here intended. They were not the *children* which God had given him—the *many sons* whom he was to conduct to glory. His disciples who believed on him and did the will of his Father, were those only whom he publicly owned and called his brethren; see Matt. xii. 49, 50, chap. xxv. 40, chap. xxviii. 10; John xx. 17. They were the beginning of his New Testament Church, and were a sample as well as pattern of all the rest. These were the men who were

given him out of the world, to whom he manifested his Father's name, who kept his word, and believed that he had sent him, John xvii. 6, 8, 26, and in the midst of whom as his Church he sang praises to him, Matt. xxvi. 30. As Christ still continues to be the great prophet of his Church, manifesting, by his word and spirit, his Father's name unto his brethren; so he is the high priest who leads the worship of his whole redeemed church, by whom their sacrifice of praise and thanks is offered up to God with acceptance; and thus, in the midst of the Church, he sings praises to his name.

Ver. 13. *And again, "I will put my trust in him."*] This is another proof that Christ and his people, are all of one. It is taken from Psal. xviii. 2, and not from Isa. viii. 17, as some suppose, for the words there are different; besides, the apostle disjoins it from the following citation by the words *and again*, which shews that they are two distinct citations, and taken from different places. Some consider this 18th Psalm as primarily applicable to David, but to him as a type of Christ. That it respects Christ, there can be no doubt; for ver. 2 is here cited as his very words, and so is ver. 49, in Rom. xv. 9. But others are of opinion, that David in this Psalm does not intend himself at all, but speaks in the person of the Messiah; and this appears to be most probable, for the following reasons:—From ver. 7—15, the language will not strictly apply to any interpositions of God in behalf of David.—The overthrow of Saul was not a matter of exultation and triumph to David, but of deep lamentation, 2 Sam. i. 17—27. The person who speaks here, represents himself as having been in the state of the dead, ver. 4, 5.—He assigns his own righteousness as the meritorious cause of his deliverance, ver. 20—25. Declares that God had made him the head of the heathen, and that a people whom he had not known should serve him, ver. 43, compare with Psal. ii. 8; Isa. lv. 5. In the title, indeed, it is termed, "A Psalm of David, when the Lord delivered



him from the hands of all his enemies, and from the hands of Saul." That David penned this psalm on the occasion mentioned, need not to be questioned, see 2 Sam. xxii., for many prophecies respecting Christ were delivered on occasion of certain occurrences in the affairs of the Jewish Church. And it should be observed, that *David* is one of the prophetic names of the Messiah, see Jer. xxx. 9, Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, chap. xxxvii. 24, 25, Hos. iii. 5; and as to *Saul*, the Hebrew word *luash*, when read without the vowel points, (which many consider as of human authority) is the same word which our translators commonly render *the grave*, and sometimes *hell*; and *the hand of the grave* is an expression used in Psal. xlix. 15, and lxxxix. 48. In short, it appears that this 18th Psalm is the Messiah's song of praise to God, for raising him from the dead, making him victorious over all his enemies, exalting him to universal power and dominion, and for giving him a people from among the Gentiles.

But then, how do the words, *I will put my trust in him*, ver. 2, prove that Christ and his people *are all of one father*, and so brethren? In explaining this, commentators have observed, that as the Son of God in his original state, could not be in any situation which required him to trust in God for relief, so this passage is quoted to show that he was to assume human nature, with its sinless infirmities, and be exposed to dangers and sufferings, which should render it necessary for him to put his trust in God for help and deliverance. But though this is true in itself, yet I am rather inclined to think with Mr. Peirce, that these words are quoted to prove that the Messiah was to be a son of Abraham, not merely according to the flesh, as ver. 14, but in a spiritual sense by faith; for as all believers are the children of God, and the spiritual seed of Abraham, the father of the faithful, Rom. iv. 16, Gal. iii. 26, 28, 29, so Christ by professing his faith or trust in God, declares himself to be a son of Abraham, consequently related as a brother to all who believe,

whether Jews or Gentiles, they having the same spirit of faith, 2 Cor. iv. 13.

—*And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.*] This is cited from Isaiah viii. 18. Some who wish to invalidate the divine authority of the Epistle to the Hebrews, deny that this testimony has any relation to Christ and his people, but must be understood of Isaiah and his children, Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, who are mentioned, chap. vii. 3, 16, chap. viii. 3, 4. But if the writer of this epistle has erred in the application of ver. 18 to Christ, so must ver. 14, 15 be misapplied by Paul in Rom. ix. 33, by Peter, 1 Epistle ii. 7, nay, by our Lord himself, Matt. xxi. 44, as also by Simeon, who applies the substance of these two verses, and part of ver. 18, to the child Jesus, Luke ii. 34. Others maintain, that Isaiah and his children were types of Christ and his disciples, and so explain this prophecy upon the principle of a double sense. Though this may partly be admitted; yet it is evident, that there are things in this prophecy which will not apply to the prophet and his children at all; for,

1. The person here spoken of is called *Immanuel*, chap. vii. 14, a name which is explained and applied to the Virgin's Son, Matt. i. 23. And what other person can be intended by that name in Isa. viii. 8, and by the original word, ver. 10. Neither Isaiah nor any of his sons could be called *Immanuel*, nor was the land of Judea the property of any of them.—2. It has been shown that ver. 14 and 15 are applied to Christ in several passages of the New Testament, and of none else could it be said, "And he shall be for a sanctuary," viz. to believers, "but for a stone of stumbling, and for a rock of offence to both the houses of Israel, and for a gin, and for a snare to the inhabitants of Jerusalem. And many among them shall stumble and fall, and be broken, and be snared, and be taken," namely, because of their unbelief. These things do not apply to the prophet, or to any of his sons, in rela-

tion to Israel; but were exactly accomplished in the different effects which Christ and his gospel had among the Jews, when the election obtained, and the rest were blinded, Rom. xi. 7, according to what old Simeon had declared, "Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel," Luke ii. 34. 3. The words, "Bind up the testimony, seal the law among my disciples," ver. 16, whether they mean, as some conceive, that the Mosaic economy was to be laid aside among his disciples, as having answered its end, or, which is more likely, that the true sense of the law and testimony was to be bound up and sealed from the understanding of the generality of the Jewish nation, and deposited among his disciples, according to Matt. xi. 25; in either view they must be the words of Christ, to whom alone it was competent to speak in this manner, and among whose disciples alone the words were fulfilled.—4. The words cited by our apostle, ver. 18, "Behold I, and the children which God hath given me," must also be spoken by Christ; for there is no intimation of a change of the speaker. Here he calls them *children*, whom before he had termed *his disciples*; children which God had given him; and their being given to him of the Father is what he frequently mentions, see John vi. 37, 39, chap. xvii. 2, 6, 24. They were given to him to redeem, keep, and conduct to glory. They are the children of God, consequently his brethren—Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 29.—5. It is added, that he and the children which the Lord hath given him "are for signs and for wonders in Israel, from the Lord of hosts who dwelleth in mount Zion." Christ himself was a sign which was spoken against, Luke ii. 34; and he and his disciples not only wrought many wonders in Israel, but in respect of sufferings, they were made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men, 1 Cor. iv. 9. This prophecy, therefore, is clearly applicable to Christ and his disciples, though delivered on occasion of a threatened invasion of Judea.

Ver. 14. *Forasmuch then as the children—*] Namely, the children which God had given him, ver. 13—the many sons he was to bring unto glory, ver. 10—and whom he is not ashamed to call his brethren, ver. 12.

—*are partakers of flesh and blood,—*] Were partakers (*kekoinoneke*), or, partook in common of flesh and blood. By *flesh and blood*, we are to understand the complete nature of man, consisting not only of a body composed of flesh and blood, but also of a rational soul. This is the common signification of the phrase in Scripture; see Matt. xvi. 17, Gal. i. 16; Eph. vi. 12. But it also signifies human nature in its frail, mortal state, subject to sufferings, sorrows, and death; and therefore flesh and blood, while in this state, cannot inherit the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. xv. 50. Now as the children were partakers of flesh and blood in its weak and mortal state,

—*he also himself likewise took part of the same,—*] He also in like manner, by being made of a woman, took part of the very same flesh and blood with them; and so became bone of their bone and flesh of their flesh. That is, he assumed into personal union with himself a true human nature, with all its essential properties, and natural, though sinless, infirmities; so that he took unto him not only the *nature* but *condition* of his brethren, and that in a degree the most humble and afflicted. Thus “the Word,” who in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made, “was made flesh,” John i. 1, 3, 14, was sent “in the likeness of sinful flesh,” Rom. viii. 3; and thus “God was manifest in the flesh,” 1 Tim. iii. 16. The design of his participating of flesh and blood was, —*that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;—*] The devil is said to have had the power of death, not because he had any absolute or sovereign power over death, or authority to inflict it at his will; but because he was permitted to tempt our first parents to sin, and so had the power of bringing death on them and all their posterity, Rom. v. 12,

17. It was through his lies and deceit that sin and death entered into the world, and have continued ever since, and so he is called a liar and a murderer from the beginning, and all liars and murderers are represented as his children, John viii. 44; 1 John iii. 12. Moses calls the tempter a *Serpent*, Gen. iii. 1—6, and so does Paul, 2 Cor. xi. 3, but this is explained to be the Devil and Satan, who deceiveth the whole world, Rev. xii. 9, chap. xx. 2.

The design of Satan in seducing our first parents, seems to have been to destroy them, and so to have put an end to the human species. But the Son of God, who was promised to come of the seed of the woman, and to bruise the head of the serpent, frustrated this malicious design of Satan, by assuming human nature in its mortal state, that he might be capable of dying, and “through death” (the very evil which Satan brought on mankind by sin), “destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.” Not that he destroyed the devil as to his being; for the word *katargese*, rendered *destroy*, signifies to defeat, bring to nought, or render ineffectual, viz., his schemes or measures, and may be explained by 1 John iii. 8. “For this purpose the Son of God was manifested,” viz., in the flesh, “that he might destroy the works of the devil,” which chiefly consist in promoting sin and death. Now as the death of Christ was an atoning sacrifice for the sins of his people, it has fully satisfied divine justice on their account, dissolved their obligation to the punishment of eternal death, procured pardon and acceptance with God, and a restoration from death by a blessed resurrection, to the enjoyment of eternal life and glory in heaven. Thus he has frustrated the malicious contrivance of the devil for the everlasting ruin of mankind, and effectually bruised the serpent’s head. To this design of Christ’s incarnation and death, the apostle adds,

Ver. 15. *And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.*] Those who are

here meant are Christ's brethren, both of Jews and Gentiles ; and it is descriptive of the state of their mind during all the former part of their lifetime, before they knew the gospel ground of hope, or at least before they had the clear knowledge of it. There is a fear of death natural to all mankind, and which is necessary to self-preservation ; but that fear of death which enslaves or produceth bondage, is connected with conscious guilt, an apprehension of the Divine displeasure, and with an awful uncertainty as to whether in dying they shall drop into non-existence or into endless punishment.

This makes death terrible indeed ! and it must have been so to the Gentiles when they seriously thought of death ; for they had no revelation to assure them of the pardon of sin, nor any certain ground of hope with regard to a future state. As to the Jews, though they had a written revelation, which declared God to be merciful and gracious, and that there was forgiveness with him ; yet fear was the prevailing effect of the Mosaic dispensation. The delivery of the law was attended with every circumstance that served to excite terror, *Exod. xix. 20* ; *Heb. xii. 18—22*. It was the ministration of death and condemnation, *2 Cor. iii. 7, 9*, so that the Sinai covenant brought forth its children in a state of bondage to the law, possessed of a spirit of slavish fear, *Gal. iv. 24, 25*. The sacrifices of beasts could not in reality take away the moral guilt of sin, nor purge the conscience of the worshippers by giving an assurance of pardon, *Heb. ix. 9*, *chap. x. 1, 2, 4*, nor was a state of future happiness so clearly revealed then as it is now. But Christ, having come in the flesh, and by his own death and resurrection made a complete atonement for sin, abolished death, and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel, *2 Tim. i. 10*, has divested death of its terrors ; so that all who believe on him are delivered from the slavish fear of death, and enjoy peace with God and the hope of future glory.

Ver. 16. *For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham:]* The verb *epilambanetai*, twice used in this verse, constantly signifies to *take hold of* a thing, see Matt. xiv. 31; Mark viii. 23; Luke ix. 47, chap. xx. 20, 26, chap. xxiii. 26; Acts xvii. 19, chap. xxi. 30, 33, chap. xxiii. 19; 1 Tim. vi. 12, 19; and in Heb. viii. 9. Our translators taking the word here to signify the same as his taking part of flesh and blood with the children, ver. 14, or his being made in all things like unto his brethren, ver. 17, have rendered it, *took on him*, i. e. assumed; but as it would be improper to say, He took not on him angels, but the seed of Abraham, they have been obliged to help out this sense by adding to the text *the nature of*. The marginal translation, however, is certainly more literal, and equally, if not more, agreeable to the context and scope of the apostle's argument, viz., "He took not hold of angels; but of the seed of Abraham he taketh hold." That is, he did not lay hold of the angels who kept not their first estate, in order to deliver them, but reserved them in everlasting chains under darkness, unto the judgment of the great day, Jude, ver. 6; but he took hold of the seed of Abraham, the children which God had given him, that he might save them.

Ver. 17. *Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren—]* Since his design was to save the seed of Abraham, in order to this, it behoved him or (*opheile*) he ought in all things to be made like unto his brethren, by participating of their nature, coming under their trials and sufferings, and by being in every respect, except sin, in the same condition with them. And this was necessary,

—*that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God.]* In order to his being a high priest he must be a man, and partake of the nature of those whom he was to represent, and for whom he was to officiate; and to be a merciful and faithful high priest, it was necessary that he should have experience of human

weakness, temptations, and sufferings, that so he might be qualified to sympathize with, and have compassion on, his brethren in all their infirmities, sufferings, and trials, and be the more deeply interested and feelingly engaged to act with faithfulness in all their concerns relating to God, and particularly

—*to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.*] Literally, “to propitiate the sins of the people;” but the meaning is, to expiate, make an atonement, or offer a propitiatory sacrifice to God for the sins of the people: For the apostle is here speaking of Christ as a high priest, and therefore this part of his work must be answerable to that of the typical high priest under the law, especially on the great day of atonement, and whose service the apostle thus describes, “Every high priest taken from among men, is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sin,” chap. v. 1; that is, offer them to God as an atonement for sins. The Aaronical high priest made reconciliation only *for the sins of the people* of Israel; but Christ hath made reconciliation for the sins of the people of God, of all nations, whether Jews or Gentiles, who are the spiritual seed of Abraham; and in this sense he is the propitiation *for the sins of the whole world*, 1 John ii. 2. Here then are two reasons assigned for his partaking of flesh and blood: 1. That he might make reconciliation for the sins of the people by the sacrifice of himself, in order to which it was necessary that a body should be prepared him, Psal. xl. 6; Heb. x. 5, 10. 2. That by the temptations and sufferings he underwent while in mortal flesh, he might be fitted by experience to act the part of a merciful and faithful high priest in behalf of his brethren in like circumstances, and so it is added,

Ver. 18. *For in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*] The apostle states it as a qualification of the legal high priest, that he should be one “who can have com-



passion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity," chap. v. 2. Now, though Christ had no sinful infirmity, like the legal high priest, to give him an experimental fellow-feeling with us in that respect, yet he was exposed to sinful temptations, which he overcame, for he was in all points tempted like as we are, chap. iv. 15. Satan set upon him when he entered upon his public ministry, and pursued him with his instruments throughout the whole course of it. He felt the weakness of the flesh, in hunger, wants, weariness, and other infirmities pertaining to the body; and his holy soul was afflicted with sorrow, shame, reproach, and contempt, for he was a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief. In short, he experienced the dreadful effects and penal evils of sin, in bearing our griefs, and carrying our sorrows, even unto death, as the substitute of the guilty. Thus he suffered, being tempted or tried.

The apostle represents Christ's sufferings in being tempted, as a qualification, whereby "he is able to succour them that are tempted." In his divine nature, simply considered, he was incapable of suffering, and yet, as God, he was certainly able to succour the tempted; therefore, ability here, as connected with his sufferings, does not mean *mere strength* or *power* to succour, but also *inclination* and *readiness* to do it. In this sense the word *dunatos*, *able*, when applied to God or Christ, is often used, see Rom. iv. 21, chap. xi. 23, chap. xiv. 4, chap. xvi. 25; 2 Tim. i. 12. Further, as Christ's *ability* to succour, is connected with his trials and sufferings, it must have a respect to him in human nature, and as possessed of all the tender feelings and affections of humanity. Men who have undergone much affliction themselves, are ordinarily more susceptible of sympathy with others in distress, and have a stronger propensity to assist them, than those who have no expe-

rience of affliction. So Christ, though he is now exalted, yet, as he still remembers what temptations and sufferings he endured in this world, so he knows the heart of a tempted sufferer, and is well acquainted with all the afflictions and trials of his brethren. He knows what aids are necessary to their overcoming temptations, and is affectionately disposed from sympathy, and in all respects fully able and ready to succour them.

## CHAP. III.

## CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

OUR author having fully proved that Christ is greatly superior to angels, by whose ministry the law was spoken to the Israelites; and having also assigned sufficient reasons for his being made a little while less than they; he recommends him to the attentive consideration of the Hebrews, as the apostle and high priest of the Christian religion, ver. 1.

Considering him as the apostle or founder of our religion, he compares him with Moses, that eminent prophet and ministerial founder of the Jewish religion. The Hebrews had justly a very high opinion of Moses, their great prophet and lawgiver; but as they did not clearly perceive the design of the Mosaic economy, which was to prefigure and give testimony to the gospel revelation in which it was to terminate, they were still strongly attached to it as of perpetual obligation. This, with the discouragements they met with from the opposition of their unbelieving countrymen, tended to keep their minds in a wavering state with regard to the Christian faith, so that they were in danger of reverting from Christ to Moses. Nothing, therefore, could better suit the apostle's design of establishing the Hebrews in the Christian profession, than to compare together the respective founders of the old and new dispensations, viz., Moses and Christ. He observes, that both Christ and Moses were faithful to God in the discharge of their office, ver. 2, but that Christ

was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as the founder and ruler of the house or church, hath more honour than the house, or any eminent servant in it, such as Moses was, ver. 3. For he that hath formed the church, and ordered all things relating to it, is God, ver. 4. That Moses indeed was faithful in all things relating to God's house, the Jewish church, but it was as a servant, and in a typical economy, designed for a testimony of the things which were afterwards to be revealed, ver. 5. But that Christ was faithful as a Son over his house, the gospel church, of whose house we who believe are members, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, if we retain the boldness of the profession, and the glorying of the hope, firm unto the end of our lives, ver. 6.

He then proceeds to caution the Hebrews against apostacy from the faith of the gospel, by reminding them of the awful punishment inflicted upon their ancestors in the wilderness, who, on account of their unbelief and rebellion against God, were excluded from the rest in the land of Canaan; intimating that, if they should apostatize from Christ, they would be excluded from a more glorious rest in the heavenly country, of which the former was only a type, ver. 7, to the end.

#### PARAPHRASE.

CHAP. III. 1. Wherefore, holy brethren of *Christ*, and partakers *with all the children of God*, of the heavenly calling, consider *attentively* the *dignity and authority of the* Apostle and High Priest of our profession, *namely*, Christ Jesus;

2. Who was faithful *in the execution of his office*, to him that appointed him *to be the great Prophet and Founder of*

*the gospel church, even as Moses was faithful to God in settling all the concerns of his house, the church of Israel.*

3. But this *Apostle of our profession* was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, *in relation to the church*, in as much as the builder or former of the house had more honour than it, or any of its parts.

4. For every house is built and set in order by some one; but he who hath built and ordered all things, and particularly what relates to his house or church, is God.

5. And Moses indeed was faithful to God in all the concerns of his house; but it was as a servant in a figurative economy, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken by Christ and his apostles.

6. But Christ was faithful in a far superior relation and character, namely, as a Son over his house, the gospel church; of whose house we are, if we retain the boldness of an open profession of the faith, and the glorying of the hope, firm unto the end of our lives.

7. Wherefore, since Christ is that great apostle and prophet to whom Moses refers us, and whom we are commanded to hear in all things, whatsoever he shall say unto us, under pain of being destroyed from among the people (Deut. xviii. 17—20, Acts iii. 22, 23), I would say to you, as saith the Holy Spirit, by David, to the Jews of his time (Psal xc. 7, &c.), “To-day, when ye shall hear his voice,

8. “harden not your hearts, as in the bitter provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness;

9. “where your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

10. “Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in heart, and they have not known my ways.

11. "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest."

12. Take heed, therefore, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in apostatizing from the living God, *either by secret infidelity, or an open renunciation of the gospel.*

13. But *to prevent this*, exhort one another daily, while it is called To-day, *the season for hearing God's voice by his Son*, lest any of you should be hardened in unbelief, through the deceitfulness of sin.

14. For we are made partakers of *the benefits of Christ*, if indeed we retain the beginning of the confidence *which we had in him when first enlightened*, firm unto the end.

15. *Therefore, I say, exhort one another to stedfastness*, while it is said, *to you as well as to your ancestors of old*, "To-day, when ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts, *as they did* in the bitter provocation, *especially at Kadesh*," Num. xiv.

16. For some of *them*, when they heard the command of God to enter into Canaan, bitterly provoked him by their unbelief and rebellion; yet not all of *them* who came out of Egypt by Moses.

17. But with whom was he grieved forty years? Was it not with them who had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

18. And to whom did he swear that they should not enter into his rest *in the land of Canaan*, but to them who believed not?

19. So we see that they could not enter in *to the promised land* because of their unbelief of God's promise, and of his power to put them in possession of it.

## COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. III.

Ver. 1. *Wherefore,*—] As if he had said, Since the Author of the gospel is so greatly superior to all the former prophets, and even to angels themselves, as has been shewn, and since the ends of his incarnation and sufferings are so exceedingly important, and of such unspeakable advantage to us, therefore,  
—*holy brethren,*—] He addresses the believing Hebrews as *holy brethren*. Believers in general are termed *saints*, or holy ones, as being sanctified by the blood and Spirit of Christ, separated to God, and devoted to his service; and they are also called *holy brethren*, 1 Thess. v. 27, which imports their relation to Christ, and to one another. The apostle in the preceding chapter had described Christians as sons of God, children of Abraham, and brethren of Christ; and represents Christ as he who sanctifieth, and them as they who are sanctified, ver. 10—14. This sufficiently accounts for his calling them *holy brethren*.  
—*and partakers of the heavenly calling*—] The calling of Abraham was the foundation of all the Jewish privileges; yet, in its letter, it was only an earthly call, a call to an earthly inheritance, and to the enjoyment of its temporal blessings: but that which is here mentioned is an *heavenly calling*. When men are converted to the faith of the gospel, they are said to be called, Rom. viii. 30, and God is said to have called them with a holy calling, 2 Tim i. 9. They are called not only to enjoy the present spiritual blessings of the gospel, but to the obtaining of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ—his eternal glory, 2 Thess. ii. 14; 1 Peter v. 10. This is the hope of God's calling, Eph i. 18, the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus, Philip iii. 14, and so is termed the *heavenly calling*. Now the believing Hebrews are said to be *partakers* of this calling, because it was not confided or pe-

cular to them as the former was; for those whom God effectually calls by the gospel are not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, Rom. ix. 24, who are equally the children of God, by faith in Christ Jesus, Abraham's seed, and heirs of the heavenly inheritance. He bids the Hebrews

—*consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.*—] They were attentively to consider what he had already said, and what he had farther to say, concerning the dignity and authority of Christ Jesus, as the apostle and high priest of the Christian profession. An *apostle* signifies *one sent forth* to execute some affair of importance, and is much the same with an ambassador or legate. Christ often speaks of himself as *sent of his Father*, John v. 38, chap. vi. 29, 39, 40, chap. viii. 42, chap. xvii. 18, chap. xx. 21. He had his mission and authority from the Father, spoke and acted in his name, and is that prophet who was promised to be raised up like unto Moses (Deut. xviii. 18), he being the great founder and lawgiver of the gospel Church, by whom God hath in these last days spoken unto us, chap. i. 2. They were also to consider Christ Jesus under the character of the *high priest* of our profession. At the end of the foregoing chapter, he had represented him as a merciful and faithful high priest, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people, and as able to sympathize with and succour his brethren in all their trials; but he only states this briefly, having a view to resume and discuss it at large afterwards. Here he terms him the apostle and high priest of *our profession*, or rather of our (*omologias*) *confession*. This is sometimes put for the thing confessed, and may therefore signify our *faith* or *religion*. Of this Jesus is the *apostle*, because sent of God to reveal it; and the *high priest*, because we receive all its blessings through his mediation.

He begins, in the first place, to treat of Christ as the great apostle and prophet of the New Testament church, in which character he compares him with Moses, the chief



prophet and minister of the law, and sets him forth as greatly superior to that eminent servant of God in dignity and authority. From this he takes occasion to caution the Hebrews against unbelief with respect to Christ, by recalling to their view the awful punishment of their ancestors in the wilderness, who, through unbelief, rebelled against God and his servant Moses, and so came short of the promised rest in the land of Canaan. This discourse he continues to chap. iv. 14, where he resumes the subject of Christ's priesthood. Of Christ, as the Apostle of our profession, he says,

Ver. 2. *Who was faithful to him that appointed him,—*] He was faithful to God the Father who appointed, or (as the word literally signifies) *made him* an Apostle. He sought not his own glory, John viii. 5. Declared his word or message to be not his own, but his Father's who sent him, John xiv. 24. Revealed the whole will of God which was committed to him for that purpose, John xv. 15, chap. xvii. 8, and exactly executed his mission respecting the ordering and settling of all things relating to the worship and government of his house or church.

—*as also Moses was faithful in all his house.*] This refers to the testimony which God gave to Moses on occasion of the sedition of Miriam and Aaron, Num. ii. 7, 8, where the Lord distinguishes him from ordinary prophets, to whom he spake only in visions and dreams; "But (says he) my servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold; wherefore, then, were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses." Moses was the greatest of all the ancient prophets; had the most immediate intercourse with God; the most honourable office was committed to him, as the ministerial lawgiver and founder of the Jewish economy; and he most faithfully discharged the work assigned him, in all things relating to the service and worship of God's house, the church of

Israel. The apostle here produceth the most honourable testimony to Moses, that is to be found in all the Scriptures, and which was given him by God himself, and so grants the Hebrews all they had to plead on that head. But great and honourable as Moses was allowed to be, he shews that Christ was greatly superior to him in dignity and worth, as well as in station and office in the church.

Ver. 3. *For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses,—* As *man* is a supplement here, apostle or prophet might be substituted for it, that being the character under which he is here spoken of. Christ was counted worthy of, or (*exiptai*) was dignified with more glory than Moses. There could be no proper comparison between the essential glory of their persons, the one being God, the other a mere man; but the comparison respects the disparity of their station and offices in the house or family of God. Jesus, the great Apostle and Prophet of the church is superior to Moses, —*in as much as he who hath builded the house hath more honour than the house.*] The Lord calls the church of Israel, in which Moses was a faithful servant, his *house* or family; and our apostle applies the same epithet to the New Testament church, terming it “the HOUSE of God, which is the CHURCH of the living God,” 1 Tim. iii. 15. The word translated *builded*, is a word of some latitude, and is variously rendered according to the nature of the thing to which it is applied; and so the verb *kataskewazo* signifies to prepare, construct, build, set in order, regulate, or govern. It is used for Noah’s *preparing* the ark, Heb. xi. 7; 1 Pet. iii. 20, and for *making* the tabernacle, and *setting in order* the things relating to it, Heb. ix. 2, 6, and likewise for the exercise of John the Baptist’s ministry, in *preparing* the way of the Lord, Matt. ii. 10. Now, as the church is represented under the figure of a house; so Christ, agreeably to this, is represented as (*o kataskewasas*), he who hath builded, *i. e.* prepared and formed it; which

imports the exercise of his prophetic and regal offices, in revealing the doctrine, appointing the laws, and establishing the worship, by which the church is collected, united, formed, and regulated under him as its head. For this end the Father hath given all things into his hand, John iii. 35, all power in heaven and in earth, Matt. xxviii. 18, and hath put all things under his feet, and gave him to be head over all things to the church, which is his body, Eph. i. 22; so that by him, the chief corner-stone, the whole building, fitly framed together, groweth unto an holy temple in the Lord, ver. 20, 21. He hath, therefore, more honour than the house, *i. e.* than the whole church collectively, consequently, than any particular member of it, Moses not excepted. For though he had an eminent office in God's typical church of Israel, yet he needed its services and privileges equally with the rest of the Israelites; and in the church of Christ, which consists of all the redeemed company, Jews and Gentiles, whether in heaven or on earth, Moses ranks only as a member under Christ the Head.

Ver. 4. *For every house is builded by (tines) some one ;—*] Whether we understand *every house* here in a literal, civil, or religious sense, it is a self-evident truth, that every house must be erected, fitted up, and set in order, by some principal founder and proprietor. And this general observation will apply both to the Jewish and Christian churches, of which the apostle is here speaking, as well as to any other kind of house.

—*but he that built all things is God.*] Commentators differ much in their explanation of these words. According to some, "he that built all things is God" the Father, and by his having built all things, they understand his having created the world. It is true that God the Father created the world; but if it is meant that this is the Father's work exclusive of the Son's, it is not true; nor in this view has it any connection with the apostle's design, which is to shew that Christ was counted worthy of more glory than

Moses, as being the builder of the house or church of God. But granting that the creation of all things is here intended, yet the Scriptures clearly testify that God created all things by Jesus Christ, Eph. iii. 9, and that he is the Word who in the beginning was with God, and was God, by whom all things were made, and that without him was not any thing made that was made, John i. 1, 2, 3. This shews that Christ is God, who built all things; and is a conclusive argument, that as the builder of the church of God, he was counted worthy of infinitely more glory than Moses. And the use of this argument is equally proper in this place as in chap. i., where the apostle sets forth the excellency and dignity of Christ above all the ancient prophets, and even angels, by his having made the worlds, ver. 2, and from his being addressed thus, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning, hast laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the works of thine hands," ver. 10.

Many, however, are of opinion, that the words under consideration do not signify his having created the world, but his having builded all things relating to the church, which indeed seems to agree better with the context. But then there are some who ascribe the building of the house immediately and exclusively to the Father; and, according to this, Christ cannot be worthy of more glory than Moses and the whole house, in respect of his having builded it, as the apostle affirms. Mr. Peirce applies the words, "he that built all things is God," to God the Father, and not to Christ, and makes Christ's having more honour than Moses to arise, not from his having *builded the house*, but from the *nearer relation* in which he stands to the Father, who is the head of the family, and who has the greatest honour in it. But as the words do not mention this, he supposes that the apostle "has omitted one part," *i. e.* the chief part, "of his argument, leaving it to be supplied by his readers, it being not very obscure, when all things are considered." But those who believe that Jesus Christ is God, will find no de-

ficiency, nor any obscurity at all, in the apostle's argument ; it being as easy to conceive that God built all things relating to the church by his Son Jesus Christ, as that he made the worlds, and created all things by him, Heb. i. 2 ; Eph. iii. 9. For he who came of the Jews according to the flesh, is declared to be *over all God*, Rom. ix. 5, and *Lord of all*, Acts x. 36, and represents himself as the builder of his church, Matt. xvi. 18.

Ver. 5. *And Moses verily was faithful in all his house as a servant :—*—Moses was faithful in forming and erecting everything relating to God's house, the church of Israel, acting in all respects according to the directions which he received from God, without deviating from them in the least ; but his faithfulness in this was in the sphere and quality of a *servant*, not as lord or master of the house ; and it was for his faithfulness in that station, that the Lord commends him : “ My servant Moses is faithful in all mine house,” Num. xii. 7. Moses indeed had an honourable place, and an office of great trust in the church of Israel ; but still he was but a servant ; and the chief design of his faithful ministry in constructing and establishing the whole frame of that typical economy, was

—*for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after :*] The ministry of Moses, in forming the church of Israel, was not appointed for its own sake, or as what God ultimately intended for perfecting the state of his church (for the law made nothing perfect) ; but it was designed only for a testimony of those things which were afterwards to be fulfilled by Christ, and clearly revealed by the gospel in forming the New Testament church, to which it had a reference. Moses, in his writings, gave testimony to the coming Messiah, representing him as the Seed of the woman, who should bruise the serpent's head, Gen. iii. 15, as the Seed of Abraham, in whom all nations were to be blessed, chap. xxii. 18, and as that notable Prophet whom the Lord was to raise up unto Israel, of

their brethren, like unto him, and whom they were to hear in all things, under pain of being cut off from among the people, Deut. xviii. 18; Acts iii. 22, 23. And so Christ himself refers the Jews to the testimony of Moses concerning him, John v. 45, 46, 47. The whole model of religious worship, with its tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices, and ceremonies, which God appointed by the ministry of Moses, was a typical testimony to the gospel revelation, or a shadow of good things to come, as our apostle shows at large in this epistle. So that, however dark the types and shadows of the Mosaic economy were in themselves, they eventually gave evidence to the truth of the gospel, when it came to be declared, the clear revelation of which belonged not to the ministry of Moses, but to that of Christ and his apostles. The apostle Peter informs us, that not only Moses, but all the succeeding prophets ministered to the Christian church, when by the Spirit of Christ they "testified beforehand the sufferings of Christ, and the glory that should follow. Unto whom it was revealed, that not unto themselves, but unto us they did minister the things which are now reported unto you by them that have preached the gospel unto you, with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven," 1 Pet. i. 11, 12. The highest character given to Moses was, that he was faithful in all God's house, the church of Israel, in the station of a servant;

Ver. 6. *But Christ as a Son over his own house,—*] This last branch of the comparison represents Christ to be as much superior to Moses, as a *Son over the house* is to a *servant in it*. A son, especially the first-born, is not only superior to a servant in respect of his near relation to the father of the family, but also as being heir and lord of all, Gal. iv. 1. This peculiar dignity and prerogative is ascribed to Christ, whom the father "hath appointed heir of all things," Heb. i. 2, and so is declared to be "Lord of all," Acts x. 26, he having the government and disposal of all things relating to the church

committed to him of the Father, John iii. 35, chap. v. 22. Our translators have rendered *ton oikon autou*, *his own house*, which seems to represent the Son as superior to Moses, in respect of his being the proprietor of the house: But though the church is the property of Christ, as having purchased it with his own blood, Acts xx. 28, and as being heir of all things, and head over all things to the church, which is his body, Eph. i. 22; yet, as he is so by the Father's *appointment*, ver. 2, from whom, in the economy of redemption, he derives his rights and prerogatives, the Father must still be the supreme and original proprietor of the house, as Father of the family; for he is "the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named," Eph. iii. 15. It is certain that the pronoun *autou*, *his*, in ver. 2 and 5 refers to God the Father, as proprietor of the house, and there seems to be no necessity for translating the same word *his own*, in ver. 6, as if the house belonged exclusively to the Son. The comparison is between Moses, as a faithful *servant in God's house*, and Christ, as a faithful *Son over it*, and that by the Father's appointment, see ver. 2, chap. v. 5, chap. x. 21.

It may farther be observed, that God's house, in which Moses was an eminent servant, was of a worldly nature, composed of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh, and confined to the particular nation of Israel, which, with all its ceremonial institutions, was but a figurative representation of the true church: But the house of God, over which Christ the Son is appointed Head, is of a spiritual and heavenly nature, composed of the spiritual seed of Abraham, which includes all who believe, whether Jews or Gentiles, they being all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 26. Now, as it is by faith that any become members of God's spiritual house or family, so it is by persevering in the faith and hope of the gospel to the end, that they continue members of it; and, therefore, the apostle adds,

—*whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.*] The hope of believers is the hope of eternal life and glory in heaven; which hope is founded on the death and resurrection of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 14, 1 Thess. iv. 14, 1 Pet. i. 3, and on the faithful promise of God, who cannot lie, Titus i. 3; Heb. x. 23; 1 John ii. 25. So that all in whose hearts Christ dwells by faith, he is in them the hope of glory, Col. i. 27. The apostle mentions two things pertaining to this hope, and which must be held firm: First, the *confidence* of hope. The word is *parresia*, which properly signifies liberty of speech or boldness, as in John vii. 26, chap. xviii. 20, 2 Cor. iii. 12, chap. vii. 4, Eph vi. 19, Philip. i. 20, and so it denotes here a free, open, or bold confession of the faith of the gospel as the foundation of our hope. This was, indeed, dangerous in the apostolic age, when Christians were persecuted, as was the case with the Hebrews; but it was absolutely necessary, and still is, to the continuance of the gospel in the world, and is expressly required by Christ, Matt. x. 32, 33, Luke xii. 8, 9, and also by the apostle Peter, 1 Epistle, iii. 14—16. Christians must not be influenced by the fear of man, either to conceal or deny the faith which is the reason and ground of their hope, but must freely confess it, and that in the face of danger. Secondly, there is the *kauchema*, *rejoicing*, or rather *boasting* or *glorying* of hope, that is, a holy glorying or boasting in the certainty and excellence of that which we hope for, so as to contemn everything that comes in competition with it, Rom. viii. 18; 2 Cor. iv. 16, 17, 18: this is to boast in hope of the glory of God, Rom. v. 2. If, therefore, we would be real members of God's house, and enjoy the present privileges and future happiness of his children, we must hold the boldness and glorying of the hope firm unto the end of our lives, and guard against every temptation to apostacy, whether of the alluring or intimidating kind.

Ver. 7. *Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost saith,—*] Some



connect the word *dio*, *wherefore*, with the beginning of ver. 12, and throw the intervening citation into a parenthesis; but if a parenthesis may be passed over without injuring the sense, it is evident that the citation from Psal. xcv. 7, &c. is not of that nature, it being the very text on which the apostle comments and grounds his exhortations and cautions to the Hebrews, both in the sequel of this chapter, and through a great part of the following. The connection and sense, I apprehend, may be thus understood: We have proved that the Son, by whom God hath spoken to us, is greatly superior in dignity and authority, even to the highest angels, much more to Moses, the minister of the law; that he is the Apostle and Prophet of the Christian religion which we profess, and so must be heard and obeyed in all things: Wherefore, as the Holy Ghost said to your fathers, so doth he now say to you,

—“*To-day, if ye will hear his voice,—*”] These words were spoken by David, as the apostle tells us, chap. iv. 7, yet they are here attributed to the Holy Ghost, which shews us that David wrote his Psalms by divine inspiration; for the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue, 2 Sam. xxiii. 2, as our Lord also testifies, Matt. xxii. 43.

The *voice* of God is the declaration of his will, as the rule of faith and obedience, and particularly respects what he requires of his professing people, in order to their entering into and enjoying his rest, answerable to the degree of revelation given them, and to the different dispensations under which he hath placed them in the successive ages of the church.

To *hear* his voice, is to give earnest attention to what he says by his inspired messengers, to believe his testimony and promises, to stand in awe of his threatenings, and to obey his commandments. Bishop Patrick observes, that this 95th Psalm “plainly relates to the days of Christ, as the Jews confess and the apostle proves.” The

call was indeed originally addressed to old Israel, the people of God's pasture, and the sheep of his hand," ver. 7, requiring them to hear his voice as made known to them by Moses and the prophets; yet our apostle extends it to their descendants, the Hebrews, who professed the Christian faith, as an exhortation to them to hear the voice of God now speaking to them by his Son, "of whom Moses in the law and the prophets did write," John i. 45. For Christ is that great Prophet foretold by Moses, of whom he says, "unto him shall ye hearken," Deut. xviii. 15; and this the Father expressly commands, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him," Matt. xvii. 5. And Christ himself, alluding to this psalm, describes his sheep as hearing his voice and following him, John x. 27, and his subjects as being of the truth and hearing his voice, chap. xviii. 37.

The time prescribed for hearing God's voice, both under the law and gospel, is *to-day*, that is, presently, and without delay. It is the present season, while God, by his inspired messengers, is calling men to hear his voice, that they may enter into his rest. Such a day was given to Israel in the wilderness, that they might enter into God's rest in the land of Canaan; but instead of hearing and obeying his voice, they provoked him by their unbelief and rebellion, and so came short of it. Long after their posterity had entered into that earthly rest, another day was given them, in which they were called to hear God's voice speaking to them by his Spirit in the prophets, that they might enjoy the quiet possession of that rest, and also enter into the more excellent rest of the gospel, Psalm xcv.; Isa. xi. 10; Jer. vi. 16. But the greater part of that people always resisted his Holy Spirit, and persecuted and slew them who shewed before of the coming of the Just One, Acts vii. 51, 52; so that when the Messiah actually came unto them they received him not, but despised and rejected him, and concurred with their rulers in betraying and murdering him, and in

persecuting his followers. And as they misimproved this day of their merciful visitation, they were given up to a judicial blindness and hardness of heart, till the wrath came upon them to the uttermost, Matt. xiii. 14, 15; 1 Thess. ii. 15, 16. The Hebrews, who professed the faith of the gospel, had also a day given them for hearing God's voice speaking to them by his Son; and they are exhorted to improve that season while it is called *To-day*, and while a promise was left them of entering into his rest, plainly intimating that this day would not always last with them; for though the gospel day (which is the accepted time and day of salvation, 2 Cor. vi. 2) will continue to the end of the world, yet with respect to particular generations and individuals, their part of it is only the short and uncertain space of time allotted them during this life, which will soon come to an end with all that live in any given period. And with some who obstinately harden their hearts or apostatize, it may be over before they leave this world; as was the case with Israel in the wilderness, when God determined they should not enter into his rest; and with many of them in our Lord's time, when the things which belonged to their peace were hid from their eyes, Luke xix. 42. It is with great propriety, therefore, that the apostle applies to the Hebrews what the Holy Ghost said by David to the Jews of his time (and which indeed applies to Christians in all ages), *To-day if ye will hear his voice,*

Ver. 8. "*harden not your hearts,*—] The *heart* in Scripture sometimes signifies a particular faculty of the soul, such as the understanding, the will, or affections. At other times it is put for the whole of its powers, as they unite in one principle of moral operation, and concur in our doing good or evil: and in this sense I understand it here. To *harden* the heart is a metaphorical expression, and is here opposed to our hearing God's voice or complying with it. Men harden their hearts when, through prejudice, false principles, or the influence of worldly lusts,

they wilfully stop their ears from hearing the voice of God, and shut their eyes against the light of his word, disregarding the divine evidence by which its truth is confirmed, and resisting all the motives of mercy and judgment by which a compliance with it is enforced ; and thus bring themselves into such a callous and obdurate state of mind, that neither his commandments, promises, or threatenings, make any proper impression upon them. They are strongly cautioned against thus hardening their hearts as their ancestors did ; and particularly, —*as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness :*] Israel often provoked and tempted the Lord in the wilderness, as—1st, In the wilderness of Sin, where they murmured for want of bread, and he gave them manna, Exod. xvi. 2d, At Rephidim, they murmured for want of water, and questioned if the Lord was among them, notwithstanding all the proofs he had given them of this : and there he gave them a fresh proof of it, by bringing them water from the smitten rock, Exod. xvii. 2—8, which place was called *Massa*, temptation, and *Meribah*, from their bitter provoking strife, ver. 7. 3d, In the wilderness of Sinai, where they received the law, they provoked the Lord in making the golden calf and worshipping it, saying, “These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt,” for which the Lord threatened to destroy them at once, but was prevailed upon by Moses’ intercession to spare them, excepting three thousand of them who were slain by the Levites, Exod. xxxii., chap. xxxiii. 4th, At Taberah, they provoked God by their murmuring for want of flesh to eat, which was granted them in his displeasure, but suddenly he smote them with a great plague : and, because there they buried the people that lusted, the place was called *Kibroth-hattaavah*, Num. xi. 5th, At Kadesh-barnea, when the Lord commanded them to go up and take possession of the land ; they having no faith in God, and being discouraged by the evil report of the spies, refused to go up,

and proposed to make them a captain, and return into Egypt; therefore the Lord swore that none of those who had murmured against him, from twenty years old and upwards, should come into the promised land, but that their carcases should fall in the wilderness, Num. xiii., chap. xiv.; Deut. i. 34, 35. All these things took place in little more than the space of two years after they left Egypt. 6th, Thirty-seven years after this sentence (when the men of war who came out of Egypt were almost extinct), we find the Israelites at Kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin or Tzin, where they chided with Moses and Aaron, and strove with the Lord on account of the want of water and other things, and were supplied as formerly by water from the rock; but, on this occasion, Moses transgressed, and was debarred from entering into the land of Canaan, Num. xx. 2—13. This is the water of Meribah, which is called Meribah-Kadesh, Deut. xxxii. 51, to distinguish it from that Meribah mentioned, Exod. xvii. 7. 7th, Soon after this, though they had manna, they murmured for bread and water, and were punished with fiery serpents, whereby many of them died, Num. xxi. 5—10. 8th, At Shittim, in the plains of Moab, which was their last station, they were seduced into idolatry and whoredom by the daughters of Moab; for which twenty-four thousand of them were cut off, Num. xxv. 1—10.

These are the chief instances on record in which Israel provoked the Lord in the wilderness; and, indeed, they were habitually an unbelieving, stiff-necked, and rebellious people; for thus Moses addresses them, "Remember and forget not how thou provokedst the Lord thy God to wrath in the wilderness; from the day that thou didst depart out of the land of Egypt, until ye came unto this place, ye have been rebellious against the Lord." And again, "Ye have been rebellious against the Lord from the day that I knew you," Deut. ix. 7, 24. But the greatest provocation seems to have been their refusing to go up from Kadesh, to possess the land of Canaan, at the

commandment of God, and their proposing to make a captain to lead them back to Egypt, Num. xiv. 1—5; this showed an absolute disbelief of all his promises, and an utter distrust of his power, and may be termed, by way of eminence, *o parapikrasmos*, the *bitter provocation*, and *the day of temptation*; for it was upon that occasion that God swore that none of that generation should enter the promised land, except Caleb and Joshua, but should all die in the wilderness, Num. xiv. 21—39. Yet the Lord's complaint against them is not confined to that instance, but extends to the whole of their conduct in the wilderness.

Ver. 9. *When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.*] When their fathers tempted God to swear that they should not enter into his rest, they had not seen God's works forty years, that being in the beginning of the third year after they left Egypt. Therefore the forty years must include all their provocations of God in the wilderness, both before and after that oath, notwithstanding all the mighty works he had shewed them during that time.

To *tempt* God, is to provoke his displeasure, by distrusting his power, faithfulness, and goodness, after these have been sufficiently demonstrated by the most striking facts. Thus, Israel tempted God by their unbelief and rebellious murmurings, after they had seen his miraculous works in their behalf in Egypt, at the Red Sea, in furnishing them with bread from heaven, and water from the rock; and at Kadesh, when commanded to go up and possess the promised land, they refused to obey him through a distrust of his power and faithfulness to put them in possession of it, and attributed the wonders he had hitherto wrought for them, to an evil design against them, Num. xiv. 2, 3. On that occasion the Lord thus describes their sin with its aggravations, "How long will this people provoke me? and how long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?" ver. 11; and, again, "Because all those men who

have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swore unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it," ver. 22, 23.—To *prove* God is much the same as to tempt him. He had given them many miraculous proofs of his constant support and protection; yet, instead of trusting in him, they questioned if the Lord was amongst them or not, Exod. xvii. 7, and, upon every new difficulty, all the former proofs went for nothing with them; and they renewed their murmurings, putting his power and faithfulness to the proof of his complying with their present demands, should it be even to gratify their lusts.

Ver. 10. "*Wherefore I was grieved with that generation*—]The particle *dio*, *wherefore*, seems to be added by the apostle. This part of the citation differs a little both from our present Hebrew copies and the LXX. where it reads, "Forty years long was I grieved with *that* generation;" which refers the forty years to the time during which they grieved God; whereas the apostle makes these years to be the time during which they saw his works; but it comes to the same thing, for they both saw his works, and yet grieved him during that time, as the apostle afterwards mentions, "But with whom was he grieved forty years?" ver. 17.

As *grief* implies pain and uneasiness of mind, so when applied to God, it must be spoken after the manner of men; for the happiness of the Divine Being cannot be disturbed or impaired by the conduct of his creatures. The Scriptures frequently ascribe human parts and passions to God, to give us some idea of his attributes and operations, accommodated to our manner of conceiving of things. This manner of speaking was strictly applicable to Christ when he assumed human nature, and there must be something analogous to these things even in the Divine nature, otherwise such language would convey to

us either no idea at all, or erroneous ones. If the original word signifies that he was *grieved*, it may import, that, as sin is repugnant to his holy nature, so the sins of his own people, when they abuse his distinguished grace and goodness, are peculiarly so; and while his justice engages him to punish them, he does it, as it were with a mixture of regret. Language to this purpose is frequently used, see Deut. xxxii. 5, 6, 28, 29; Psal. lxxxi. 13; Hos. vi. 4, chap. xi. 8. But I apprehend that *prosochthisa* signifies, that he was *greatly displeased*, or *grievously offended* with that generation; and this seems to agree best with the awful oath which follows:—

—“*and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.*”] This is the judgment which God formed of that generation, and it was certainly according to truth. The words are not to be found in Num. xiv., but the inspired Psalmist expresses the sense of what the Lord then said. The Hebrew reads, “*It is a people that do err in their heart;*” but our apostle agrees with the LXX. who have it, “*They always err in heart.*” This greatly aggravated their guilt; for it was not an occasional falling in an hour of temptation, and succeeded by true repentance; but an habitual, fixed, and prevailing evil bias of heart. It was in the heart that the error of this people lay; but they did not err through mere ignorance, nor for want of the means of instruction. God gave them the clearest and most striking proofs of his power, faithfulness, and goodness, by the wonderful works which he performed in their behalf; yet they believed not in him, nor trusted in his salvation. He also gave them his laws as the rule of their duty, enforced by every motive both of mercy and judgment, to influence their obedience; yet still they continued “*a stubborn and rebellious generation; a generation that set not their heart aright, and whose spirit was not stedfast with God,*” Psal. lxxviii. 8. It is added, *and they have not known my ways.* Some, by the *ways* of God, understand his methods



of dealing with them, or the wonderful things he did for them ; these, indeed, they did not know, *i. e.* regard or lay to heart ; but I apprehend that his *ways* here signify his precepts or commandments, which are most frequently termed *his ways*, they being prescribed by him as the way in which men ought to walk ; see Deut. viii. 6, chap. xxvi. 17, chap. xxviii. 9, chap. xxx. 16. Though Israel had both seen God's works and heard his law, yet they are said not to have known his ways. Their knowledge was not accompanied with faith and love, and so was not of a practical nature ; on the contrary, what knowledge they had, served only to excite their disapprobation and dislike, which in Scripture language is frequently expressed by *not knowing*. In a word, they desired not the knowledge of God's ways. We have seen God's account of their sin ; let us now attend to the sentence he pronounced upon them.

Ver. 11. "*So I swear in my wrath, they shall not enter into my rest.*" ] The original, both in the Old Testament and here, is, "If they shall enter," which is an elliptical expression, and may be thus supplied, "If they shall enter, I am not God." In the Old Testament, oaths are frequently expressed in this imperfect form ; see the original in Deut. i. 35 ; 1 Sam. iii. 14 ; Psal. lxxxix. 35, cxxxii. 2, 3. This dreadful oath, with the occasion of it, is recorded, Num. xiv., and seems to be thrice repeated with a little variation in words : "But *as truly as* I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men who have seen my glory, and my miracles which I did in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice ; surely they shall not see (Heb. if they shall see) the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it," ver. 21, 22, 23.—"Say unto them, *As truly as* I live, saith the Lord, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you : Your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness," &c.

ver. 28—29. But the words of the oath in Psalm xcv. 11, seem to be taken from the recital of this affair in Deut. i. 35; and we have an account of their full accomplishment in Num. xxvi. 64, 65. There are many threatenings in the word of God, which have a tacit reserve in them, and leave room for repentance, such as the threatening against Nineveh, and the message of death sent to Hezekiah; but when God interposeth his oath to confirm a threatening, it becomes an absolute and unalterable sentence: Therefore when the Lord says, "I swear in my wrath," it shews both the greatness of their sin which provoked him to such a degree, and also his irrevocable purpose to punish them, by excluding them for ever from entering into his rest; so that they were never to set a foot within its borders, nor so much as to see it, Num. xiv. 23.

The *rest* here mentioned was the land of Canaan; that land which was possessed by the Canaanites, the posterity of Ham, but which the Lord had promised to Abram and his posterity for an inheritance, Gen. xv. 18, chap. xvii. 8, and so he terms it, "the land which I swear unto Abram, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob," Num. xxxii. 11. This was literally the *rest* from which that unbelieving and rebellious generation was excluded. Moses had before called it *the rest*, "Ye are not yet come to the rest, and to the inheritance which the Lord your God giveth you," Deut. xii. 9. In the Psalm, God calls the land of Canaan *his rest*, because he was there to rest from his work of bringing Israel into it, to pitch his tabernacle and sanctuary, to establish his worship, and to take up his rest or dwelling among his people; and here Israel were to rest and settle after all the journies and fatigues they had undergone in the wilderness, and to live in safety under his protection. This land was also a type of the heavenly country, the rest which remains for the people of God; so it was understood by the patriarchs, as our apostle informs us, chap. xi. 10, 16, 26. But, though it was a dreadful thing to be excluded by the oath of God from the earthly

rest, yet we are not warranted to conclude, that all those who fell in the wilderness, were also excluded from the heavenly rest; for some of them might repent of their unbelief and rebellion before they died. Though Moses and Aaron were not excluded from that earthly rest by the oath, yet they were not permitted to enter into it.

The apostle now proceeds to apply all he had said of the sin and punishment of Israel in the wilderness, as an awful warning to the believing Hebrews, and so to all professing Christians to the end of time; for all these things happened to old Israel for examples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come, that he that thinketh he standeth, may take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. x. 11, 12.

Ver. 12. *Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God.*] It was an evil heart of unbelief that was the source of all the sin, consequently the cause of all the punishment inflicted on Israel in the wilderness, as we have seen; and from what befel them, the apostle cautions the Hebrews against that radical evil. It is by an evil heart of unbelief that men reject the revelation which God proposes to them with sufficient evidence. This was the sin of Israel of old, and it was the sin of the greater part of the Jewish nation, who rejected Christ, though they heard his doctrine and saw his miracles; of whom he says, "If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin; but now they have no cloak for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which no other man did, they had not had sin; but now have they both seen and hated both me and my Father," John xv. 22, 24. But as those of them to whom the apostle here writes, were professed believers in Christ, who had been enlightened, and tasted of the good word of God, to caution such against an evil heart of unbelief, is to caution them against apostacy from the faith, and so is termed a "departing from the living God." This is a sin of the most heinous nature, from which men are

seldom recovered, and which subjects them to the severest punishment. God is here termed *the living God*, in opposition to dead and senseless idols, see Jer. x. 8, 9, 10, Acts xiv. 15, 1 Thess. i. 9, and particularly to set forth the danger of incurring his displeasure by apostacy, it being "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God." Heb. x. 31.

To prevent their apostacy from the living God through unbelief, he gives them the following important advice,

Ver. 13. *But exhort one another daily*—] They were not only carefully to guard against the first workings of unbelief and apostacy in their own hearts, but to have a mutual care and concern one for another, and *daily*, *i. e.* as they had opportunity, or saw it needful, to exhort, admonish, and caution one another against the evil and danger of apostacy, and of every approach towards it. The word *parakaleo* signifies also to *comfort*, and imports that they should by the truths and promises of the gospel, comfort and strengthen one another's minds under all the discouragements which had a tendency to turn them aside, and so to excite and encourage each other to steadfastness and perseverance in the faith. Though the duty of exhortation belongs more especially to elders or pastors, as being a branch of their office, Rom. xii. 8; 2 Tim. iv. 2; yet mutual exhortation cannot be restricted to them; and it is here enjoined as a duty upon the believing Hebrews in general, that is, upon all of them who had abilities to perform it to edification: Nor were they to exhort one another merely in private, but also publicly when assembled together; see chap. x. 24, 25. When this duty is performed from a proper principle, and in a proper manner, it must have a blessed tendency to promote mutual edification and stability in the faith, and so to provoke to love and good works. They were thus to exhort one another daily, or day by day,  
—*While it is called To-day*—] This refers to the words in Psal. xcv. 7, 8, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice,

harden not your hearts ;” and imports that the Hebrews should diligently improve the present season, both in watching over the state of their own hearts, and in their mutual endeavours to confirm and establish one another in the faith and obedience of the gospel. And there was need for their doing this without delay,

—*lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.*] To be *hardened*, implies unbelief ; see Mark xvi. 14 ; Acts xix. 9. Men are hardened, when through unbelief, they reject the gospel, and the evidence by which it is confirmed, and so shut out its influence from their hearts, and bring themselves into such a state, that neither God’s commands, promises, nor threatenings, make any proper impresson upon them. This is hardness of heart. —But, in general, matters do not come this length with backsliding professors all at once. This hardening comes “through the deceitfulness of sin,” working in the heart at first, perhaps, imperceptibly, or under some plausible disguise, suggesting suspicions and doubts as to the truth of the gospel, which, if not properly resisted by the use of the means which God has appointed, will gradually gather strength, till at last they settle into a confirmed habit of unbelief, or at least into such a degree of it as to cool their affections and unsettle their hopes. Then the fear of suffering from men for Christ’s sake will prevail over the fear of God and of future punishment, and the allurements of this present world, such as its pleasures, riches, and honours, will outweigh the unsearchable riches of Christ, the pleasures of a good conscience, and the promise of the heavenly country. Thus the heart is hardened, and the conscience lulled into fatal security and stupefaction through the deceitfulness of sin.

Ver 14. *For we are made partakers of Christ*—] This verse has a great similarity to verse 6, which has already been explained : and therefore to be *partakers of Christ*, seems to be much of the same import with the words *whose house are we*, in that verse ; for if we are really God’s

house or family, we are his children, Christ's brethren, chap. ii. 11, and so heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ of all the blessings which he hath procured for and promised to believers, including the heavenly inheritance. But then we are partakers of these blessings only, —*if we hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end.*] The pronoun *our* is not in the original, and if any supplement were necessary, the article *the* would be fully as proper. The word rendered *confidence* here, is not *parresia*, as in ver. 6 (which signifies *freedom or boldness of speech*), but *uposasis*, by which the apostle afterwards defines faith, terming it *elpixomenon uposasis*, the *confidence*, or firm persuasion, *of things hoped for*, chap. xi. 1. The *beginning of the confidence* was that faith and hope which was begun in the Hebrews when they first believed in Christ, and gladly received the word as good news to guilty sinners; and which manifested itself in their lively devotion, their brotherly love and liberality, their unity of heart and soul, and their courage and patience under sufferings for Christ; of all which we read in the history of the Acts, and of which the apostle afterwards reminds them in this epistle, chap. x. 32—36.

This verse, which begins with the particle *gar*, *for*, contains a strong argument to enforce the cautions given in ver. 12, 13, and amounts to this, That if they continued stedfast in the faith unto the end, they should not only partake of the blessings of Christ which are enjoyed in this life, but of eternal happiness in the life to come. And this implies, on the other hand, that if they should totally and finally apostatize from the living God, through an evil heart of unbelief, and become hardened through the seduction of sin, they would undoubtedly forfeit all part and interest in Christ and his salvation. They were therefore to hold the beginning of the confidence stedfast unto the end, and to exhort one another to this daily.

Ver. 15. *While it is said, To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.]*

These words have been already explained (see notes on ver. 7, 8.) They were originally addressed to the Jews in David's time; but are here repeated by the apostle, and addressed to the Christian Hebrews, to show how necessary it was for them to hear the voice of God now speaking to them by his Son in the gospel, and to beware of hardening their hearts, as their ancestors did in the wilderness, especially in that bitter provocation, which brought them under the irrevocable sentence of the divine oath. And here the apostle resumes the consideration of the case of the unbelieving Israelites, to enforce his argument.

Ver. 16. *For some when they had heard, did provoke :—*] Whitby would render the whole verse thus, "For who are they that hearing did provoke? were they not all that came forth out of Egypt?" But, though all of them might provoke the Lord more or less, yet all of them were not guilty of the great provocation which brought upon them the divine oath. Some think that the apostle, by using the word *tines, some*, meant to avoid giving offence to the Jews by saying only that *some* of them did provoke, but not *all*. This word, however, is sometimes used when a *great many*, and indeed the *greater part*, must be understood, see Rom. iii. 3, chap. xi. 17; 1 Tim. iv. 1. In the case here referred to, we know that all the men fit for war, of twenty years old and upwards, when they left Egypt, provoked God, and fell under the sentence of the oath, excepting Caleb and Joshua, Num. xiv. 29, 30. It is said, *when they heard they did provoke*. This was a great aggravation of their sin, it being committed against the clearest declarations of the divine will. They heard his voice promulgating his law at Mount Sinai, and in all the instructions he gave them by the ministry of Moses. But I apprehend the apostle here chiefly means God's promise of the land of Canaan, and particularly his command to go up and possess it; for on that occasion, after they had heard the report of the spies,

their unbelief manifested itself in the highest degree, by their refusing to obey God, and their rebelling and murmuring against him, attributing all he had done for them to his hatred, and a design to destroy them, see Deut. i. 20—37. This was the bitter provocation for which they were excluded from God's rest. But some of them were of another spirit, and therefore the apostle adds, —*howbeit, not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.*] Their little ones, (*i. e.* all under twenty years of age), were expressly excepted in the oath, Num. xiv. 31, for the oath only excluded all who were numbered in the beginning of the second year after they came out of Egypt, from twenty years old and upwards, as being fit for war, Caleb and Joshua alone excepted, ver. 29, 30. And as the Levites were not numbered among the other tribes who were to be engaged in war, but were appointed to the charge and service of the tabernacle, Num. i. 47—52; so there is reason to believe that many of them also entered into the land of Canaan; for we find Eleazer, the son of Aaron, who was chief over the chief of the Levites, Num. iii. 32, dividing the land among them, and dying about twenty-four years after, at an advanced age; compare Num. xxxiv. 17, with Josh. xiv. 1; chap. xxiv. 33. So that all who came out of Egypt were not guilty of the great provocation.

Ver. 17. *But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned,—*] Though all who came out of Egypt did not so provoke God as to be excluded from his rest, yet the greater part of them did; and for the truth of this, the apostle, in these questions, appeals to the Hebrews themselves, that he might the more deeply impress upon their minds the heinous and provoking nature of the sin of unbelief, and how displeasing it was to God. He reminds them of what the Lord said of their fathers, "Forty years long was I grieved with this generation," Psal. xcvi. 10, and that his displeasure was not without a sufficient cause, it was with them that had



sinned," and on account of their sin and rebellion, after all the manifestations which God had made of himself to them. He next takes notice of their punishment :

—*whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?*] The word *kola*, rendered *carcasses*, literally signifies *limbs* or *bones* ; a part of the body being put for the whole : The Lord did not say simply, You shall die, but "Your carcasses shall fall in the wilderness," Num. xiv. 29, representing them as detestable objects of contempt and ignominy, and perhaps some of them lay unburied. Thus they are set up as beacons for a warning to the church in all ages.

Ver. 18. *And to whom swear he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?*] This question is much to the same purpose as the foregoing, only the apostle, instead of saying in general, that the persons who were thus punished, were *them that sinned*, he describes them more particularly as *those who believed not*. As he is enforcing upon the Hebrews the exhortation he gave them, ver. 14, so he would have them particularly to beware of the sin for which their forefathers were excluded from God's rest, namely, their unbelief. And this is the account which God himself gives of it, "How long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?" Num. xiv. 11. He had sworn to their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, that he would give the land of Canaan to their seed after them ; he had brought that generation, by a continued train of miracles, to the borders of that land ; he had set it before them, and commanded them to go in and possess it. What now hindered them from entering into it? Nothing but their unbelief. They did not believe God's faithfulness to his promise, or that He who had so often displayed his supernatural and almighty power on their behalf, was able to overcome the Canaanites, and give them the possession of their land ; and this unbelief was the source of their disobedience and rebellion against him, and provoked him to swear that they should not enter into his rest.

Ver. 19. *So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*] The Israelites were guilty of many other sins and provocations, such as idolatry, uncleanness, murmurings, rebellion, &c., but all their provocations sprung from their unbelief. This was particularly evident in the great provocation which brought the oath of God upon them; so that their unbelief was the cause of their not entering into the promised land, and by which they forfeited all title to the promise of it.

It may be proper here to rectify a mistake respecting the promise made to Israel of giving them the land of Canaan for a possession. The Lord, in a message by Moses to the Israelites, when about to deliver them out of Egypt, said, "I will bring you into the land concerning which I did swear to give it to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, and I will give it you for an heritage: I am the Lord," Exod. vi. 8. Some consider this as an *absolute* or *unconditional promise* to that particular generation, that they should, at all events, enter into the possession of the land; and that therefore every one of them was bound to believe that he himself would infallibly enter into it: And from this they argue, that the faith required of every hearer of the gospel, or professor of Christianity, is the belief of an absolute promise, that he himself shall be saved, and enter into the heavenly country.

Not to mention how opposite this is to the whole strain of the apostle's cautions, warnings, and admonitions to the Hebrews, we may observe, that though no *express* condition is mentioned in the forecited promise, no not even the duty of believing it, yet it was most certainly *implied*: For if that promise, as made to them, had been absolute or unconditional, it was not possible that it should eventually fail, any more than it was possible for God to lie. Therefore, to reconcile this promise with the faithfulness of God, and with the event, we must view it as it respected that generation, to be not an absolute promise, but suspended on their believing God and their

obeying his voice ; because this was the tenor of his covenant with them, and what he required of them in order to their going in and possessing the land, see Exod. xix. 5—9, chap. xxiii. 20, 24 ; Deut. viii. 1 ; and because their unbelief and disobedience are constantly assigned as the cause of their not entering into it, Num. xiv. 11, 22, 23, chap. xxxii. 11—14 ; Deut. i. 26—41, chap. ix. 23 ; Josh. v. 6 ; Psal. xcv. 9, 10, 11. Accordingly, our apostle says, “ they could not enter in because of unbelief.” As therefore God did not promise to bring them into that land, whether they believed and obeyed him or not, it was no breach of promise in him, though that unbelieving, murmuring, and rebellious generation did not enter into it, but fell in the wilderness.

But though the most of that generation believed not, yet God continued faithful to his promise which he made to Abraham, “ Unto thy seed have I given this land,” Gen. xv. 18. This he accomplished to the succeeding generations, as he had said, Num. xiv. 31, not indeed for their righteousness, or for the uprightness of their heart, but that he might perform the word which he swore unto their fathers, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, Deut. ix. 5. And in the book of Joshua we have an account of the actual accomplishment of this promise, “ and the Lord gave unto Israel all the land which he swore to give unto their fathers ; and they possessed it, and dwelt therein,” chap. xxi. 43. So that Joshua appeals to themselves for the faithfulness of God in this matter : “ Ye know in all your hearts, and in all your souls, that not one thing hath failed of all the good things which the Lord your God spake concerning you : all are come to pass unto you, and not one thing hath failed thereof,” chap. xx. 14.

Now, to apply this to the gospel promise of the heavenly inheritance : That promise will infallibly be accomplished to all the spiritual seed of Abraham, and who are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, Gal. iii. 26,

29. They were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4. Eternal life was promised to them before the times of ages, and confirmed to Abraham by the oath of God, with whom it is impossible to lie, Tit. i. 2; Heb. vi. 13—19. They were redeemed unto God by the blood of the Lamb, and are in due time called according to his gracious purpose, Rev. v. 9; 2 Tim. i. 9. The inheritance is reserved in heaven for them, and they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 4, 5. These are they of whom Christ says, "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me. And I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand. My Father who gave them me is greater than all, and none is able to pluck them out of my Father's hands," John x. 27, 28, 29. So that they shall all at last inherit the kingdom which was prepared for them from the foundation of the world, Matt. xxv. 34.

But then it must be observed, that the gospel does not testify *directly* to any one, that Christ died for him in particular, and that he shall be saved through his death; nor is the gospel an *absolute* promise of salvation to every one that hears it. The promise runs in this tenor, "He that believeth shall be saved," while it is declared with equal certainty, that "he that believeth not shall be damned," Mark xvi. 16. Nor is it absolutely promised that all who profess the faith, and have some inward impressions of the truth, shall be saved! for though that for the time may entitle them to our charitable regards as brethren; yet Christ informs us, that some receive the word with joy, and for a while believe, who yet in time of temptation fall away, Matt. xiii. 20, 21, Luke xii. 13; and the apostle supposes, that some of the professing Hebrews who had been once enlightened, and had tasted of the heavenly gift, and of the good word of God, might notwithstanding fall away irrecoverably, chap. vi. 4—7; and it is to guard them against this that he gives them so many cautions,

warnings, and admonitions ; but if they did not believe that it was possible for them to fall away, such cautions could have no influence upon them. Though the purpose of God according to election must stand, and all the election shall most certainly be saved, yet they cannot know their election, nor have any absolute assurance of their salvation, independent of their continuing in the faith, love, and obedience of the gospel ; for this is the very evidence of their calling, and so of their election, and it is by enabling them to persevere in faith and holiness, that they are kept by the power of God unto salvation, 2 Pet. i. 5—12 ; 1 Pet. i. 3—10.

## CHAP. IV.

## CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

It will perhaps throw some light upon part of the apostle's reasoning in this chapter, if we recollect what he elsewhere teacheth us, viz., That God promised to Abraham two different kinds of seed ; a natural seed which were to spring from his body in the line of Isaac, and a spiritual seed by faith, who were typified by the former : That to his natural seed the land of Canaan was promised for an inheritance, and that under that, as a type, was ultimately intended the heavenly country (chap. xi. 16), and the promise of it to his spiritual seed, viz., believers of all nations, as is now more clearly revealed by the gospel ; see Rom. iv. and Gal. iii.

But, though the promise of the earthly inheritance was made to the natural seed of Abraham, yet that generation of them who were redeemed out of Egypt, taken into covenant with God, and had seen his mighty works, came short of that inheritance through unbelief. This awful example he sets before the Hebrews, as a motive to cautious fear, lest they, through unbelief, should come short of the heavenly rest of which they had the promise, even as their ancestors in the wilderness came short of the earthly rest which was promised to them, ver. 1, 2.

But, lest any of the Hebrews should object, that besides the rest of the seventh day, and the possession of the land of Canaan, which they already enjoyed, they found no mention of any other rest from which they were in danger

of being excluded ; the apostle, to obviate this objection, explains the words in Psalm xcvi. 7, 8, &c., "To-day, when ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts," as implying a promise to believers of entering into God's rest : And he argues, that this promise could not respect the rest of the seventh day, because that commenced when the works of creation were finished, ver. 3, 4. Nor could it respect the earthly rest in the land of Canaan ; for if that had been the rest ultimately intended in the promise, God would not, after the Israelites had possessed it so long a time, have spoken by David of another day or season for hearing his voice, that they might enter into it, ver. 6, 7, 8. Since therefore it does not mean either of the forementioned rests, though they prefigured it, he concludes that there is a rest which still remains to the people of God, when they shall have ceased from all their works and labours in this world, ver. 9, 10.

He therefore exhorts the Hebrews to labour to enter into that rest, lest any of them should fall, after the example of the Israelites, through unbelief, ver. 11 ; and he farther enforces this exhortation by describing the word of God, according to which they will be judged at last (John xii. 48), as living and effectual for discerning, censuring, and punishing, not only open and avowed apostacy, but also the secret thoughts and intentions of the heart ; and that all things lie naked and exposed to the eyes of the Judge, whose word it is, and to whom we must give an account, ver. 12, 13.

The apostle having finished what he had to say of Christ, as the Apostle of our profession, with suitable exhortations and cautions to the Hebrews on that ground, he returns to the subject of his priesthood, of which he

had given some hints before (chap. i. 3, ii. 17, 18, iii. 1); and here he represents him as a great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, who is passed through the heavens into the immediate presence of the Divine Majesty, and who is qualified to sympathize with our weaknesses, having been himself tempted like as we are, yet without sin. From these considerations, he exhorts the Hebrews to hold fast their profession; and to approach, through his mediation, with boldness to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need, ver. 14, 15, 16.

#### P A R A P H R A S E.

CHAP. IV. 1. Wherefore, *since such was the punishment of ancient Israel for their unbelief and disobedience*, let us fear to provoke God as they did, lest a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to fall short of it.

2. For we have received good tidings of a future rest, as they also did; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in the hearers: and it will be equally unprofitable to us unless we believe it.

3. For we enter into the promised rest, only in the way of believing, unbelievers being excluded, as he said concerning the unbelieving Israelites, "So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest," and that notwithstanding the works of creation were finished from the foundation of the world; which, therefore, could not be meant of the seventh-day rest, of which the Israelites were already in possession.



4. For, *as to that rest*, he (*Moses*) spake somewhere (Gen. ii. 2, 3), concerning the seventh day thus, "And God rested on the seventh day from all his works," *which he also sanctified as a weekly day of rest for man, and gave it in command to Israel in the wilderness, to be observed by them*, Exod. xx. 10, 11.

5. Moreover, in this 95th Psalm, the Holy Spirit again admonisheth the Israelites in David's time to hear God's voice, and not to harden their hearts, lest, like their fathers, they should fall under the awful oath, "They shall not enter into my rest," *which must refer to another rest than that which they then enjoyed in the land of Canaan.*

6. Seeing, then, it remained for some to enter into it, according to the full sense of the promise made to Abraham's believing seed, (Rom iv. 16), and they who were first favoured with the good tidings, entered not into the earthly rest, because of unbelief ;

7. And seeing he again limiteth a certain day for hearing his voice, saying by David, "To-day," so long a time after Israel had possessed the land of Canaan, as it is said "To-day when ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts," *it plainly shews that another rest besides the earthly inheritance was included in the promise.*

8. For if Joshua, by settling them in the land of Canaan, had given them all that rest which God intended in the promise, he would not after that have spoken of another day for hearing his voice, that they might enter into it.

9. Therefore, since neither the rest of the seventh day, nor that in the land of Canaan, were the ultimate rest intended, but only types of it, it follows, that there still remains a rest (*a sabbatism*) to the people of God.

10. For he who is entered into his (*God's*) rest, hath

himself also rested from his works like as God *did* from his own.

11. Therefore, let us diligently strive to enter into that *glorious and perfect rest, which is promised to believers*, lest any one should fall after the same example of unbelief *which ancient Israel exhibited*.

12. For the word of God, *which he hath spoken by his Son, the Apostle of our profession, and by which we shall be judged at the last day* (John xii. 48), is living and efficacious, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder both of soul and spirit, and also of the joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

13. And, *as to the Judge himself*, there is no creature unmanifest in his sight; but all things *are* naked and laid open to the eyes of him to whom we must give an account, Rom. ii. 16.

[*Here the apostle returns to the subject of Christ's Priesthood, which he had briefly mentioned before, chap. i. 3, and ii. 17, 18, and recommended to their consideration, chap. iii. 1.*]

14. Having therefore a great High Priest, who hath passed through the heavens, *into the immediate presence of the Divine Majesty*, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession.

15. For, *as we have already hinted*, (chap. ii. 17, 18), we have not an High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses; but has been *himself* tried in all points, like *as we are* (Gr. *according to the likeness*), yet without sin.

16. Let us therefore approach with boldness to the throne of grace, *through his mediation*, that we may receive mercy *for the pardon of our sins*, and find grace

for reasonable assistance *under all our trials and afflictions.*

## COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. IV.

Ver. 1. *Let us therefore fear—*] The apostle having shewn that unbelief was the cause why Israel in the wilderness could not enter into God's rest, in the land of Canaan, applies that awful example as a caution to the Hebrews, lest they, through unbelief, should come short of the rest proposed to them in the gospel; and he endeavours to awaken in them a deep concern and cautious fear on that head, *Let us therefore fear, &c.* The fear inculcated upon the Hebrews is not of a discouraging or desponding nature, nor is it a fear that anything which God hath promised can possibly fail on his part, for such a fear would defeat the design of the exhortation, and was the very sin of old Israel, who believed not God, nor trusted to his power and faithfulness to make good his promise to the seed of Abraham; but the fear which is here exhorted to, is a cautious and watchful fear.

—*lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.*] That is, lest any of you, through your own unbelief, should fall short of obtaining the promise, which is made only to believers. Some render the words thus, *lest, leaving the promise, &c.*; but the common translation agrees better with the verse immediately following, and, indeed, with the scope of the apostle's reasoning to ver. 10, which is to prove from Psal. xcv. 7, that besides the seventh-day rest, and the rest in the land of Canaan, there still is *left*, or there (*apoleipetai*) *remaineth* another rest to the people of God, ver. 9. Agreeably to this he here says, that the promise of this rest (*kataleipomenes*) *being left*, or *remaining*, they were to fear lest *any of them should seem to come short of it.* Some who are not reconciled to this awful caution,

take notice of the English word *seem*, in order to soften it, as if the apostle had meant to say, "You cannot indeed *really* come short of the heavenly rest, but you ought to be cautious lest any of you should have that *appearance*." But this destroys the force of the caution, which is urged from the example of Israel in the wilderness, who not only *seemed*, but actually came short of the rest promised them. The word *doke*, rendered *should seem*, is in many places of the New Testament redundant, or a mere expletive; but if it is otherwise here, it is seldom expressive of the *mere appearance* of a thing (see 1 Cor. vii. 40), and it can admit of no doubt that the apostle inculcates this fear upon them, that they might beware lest they should *actually* come short of God's rest. Besides, the word *userekenai* signifies to fall behind, to come short of, or fail of obtaining a thing; and it may also import here, that men may appear to be so far on the way to the promised rest, like Israel in the wilderness, and yet never come the full length, so as actually to enter into it.

Many have adopted a scheme of doctrine which tends to set believers free from every kind of fear, as being inconsistent with faith, which they think is a person's believing that he himself shall be saved at all events; and especially if he has been once enlightened, and has ever received the word with joy, it is supposed that he can never fall away. So that whatever present symptoms of apostacy may appear, he is to consider them only as the infirmities and failings of God's children, but has no cause to fear lest he should finally come short, which is looked upon as the great sin of unbelief.

But our apostle had no idea that a cautious fear of coming short through unbelief, was itself unbelief. On the contrary, it was to guard them against unbelief and its awful consequences that he inculcates this fear upon them. Faith, in general, is the belief of God's word, and respects his threatenings as well as promises; and so

gives credit to the motives of fear, as well as of hope, both of which are necessary to believers while in this world. Both believers and unbelievers have their fears; but they arise from very different sources, and have quite opposite effects. The fears of unbelievers arise from unworthy thoughts of God; a distrust of his power, faithfulness, and goodness; and also from a prevailing love of this present world and its enjoyments, which makes them more afraid of worldly losses and sufferings for righteousness sake, than of forfeiting the divine favour: such fears not only indispose the mind for obedience, but lead directly into sin. But that godly fear which is proper to believers, arises from a just view, reverence, and esteem of the character of God, and a supreme desire of his favour as their chief happiness; and is a fear lest they should offend him and incur his just displeasure; such a fear of him as outweighs all the allurements of sin on the one hand, and all the terrors of present sufferings for righteousness sake on the other. This is that fear which Christ inculcates upon his disciples, Luke xii. 4, 5, and this is to sanctify the Lord God in our hearts, and to let him be our fear and our dread, Isa. viii. 12, 13; 1 Pet. iii. 14, 15. Happy is the man that thus feareth alway, Prov. xxviii. 14. This pious fear, instead of dejecting and debasing the mind, like the abject fear of man that bringeth a snare, Prov. xxix. 25, inspires with a noble courage and freedom, by raising us above every other fear which might intimidate or discourage in the way of duty; and as it preserves us from slothful security, and checks self-confidence and high-mindedness, Rom xi. 20, 21, so it makes us cautious and vigilant with respect to everything that may endanger the safety of our souls.

But as the apostle urges this cautious fear upon the Hebrews, from what befel their ancestors in the wilderness, who, though they had the promise of the earthly rest proposed to them, yet came short of it through unbelief; and as the Hebrews might perhaps object to this, that the

cases were quite different, there being no mention made of any rest but that of the land of Canaan, in which they have now no concern, as no promise of entering into it remains to them; he therefore proceeds, ver. 3—10, to prove, that the promise of another and better rest still remains, and is proposed to Christians, who are in danger of coming short of it, even as old Israel did of theirs; and so he says,

Ver. 2. *For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them,—*] This translation does not clearly convey the apostle's meaning. To say that the gospel was preached to the Hebrews, as well as it was to their ancestors in the wilderness, imports that what we commonly call the gospel, was equally preached to both; whereas there can be no just comparison: it being preached far more fully and clearly to the Hebrews and to Christians in general than ever it was to old Israel. The original is, "For we were (*euaggelismenoi*) evangelized even as they." The word *euaggelizo* signifies to *bring good news* or *glad tidings* of any kind; and here the context leads us to understand this good news to be the promise of a rest; for that is the subject of which the apostle is treating; so that the sense is, We, Christians, have been favoured with the good news or promise of a rest in the heavenly country, even as old Israel were with the good news of a rest in the land of Canaan.

—*but the word preached—*] Gr. "the word of hearing," that is, the word which old Israel heard. This word contained not only a promise of the land, but a command to go up and possess it: "I said unto you, Ye are come unto the mountain of the Amorites, which the Lord our God doth give unto us. Behold the Lord thy God hath set the land before thee; go up *and* possess it, as the Lord God of thy fathers hath said unto thee. Fear not, neither be discouraged," Deut. i. 20, 21. But the word which they heard, and all the encouragements contained in it, —*did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them*

*that heard it.*] That is, it did not benefit them, nor had it any good influence on their hearts and conduct ; on the contrary, they broke out into higher acts of provocation than ever they had done before, see Num. xiv. 1—11. The reason given why the word did not profit them is, its “not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.” They did not believe the truth of God’s promise, nor trust in his power and faithfulness to make it good. This is what he complains of them, “How long will it be ere they believe me, for all the signs which I have shewed among them?” Num. xiv. 11 ; and Moses says, “Yet in this thing ye did not believe the Lord your God,” Deut. i. 32. However clearly the word of God may be declared, and however strong the evidence by which it is confirmed, it cannot, in the very nature of things, benefit those who give no credit to it. Some think that the expression, *mixed with faith*, alludes to food which can do us no good, unless digested and mixed with the substance of our bodies. The word of God is indeed frequently compared to food, 1 Cor. iii. 2, 1 Pet. ii. 2, Heb. v. 12, 13 ; and believing and relishing it, is termed eating and tasting it, Jer. xv. 16 ; Heb. vi. 5. Believing in Christ is also represented as eating his flesh and drinking his blood, John vi. 53—59. But whether the expression alludes to food or not, the meaning is quite obvious, viz., that the word did not profit the Israelites, because they did not believe it. Peirce, I think, justly observes here, that to complete the sense of this verse, somewhat of this nature seems necessary to be understood, viz. “And as the word heard did not profit them of old for want of faith ; so neither will the word heard by us profit us without faith, which is a good reason why we should fear, ver. 1, or why we should be diligent and careful to enter into it, ver. 11.”

Ver. 3. *For we who have believed do enter into rest—*] Or, “we, believing, do enter into the rest.” *Eiserchometha do enter*, is in the present tense ; but this is often put for the future, and may be so understood here, see Matt. iii.

10, chap. xxvi. 28, Mark ix. 31, 1 Cor. xv. 2, 12; and in the original of James v. 3, 2 Peter iii. 11, 12, Christians have a rest proposed to them, as well as old Israel had, ver. 2, and we who have believed, and so are the true seed of Abraham, do enter into it. But as some might object, that there is no rest spoken of in the Old Testament but the seventh-day rest, and the rest in the land of Canaan, he proceeds to prove, that in Psalm 95th, another rest is mentioned besides these two, which still remains to the people of God, and into which none but believers shall enter,

—*as he said, "As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest,"*—] That is, they shall not enter. (See note on chap. iii. 11). God sware this oath excluding the unbelieving Israelites from his rest :

—*although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.*] That is, notwithstanding the works of creation were finished, and the seventh-day rest was instituted from the beginning, and so could not be the rest here intended.

Ver. 4. *For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, "And God did rest the seventh day from all his works."*] The place where this is mentioned is Gen. ii. 2, 3, where Moses adds, "And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it; because that in it he had rested from all his work, which God created and made." Not that God needed rest, as if he had been weary, but that he ceased from his creating work, as having completed all things to his satisfaction. This passage shews, that the rest of the seventh day is fitly called *God's rest*, and that it was set apart from the beginning as a day of rest. And so we find it strictly enjoined upon the Israelites in their law, both on the ground of its original institution, Exod. xx. 8—12, and also to commemorate their deliverance from the bondage of Egypt, Deut. v. 15. Now as Israel, while in the wilderness, had already entered into the seventh-day rest, that cannot be the rest



from which the oath excluded them; and therefore it must be a future rest into which they might have entered, had they not disbelieved and disobeyed God, namely, a rest in the land of Canaan, which is called *God's rest*, because when Israel got possession of it, God rested from his work of introducing them into it, and fixed the place of his rest among them; and because they were there to observe his Sabbaths, and perform his worship under his special protection.

Ver. 5. *And in this place again, "If they shall enter into my rest."*] The oath by which the unbelieving Israelites were excluded from God's rest in Canaan, is again repeated in the 95th Psalm, as a warning to the Israelites in David's time, and, indeed, to all after ages, and therefore it must refer to another rest besides the rest which they then enjoyed in Canaan; a rest which still remained for believers to enter into, and from which unbelievers are excluded.

Ver. 6. *Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein; and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief;]* As if he had said, Since, therefore, another rest than that in Canaan remaineth for some to enter into it, a promise of it being left us, ver. 1, and since they who first received the good tidings of the earthly rest entered not into that good land on account their unbelief, as is evident from the oath which excluded them from it; therefore, I say,

Ver 7. *Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, "To-day," after so long a time; as it is said, "To-day, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts."*] To show that the rest in Canaan was not the only or principal rest intended, the apostle observes, that in this 95th Psalm, God again (*orizei*) sets, limits, or determines a certain day or season, saying by his Spirit in David, *To-day*, (*i. e.* this very day, or just now,) *if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.* Now, as this was said so long a time after the Israelites were settled in the earthly rest, which

was about four hundred and fifty years, Acts xiii. 20, and as it is a call to hear God's voice to-day, that they may enter into his rest, it must respect another rest than that which they had in the land of Canaan.

Ver. 8. *For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterwards have spoken of another day.*] By Jesus here is meant Joshua the son of Nun, whose name was originally *Hoshea*, Deut. xxxii. 44, but was changed by Moses into *Jehoshua*, Num. xiii. 16, and is usually pronounced *Joshua*, but in Greek, *Jesus*, as here and in Acts vii. 45, as it is also throughout the Septuagint version.

Should any object that Joshua, by conducting Israel into the possession of the land of Canaan, had given them all that rest which God had promised to the seed of Abraham, the apostle's words are a direct reply to this. For if Joshua had introduced them into the principal or ultimate rest intended in the promise, God would not after that, by his Spirit in David, have spoken of another day for hearing his voice, that they might enter into it. And from the whole he draws the following conclusion,

Ver. 9. *There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.*] As if he had said, since the rest spoken of and, proposed in Psalm 95th, is neither the seventh-day rest nor the rest in the land of Canaan; since it is a rest of which the promise is left us, and we are called to-day to hear God's voice in order that we may enter into it, it must therefore be a future rest which still remains to the people of God, that is, to the true Israel or spiritual seed of Abraham.

In this verse the apostle, instead of the word *katapausis*, which he has all along used to express the rest which remains to the people of God, uses the term *sabbatismos*, a word derived from the Hebrew, and may be rendered *the keeping of a Sabbath*. Commentators differ as to the reason they assign for this change of the term. Some are of opinion that it was with a view to include the first day of the week as the day of sabbatical rest which God hath

appointed under the gospel state, answerable to what he had said, ver. 4, concerning the seventh-day Sabbath; and as that day was appointed in commemoration of God's resting from the work of creation; so the first day of the week is appointed under the New Testament to commemorate Christ's resurrection, and his resting from the work of redemption; accordingly they apply ver. 10 entirely to Christ. Some also affirm, that the Sabbatism, or rest which remains to the people of God, is that rest which true believers do enter into in this world, and which they have by Christ in the grace and worship of the gospel, *and no other*; and that the *whole design* of the apostle is to set forth the excellency of the gospel, with the church, state, and worship of it, above the legal state of things, in respect of peace with God, freedom from a spirit of bondage and from the yoke of Mosaic institutions, the supply of the Spirit, &c.

But these glosses, instead of explaining this passage in a simple and uniform manner, appear to me to confuse and perplex the sense. Though we have sufficient Scripture authority for keeping the first day of the week in memory of Christ's resurrection, from the example of the apostles and first Christians, and from its being denominated *the Lord's day*; yet it is far from being clear that the apostle had an eye to it here as the reason of his changing the term, or that he meant to include it in the Sabbatism which remains to the people of God. The word *sabbatismos* evidently means the same thing as *katapausis*, and so both are justly rendered *rest*. And were not this the case, this argument would be very faulty, as there would be something in the conclusion that was not in the premises. The reason why the word *Sabbatism* is here used, seems to be, because that it was usual with the Jews, to whom the epistle is directed, to speak of the happiness of a future state under the title of a Sabbath, and to explain several passages in the Old Testament which mention the Sabbath as prefiguring that happiness.

The *rest* of which the apostle speaks is not the first day of the week, though that may be considered as an emblem of it; but it is a rest of which a promise is left us, and concerning which we are exhorted to labour, that we may enter into it, ver. 4—11. Nor is it merely a rest in this world which believers have in Christ in the grace and worship of the gospel; for though believers have a present spiritual rest by faith in Christ, Matt. xi. 28, 29, yet it must be connected with their fighting the good fight of faith, and running with patience the race set before them. They have indeed peace in Christ, but in the world they shall have tribulation, John xvi. 33; so that the rest which believers enjoy while in this imperfect and militant state, does not come up to the rest which remains to the people of God, and which the apostle has chiefly, if not solely, in view; for what spiritual rest can the people of God enjoy in this world, abstract from the faith and hope of a future rest in the world to come? All present spiritual enjoyments refer to and are connected with the prospect of future happiness. The rest or Sabbatism which is the subject of the apostle's reasoning, and concerning which he concludes that it remains to the people of God, is undoubtedly the heavenly rest. The rest in the land of Canaan was a type of the rest to be enjoyed in the heavenly country; and so the patriarchs, who had the promise of that earthly rest, looked beyond it, and confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth; plainly declaring that they sought and desired a better country, that is, an heavenly, Heb. xi. 13—17. That temporal earthly inheritance prefigured the eternal inheritance of which believers have the promise, chap ix. 15. They are begotten again to the lively hope of it, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; and it is described to be an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven for them, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. This, then, is the rest that remains to the people of God, which is opposed to a state of labour

and trouble in this world, and is the rest which they shall obtain when the Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven, 2 Thess. i. 7. This farther appears from the next verse.

Ver. 10. *For he that is entered into his rest,—*] That is, every real believer who is entered into God's rest, the heavenly rest,  
—*he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.*] Those who understand this rest to be only a spiritual rest in this world, explain the believer's works from which he ceases, or (*katepausen*) rests, to be the works of the flesh, or self-righteous works. But the works from which the believer ceases when he enters into the rest here intended, do not mean sinful works (though he shall then be free from all sin), but his toils and labours in the Christian race and warfare, with the trials and sufferings which attend these; and as he does not rest from these works in this world, it must be in heaven where those who die in the Lord *shall rest from their labour*, Rev. xiv. 13. It is a complete rest, in the enjoyment of perfect happiness, for it is compared to God's resting from (*ton idion*) his own proper works in creating all things; and such a rest none can enjoy in this mortal state, nor till their works of trial are ended, their warfare accomplished, and their course finished. And in this they are conformed to Christ the Captain of their salvation, who conducts them into glory; for he first finished the work which the father had assigned him on earth, and then entered into heaven as their forerunner, to prepare a place for them, and has left them his promise that he will come again to receive them to himself, that where he is, there they may be also, Heb. ii. 10, chap. vi. 20; John xiv. 2, 3. There they shall pass a Sabbath of everlasting and uninterrupted rest; not indeed in listless indolence, or mental inactivity, for that would be inconsistent with positive happiness; but a rest from everything that is toilsome, disagreeable, or painful, while all the powers of their souls are engaged in the delightful contempla-

tion, worship, and enjoyment of God and of the Lamb.

Ver. 11. *Let us labour, therefore, to enter into that rest,—*] The apostle here returns to the exhortation he set out with in ver. 1 ; and this he does with the greater advantage, after having proved, in the intervening verses, that there is a rest still remaining to the people of God. He had said (ver. 1) that a promise was left of entering into God's rest, and here he exhorts them to labour to enter into it ; which plainly shows that he is speaking of a future rest, into which the believing Hebrews had not as yet entered. How believers are to labour to enter into that rest, may be gathered from the various practical exhortations contained in this epistle, which are enforced by all the encouraging motives of the gospel on the one hand, and by the most awful cautions against coming short of it on the other. But this labour is not to establish our own righteousness by the works of the law, as the ground of our justification before God, which would be to set aside the obedience of Christ, by which the many are made righteous ; "for if righteousness come by the law, then Christ hath died in vain," Gal. ii. 21. Our apostle, who renounced all his own righteousness in this respect, and was justified by faith, shows how diligently he laboured to obtain the prize at the end of his race : "Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended ; but this one thing I do ;—forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark, for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus," Philip. iii. 13, 14. And, exhorting the Corinthian believers so to run that they may obtain the incorruptible crown, he sets his own example before them : "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly ; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air : but I keep under my body, and bring it into subjection, lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be disapproved," 1 Cor. ix. 26, 27 ; see also 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8. The apostle

Peter also, directing the believers to whom he writes, how they were to labour to enter into the heavenly rest, says, "And besides this, giving all diligence, add to your faith, courage (*aretē*); and to courage, knowledge; and to knowledge, temperance; and to temperance, patience; and to patience, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, charity: for if these things be in you and abound, they make *you that ye shall* neither be (*argous*) slothful nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things ye shall never fall: for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly into the everlasting kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Pet. i. 5—12. Thus we are to labour, or carefully strive, to enter into that rest,

—*lest any man fall, after the same example of unbelief.*] The example referred to is that of Israel in the wilderness, who, though they had by a train of miracles been redeemed from Egyptian bondage, taken into covenant with God, and had the promise of the earthly rest in Canaan, yet, after all, forfeited that promise, and fell in the wilderness through unbelief. By this awful example, the apostle enforces his exhortation to the Hebrews, that they should labour to enter into the heavenly rest, of which a promise was left them, lest they should come short of it through unbelief, as Israel did of the earthly rest.

Though what befel Israel in the wilderness may serve as a caution to Gentile Christians in all ages, and so is also used as a warning to the church at Corinth, 1 Cor. x. 6—11; yet, as Peirce remarks, the example here urged, was particularly proper and agreeable to the case of the Hebrews, to whom it was applied. 1. In that it is taken from their own ancestors, and so the more apt to work upon them. 2. The evil against which he cautions them is the same with that of which their ancestors had been guilty, viz. unbelief. 3. Old Israel were thus un-

believing, notwithstanding all the miraculous mighty works which God did on their behalf, and that presently after he had erected a new constitution, religion, and government among them: It concerned the Hebrews, therefore, to beware lest they should fall after the same example of unbelief, now that God had fully confirmed the gospel revelation among them, and established a new and more excellent constitution of things, of which the former had only a shadow. 4. The consequence in each case was alike; unbelief debarring the guilty in both from an entrance into God's rest. 5. The unbelief in the present case was aggravated above the former, by the dignity and extraordinary character of the messenger employed. Formerly God spake to their fathers by his servant Moses, but now he had spoken to the Hebrews by his Son; and in proportion to his superior dignity and authority must their guilt be heightened in rejecting him. 6. The vast difference of the two rests increased the danger in the present case beyond that of the former, and so served much to strengthen the apostle's argument. The unbelief of old Israel excluded them from an entrance into the earthly rest in the land of Canaan; but unbelief of the gospel, or apostacy from the faith of it, forfeits an entrance into the heavenly rest.

Ver. 12. In this and the following verse the apostle, farther to enforce the exhortation in the verse preceding, adds to the awful example of the sin and punishment of their ancestors, the consideration of the power and efficacy of the word of God, according to which men shall at last be judged; and of the omniscience of Christ the judge, from whose eyes the most secret Infidelity and hypocrisy of the heart cannot be concealed.

*For the word of God—*] By the word of God some understand Christ, whom the apostle John sometimes calls the Word, John i. 1, 14; 1 John i. 1, chap. v. 7; and the word of God, Rev. xix. 13, and the Chaldee paraphrasts often put the word of God, for what in the original is only



*God* or the *Lord*; but it is doubtful if Paul ever gives that title to Christ. And though the things attributed to the word of God in this verse will also apply to Christ, yet as these things are attributed to the word of revelation elsewhere, it is more natural to understand it of the word spoken by God; and as it stands here closely connected with what goes before, it would seem, that by *the word of God* is meant his threatenings denounced against unbelievers, and especially apostates from the faith. It is not unusual in Scripture to ascribe that to the word of God, which God himself performs, either by means of his word, or according to what he hath promised or threatened. Great efficacy is ascribed to the word of God in the conversion of sinners, Psalm xix. 7; 2 Cor. x. 4, 5; James i. 18; 1 Peter i. 23; and it effectually worketh also in them that believe, 1 Thess. ii. 13. But it does not appear that the apostle is here speaking of the gracious operations and effects of the word, but is cautioning the Hebrews against unbelief, by what befel their ancestors in the wilderness on that account; and what he attributes to the word is intended as a farther inforcement of that caution, and therefore must respect punishment; for to this both the scope of the discourse, and the most natural sense of the expressions best agree. In this view we shall go over the particulars. It is affirmed that the word of God

—*is quick and powerful*—] It is (*zon*) *living*; Christ says, “The words that I speak, they are spirit and they are life,” John vi. 63; and Peter terms the gospel “the word of God which liveth,” 1 Peter i. 23. It deals not in empty promises, or vain threatenings, which never take effect, but is living and (*energes*) powerful or efficacious, being the word of the living God, and attended with his power to convey life or death to men. The Lord frequently mentions the efficacy of his word in relation to punishment: “Behold I will make my words in thy mouth fire, and this people wood, and it shall devour them,” Jer.

v. 14. "Is not my word like as a fire? saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?" chap. xxiii. 29. "I have hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth; and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth," Hos. vi. 5. Again, the word of God is represented as —*sharper than any two-edged sword,*—] It is prophesied of Messiah, that "he shall smite the earth with the rod (or, as the LXX. has it, *the word*) of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked," Isaiah xi. 4. Here the apostle compares the word of God to a sword, and says, it is sharper, or (*tomoteros*) more cutting than any two-edged sword. This sharp two-edged sword is represented in the Revelation as issuing out of Christ's mouth, chap. i. 16; and with this sword of his mouth he threatens to fight against some in the church of Pergamos, chap. ii. 16. And he hath this sharp two-edged sword that goeth out of his mouth, that with it he should smite the nations, and rule them with a rod of iron, when he treadeth the wine-press of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God, chap. xix. 15. As the apostle had been setting before the Hebrews God's vengeance on their ancestors in the wilderness, so in comparing the word of God to a sword, he seems to glance at Deut. xxxii. 41, where God says, "If I whet my glittering sword, and mine hand take hold on judgment, I will render vengeance to mine enemies, and will reward them that hate me." And he afterwards recites part of the 35th and 36th verses of that chapter, to shew the dreadful punishment that shall be inflicted upon apostates from the Christian faith; see Heb. x. 30, 31. This two-edged sword is represented as —*piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow;*] The Hebrew words *nephesh* and *ruach*, which the LXX. render *Psyche* and *pneuma*, and we *soul* and *spirit*, frequently signify the same thing; but when they are distinguished as here, they

must have a different meaning. Our apostle represents man as consisting of three parts, namely, the soul, body, and spirit, 1 Thess. v. 23. The *body* is that part of man which God formed of the dust of the ground; and to this he made an important addition when he breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, whereby he became a living soul, Gen. ii. 7; and, in the original, all the inferior animals are also said to be living souls, or to have a living soul in them, Gen. i. 20, 24, 30. The soul of man, therefore, strictly taken, seems to be the principle of his sensitive or animal life, and the seat of his sensations, appetites, and passions. And so the body of the first man, animated with the breath of life, is termed (*soma Psuchikon*) a *soulish* or *animal body*, to distinguish it from the (*soma pneumatikon*) *spiritual body*, in which the saints shall be raised at the last day, 1 Cor. xv. 44, 45, 46. But man, besides his body and animal soul, has a higher and more noble principle in him, called *spirit*, in the natural and moral powers of which he is clearly distinguished from the brute creation; for we are informed, that "God created man *after his own image*," Gen. i. 26, 27; and as neither his body formed of the dust, nor his animal soul, which he hath in common with the inferior animals, seem to be any part of God's image, he must bear this image or likeness in his *spirit*, which is the seat of intellect, rationality, and conscience, and by which he is fitted to know, love, and obey his Maker, to have dominion over the lower creation, and to govern the animal part of his own constitution.

On this subject Dr Macknight says, "To comprehend the distinction between *soul* and *spirit*, which the sacred writers have insinuated, the soul must be considered as connected with the body and with the spirit. By its connection with the body, the soul receives impressions from the senses; and by its connection with the spirit, it conveys these impressions, by means of the imagination and memory, to the spirit as materials for its operations." But whatever be in this, as the Scriptures clearly reveal that

there is a distinction between the soul and spirit, our belief of it ought not to depend on our being able fully either to explain or comprehend it. It is, however, a matter of observation and experience, that the animal part of man may be greatly afflicted, while his spirit or mind is joyful and happy; and, on the other hand, that his mind or spirit may be sorely distressed, while there is nothing immediately affecting his animal part. This, I think, plainly manifests a distinction between the sensitive soul and the spirit of man.

Now, when the word of God is compared to a sharp two-edged sword, which penetrates into, and divides asunder, both the soul and spirit, it imports its efficacy in thoroughly punishing the whole man, affecting not only the animal life, but reaching also to the spirit, the noblest part of man, in which he is susceptible either of the highest happiness, or of the most consummate misery; for "the spirit of a man will sustain his infirmity; but a wounded spirit, who can bear?" Prov. xviii. 14. As to its effect on the body, it is represented as penetrating the bones into the marrow, and separating the joints which are united by the strongest tendons. No language can more strikingly set forth the power of God's wrath in the punishment of his enemies. Mr Pierce thinks, that the effects here ascribed to the word of God, allude to the judgments inflicted on some of the rebellious Israelites by fire and lightning which went out from the Lord, Lev. x. 2, Num. xi. 1—3, chap. xvi. 35, nothing being so swift in its motion, or more powerful, irresistible, and penetrating than lightning, which makes its way through all obstacles, and strikes men dead in an instant. Of the word of God it is farther added,

—*and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.*] The word *kritikos* signifies not only a discerner, but a judge and censurer. To ascribe discernment and judgment to the word, as if it were a person, is no doubt figurative language; but Christ used the same figure

when he said to the Jews, "He that rejecteth me, and receiveth not my words, hath one that judgeth him; the word (*o logos*) that I have spoken, the same shall judge him at the last day," John xii. 48. It discerns and passeth judgment on the thoughts and intentions of the heart; those secret cogitations, devices, and purposes, which are formed in the inmost recesses of the mind. This consideration serves strongly to enforce the caution he had given the Hebrews, chap. iii. 12, 13, to take heed lest there be in any of them an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God; and lest any of them should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; seeing no disguise could avail to conceal their most secret sins, or to screen them from the punishment they deserved, according to the judgment and sentence pronounced in the word of God.

Ver. 13. *Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight—*] Here there is a transition from the word of God as the rule of judgment, to the omniscience of the Judge himself. The pronoun (*autou*) *his*, evidently refers to the same person with *him to whom*, in the end of the verse, it is said, *we must give an account*. Some refer this to Christ, and not without good reason: For as the apostle had represented the Son as the creator and upholder of all things, chap. i. 2, 3, 10, and as Lord and lawgiver over the house of God, chap. iii. 1—7, it is natural to understand him here to be speaking of him as the judge of the world, to whom we must all at last give an account; especially as Christ himself hath said, that "the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son," John v. 22, and has particularly described his procedure in the judgment, Matt. xxv. 31—46, and commanded his apostles to "preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead," Acts x. 42. It is said, "there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight," which is expressive of his omniscience by which he

is fully qualified to judge the secrets of men, Rom. ii. 16, and make manifest the counsels of the heart, 1 Cor. iv. 5. So that nothing can escape his notice ;

—*but all things are naked and opened to the eyes of him—*]

All things, even the most secret thoughts, devices, and purposes of men's hearts, lie naked and exposed to his inspection. The expression *gumna kai tetrachelismena*, rendered *naked and opened*, seems to allude to the burnt-offerings : These animals were first skinned, and then cut open and cleft asunder through the neck and back-bone, by which everything, both without and within, was laid open to the inspection of the priest. The meaning is, that the most secret infidelity and hypocrisy cannot be concealed from our Judge, "who searcheth the reins and hearts," Rev. ii. 23, and

—*with whom we have to do.*] The phrase *pros on emin o logos* is somewhat unusual, and does not admit of a literal translation. Some render it, "concerning whom we speak," or "of whom we have the word : " But I think our common translation gives the sense, though it might still be more properly rendered, "to whom we must give an account ;" for this is frequently the signification of the word *logos*, as in Matt. xii. 36, chap. xviii. 23, Luke xvi. 2, Rom. xiv. 12 ; Heb. xiii. 17. Every man must give an account of himself to Christ, before whose judgment-seat we must all appear, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad, 2 Cor. v. 10.

Our author having finished his discourse concerning Christ, as the apostle of our profession, in which he represents him as greatly superior to Moses, the minister of the law ; and having given suitable exhortations and cautions to the Hebrews, lest they should, through unbelief, come short of the heavenly rest, as their ancestors in the wilderness did of the earthly, and enforced these exhortations by the account they have to give to Christ, the omniscient Judge ;—he now resumes the subject of his

priesthood, of which he had given some hints before, representing him as having by himself purged our sins, chap. i. 3, as being a merciful and faithful high priest, chap. ii. 17, and recommended him under that character to the consideration of the Hebrews, chap. iii. 1.

Ver. 14. *Seeing, then, we have a great high priest—*] Or, "having therefore a great high priest." It is evident that these words do not connect with anything he had said in this or the most of the foregoing chapter, but refer to what he had said, chap. ii. 17, 18; chap. iii. 1. He had there termed Jesus "an high priest," and "the high priest of our profession," or religion, and here he calls him *a great high priest*; for he had already proved him to be not only worthy of more glory than Moses, chap. iii. 3, but greater than the angels, chap. i. 4, 5, 6. He is our great high priest,

—*that is passed into the heavens—*] Or, "who (*dielou-luthota*) hath passed through the heavens;" alluding to the high priest, who, to perform the service peculiar to him on the great day of atonement, passed through the second vail into the holy of holies, Lev. xvi. 12—16. So Jesus, in consequence of his death and resurrection, passed through the visible heavens, and ascended up far above all heavens (Eph. iv. 10), to appear in the immediate presence of God for us, Heb. ix. 24. Thus he is an high priest, made higher than the heavens, chap. vii. 26, as he had before hinted, chap. i. 3. This great high priest is —*Jesus the Son of God—*] This name sets forth the divine dignity of his person, and includes not only his divine nature, but his human (see note on chap. i. ver. 2.); for it was necessary that he should partake of the same flesh and blood with God's children, and be in all things made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, in order to expiate their sins and intercede for them, chap. ii. 14, 16, 17. From the consideration of our having such a great high priest, he exhorts

—*let us hold fast our profession.*] To hold fast our profession, or (*omologia*) confession, is the same as to hold fast the faith, or the beginning of the confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end, chap. iii. 6, 14, and that notwithstanding all the persecutions and trials to which we may be exposed on that account. The believing Hebrews met with much opposition, especially from their own countrymen, for their adherence to Christ, and so were under temptations to relinquish the Christian profession, and fall back to Judaism. To establish them in the faith, and to support their minds under such discouragements, he adds,

Ver 15. *For we have not an high priest who cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities—*] Though he is the Son of God, who has passed through the heavens, and is advanced to the highest glory and blessedness; yet he is not unmindful of his brethren, who are labouring under infirmities and sufferings in this world; nor is he incapable of tenderly sympathizing with their weaknesses, like one who never had any experience of their trials:

—*but was in all points tempted like as we are—*] Christ, during the days of his flesh, was “a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief,” as was foretold, Isa. liii. 3; he endured all manner of insults, reproaches, temptations, and bold attacks from Satan and his emissaries, and at last suffered the painful and ignominious death of the cross. Our apostle afterwards observes, that it was a necessary qualification of the legal high priest, that he should be one who can have compassion on the ignorant and erring, as being himself also compassed with infirmity, chap. v. 2. Christ was incapable of sufferings in his divine nature, consequently of human feelings under them; therefore one great end of his assuming human nature was, that, by his own experience of sufferings, he might have a fellow-feeling or sympathy with his brethren in such circumstances. The apostle had before said, that it behoved Christ to be in all things made like unto his



brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest ; and he particularly mentions his temptations and sufferings as fitting him for that office, “ for in that he himself hath suffered, being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted,” chap. ii. 17, 18. And here it is said, that he, “ *was in all points tempted like as we are ;* ” or, as the original has it, (*kath omoioteia*) *according to the likeness*, which may be understood of the likeness of his condition or nature to ours, or that he was tempted as far as that likeness would permit ; and here no exception is mentioned, but his being

—yet *without sin.*] He was perfectly free of that depravity of nature which we derive from fallen Adam ; so that, however great his temptations and sufferings were, even when tried to the utmost, he never committed any sin either in heart or life. No temptations to sin could in the least prevail with him, as, alas ! they often do with us. This shews how vastly preferable Jesus, the high priest of our profession is to the legal high priests who were subject to sin themselves, and so had to offer for their own sins as well as for those of the people, chap. v. 3 ; but Christ, being without sin, had no occasion to offer for himself, but only for the sins of the people, chap. vii. 27. And his being free from sin was necessary to his being an acceptable high priest for us ; “ for such an high priest became us, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners,*” ver. 26. Some, perhaps, may imagine, that as Christ was without sin, he could not be so powerfully moved to compassionate the people as the Jewish high priest was by the painful consciousness of his own sin ; but let it be considered, that the more holy and pure he was, he must have had the greater repugnancy in his nature to sin, and the deeper impression of its evil and demerit, consequently, the more must he be concerned to deliver his people from its guilt and power ; and, in fact, such was his pity and compassion for them, that he laid down his life to redeem them from it, As to temptations

and sufferings, he had such personal experience of these, and of human feelings under them, as must effectually engage him to exercise the tenderest sympathy and compassion towards his brethren in such circumstances. From these encouraging considerations, which are drawn from the character of Christ as High Priest of the Christian profession, he exhorts the Hebrews, and, indeed, all Christians, to make the proper use of it.

Ver. 16. *Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace,—*] As if he had said, Seeing we have such an high priest as has been described, and who is gone into heaven, now to appear in the presence of God for us, let us therefore improve this great privilege; and laying aside the spirit of bondage and slavish fear, let us, through faith in his mediation, approach with filial (*parresias*) boldness and freedom to the throne of grace (the antitype of the ancient mercy-seat), on which God the Father is seated, waiting to be gracious; and ready to hear and answer our requests, through the merits and intercession of his Son. The like use is made of Christ's priesthood, chap. x. 19, 24. The end or design proposed for our coming thus to the throne of grace is, —*that we may obtain mercy—*] Or, that we may (*labomen*) receive mercy. Mercy commonly signifies *pardoning mercy*; and this, I apprehend, is the sense here. But some are of opinion that this sense does not answer in this place, where they allege the sacred writer is considering the believer, not as under guilt, but as under temptations, trials, and persecutions; and so they imagine that *obtaining mercy* here, is the same with *finding grace*, and that both relate to *help in time of need*. But if we attend to the close connection between this and the three first verses of the following chapter, we shall find that *pardoning mercy* was one of the chief designs of the priestly office, and for the procuring of which he offered sacrifices. Now, though Christ hath offered himself but once, and by that one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,

Heb. ix. 25, 26, chap. x. 14, so that there is no more offering for sin, ver. 18, it being a sufficient atonement for future as well as past sins ; yet none are actually pardoned or justified by it, till they believe ; for it is by faith they receive that blessing, Acts x. 13, chap. xiii. 38, 39. Farther, though believers in Christ are not so under guilt as to be in a state of condemnation, there being no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus, Rom. viii. 1, yet as sin remains in them while in this imperfect state, they have constant need of pardoning mercy ; and so they are taught to pray to their heavenly Father, “ Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors ” Mat. vi. 12. John, writing to believers, says, “ If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness, ” 1 John i. 9, “ and if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous ; and he is the propitiation for our sins, ” chap. ii. 1, 2. So believers are here encouraged, upon the grounds of Christ’s priesthood, to approach with boldness to the throne of grace, that they may obtain mercy for the pardon of their daily short comings. And whether God exerciseth this mercy in successive acts of pardon, or only in communication of peace to the conscience, or in both, it comes to the same thing in the believers experience. It is added,

—*and find grace to help in time of need.*] Grace here signifies the gracious influence of the Spirit in the way of seasonable support and assistance under trials and discouragements. Christians, while in a state of affliction and trial, have always need to apply for this grace ; and it was particularly needful for the Hebrews, who were then exposed to much opposition and persecution, by which they were tempted to apostatize from their holy profession. In these circumstances they required to be inwardly supported, or “ strengthened with all might according to his glorious power, unto all patience and long-suffering, with joyfulness, ” Col. i. 11. The Spirit who gives (*eukaiiron*)

seasonable support to sufferers for Christ, is termed "the Spirit of Glory and of God," and is said to rest upon them, 1 Pet. iv. 14. He is also the Spirit of Christ, by whom he "succours them that are tempted:" and this succour Paul experienced under his sufferings, 1 Cor. i. 4, 5, and particularly, when under a severe trial, he besought the Lord thrice that it might depart from him, and was answered, "My grace is sufficient for thee; for my strength is made perfect in weakness." This fully satisfied Paul; and therefore he says, "Most gladly, therefore, will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me," 2 Cor. xii. 8, 9. But, for this gracious support of the Spirit, we must apply to the throne of grace with the confidence of faith, and with persevering earnestness and importunity; for the word *boetheia* rendered *help*, signifies help obtained upon our *crying aloud* for it.

## CHAP. V.

## CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

THE apostle here continues his discourse of Christ's priesthood and sacrifice which he had resumed, ver. 14th of the foregoing chapter. This being a subject of the highest importance in the gospel system, and well calculated to reconcile the Hebrews to the removal of the Aaronical priesthood and its services, he proves it by testimonies and arguments from the Old Testament writings, which were the most convincing to them; he handles the subject at considerable length, and, excepting a few necessary digressions, pursues it to the 19th verse of the 10th chapter.

To encourage their confidence in Christ's priesthood, in applying for mercy and grace to help in time of need, he describes the office, duties, and qualifications of an high priest taken from among men, such as, That he is ordained to officiate for men, in things relating to the worship of God; particularly to offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins, ver. 1. That he must be one who can have a due measure of compassion on the ignorant and erring, from his own experience of human infirmities, ver. 2. That he must also be one who is appointed of God to that office, as no man can warrantably assume the honour of priesthood to himself, or be accepted in it, but he who is called of God as Aaron was, ver. 4.

These qualifications he ascribes to Christ in the most perfect degree, who glorified not himself to be made an High Priest, but was appointed of God to that office.

This he proves from what God said to him when he raised him from the dead, Psalm ii. 7, "Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee," ver. 5; and when he invited him to sit at his right hand, and swore to him with an irrevocable oath, saying (Psalm cx. 4), "Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedec," ver 6. He also shews that he was fully qualified to have compassion on the ignorant and erring; for though he had no sinful infirmities of his own (chap. iv. 15), yet, in the days of his flesh, he was in all points tried like as we are, enduring the greatest sufferings both in soul and body, as a sacrifice for the sins of men; as appears from his offering up deprecations with strong crying and tears to him that was able to save him from death, and was delivered from fear, ver. 7. So that, though he was a Son, yet he experimentally learned the most difficult obedience we can be called to, by what he himself suffered in becoming obedient unto death, ver. 8. And being thus made perfect through sufferings (chap. ii. 10), he became the Author of eternal salvation to all who obey him; being denominated of God an High Priest according to the order of Melchisedec, ver. 9, 10.

He then enters upon a digression, in which he reproves the Hebrews for their ignorance and slothfulness, with a view to stir them up to a more diligent attention to what he had farther to offer on this subject. He informs them, that he had many things to say concerning Melchisedec for illustrating Christ's priesthood, but of difficult explanation to them, on account of the slowness of their apprehension in spiritual things, ver. 11. That instead of growing up to manhood in the knowledge of the doctrine of Christ, they had rather degenerated into babes, being

unskilful in the word of righteousness, and unable to penetrate much beyond the surface or outward letter of the ancient revelations ; and so were unfit to digest the more deep and sublime truths of the gospel which he was now about to lay before them, ver. 12, 13, 14.

## PARAPHRASE.

CHAP. V. 1. For every high priest taken from among men, is constituted for men *to officiate* in things relating to *the worship of God, and especially* that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins :

2. Being able in due measure to compassionate the ignorant and erring, seeing he himself also is beset with infirmity, *even of a moral nature.*

3. And for that reason he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer *sacrifices* for sins.

4. And no one *lawfully* taketh this honour of *priesthood* to himself, but he that is called of God *to it*, even as Aaron *was.*

5. So also the Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest ; but he (God) *appointed him to that office*, who, *having raised him from the dead*, said to him, “ Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee,” Psalm ii. 7.

6. As also in another *Psalm, after inviting him to sit at his right hand*, he saith, “ Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedec,” Psalm cx. 1, 4.

7. Who, in the days of his flesh, having offered up both deprecations and supplications, with strong crying and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and being heard, *was delivered* from fear.

8. Though he was a Son, *yet he experimentally* learned

obedience by the things which he suffered, *both in soul and body, in becoming obedient unto death.*

9. And being made perfect *through sufferings, and thoroughly qualified to be a compassionate High Priest, he became to all them who obey him, the procuring and efficient cause of eternal salvation.*

10. Being styled of God an High Priest, according to the order of Melchisedec :

11. Concerning whom, *as an eminent type of Christ in his royal priesthood, we have much matter to deliver, and of difficult explanation to you, because ye are dull of hearing, or of slow apprehension in spiritual things.*

12. For when for the time *that ye have professed the faith, ye ought to have been teachers, ye have need of one to teach you again certain first principles of the oracles of God; and have become such as have need of milk, the very plainest and most obvious truths of the gospel, and not of strong meat, being incapable to receive and digest the deep sense of Old Testament types and figures relating to Christ.*

13. For every one that useth *milk only, and knows nothing of the ancient revelations but the letter, is unskilful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe in Christian knowledge.*

14. But strong food belongeth to them who are perfect, *or fully grown up, who by use have their senses, or the faculties of their minds, exercised to discern both good and evil.*

#### COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. V.

To show the Hebrews that they had good reason to expect mercy and grace to help in time of need through



the priesthood of Christ, the apostle describes the designation, duty, and qualifications necessary, even in a typical high priest, and ascribes these things to Jesus in their truth and perfection, with other matchless qualifications altogether peculiar to himself.

Ver. 1. *For every high priest taken from among men—*] Before the law of Moses, the father or first-born acted as priests in their families by divine appointment. Noah, Abraham, and Job, offered sacrifices, and Melchisedec was a royal priest; but the scope of the epistle leads us to understand the apostle to mean, every high priest of the order of Aaron. All the sons of Aaron were priests, but there was one who was distinguished as chief among them, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and who was consecrated to put on the garments, Lev. xxi. 10. This distinguished priest had peculiar services allotted him, and was a more eminent type of Christ than the other priests were. Now, the apostle, having said that Jesus Christ is the high priest of our profession, chap. iii. 1, and that in him we have a great high priest, chap. iv. 14, proceeds to prove it, by comparing him with the Aaronical high priest, and by shewing that he has all the essential qualifications of an high priest, and that in the highest and most eminent degree. The legal high priest "was taken from among men;" that is, he was singled out, sanctified, and set apart to that office from among his brethren, the children of Israel (see Exod. xxviii. 1, and the manner of his consecration, chap. 29), and as one partaking of the same nature with them; which was a necessary qualification of the high priest, that he might represent them, have experience of their infirmities, and be attached to them by fraternal affection and sympathy. So Christ took part in flesh and blood with the children which God had given him, and was in all things made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest, chap. ii. 14, 17. But though he is a real man, being of the seed of Abraham and of David

according to the flesh ; yet he has the peculiar excellency of being more than a mere man, even the Son of God, chap. iv. 14, chap. vii. 28. The Aaronical high priest —*is ordained for men in things pertaining to God,—*] He is appointed, according to a divine institution, to be an high priest (*uper*) “for men,” to officiate in their stead, on their account, and for their benefit, “in things pertaining to God,” (*ta pros ton Theon*): These things include the whole of the worship and service which the high priest was to perform towards God in behalf of the people, and particularly

—*that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.*] This is mentioned again, chap. viii. 3. By *gifts*, we may understand free-will offerings, or thank-offerings, which were expressive of gratitude to God for his benefits ; and by *sacrifices for sins*, we are to understand propitiatory sacrifices, which were offered to appease God, and atone for the sins of the people. But some are of opinion that both these were offered *for sins*, and that in Matt. v. 23, our Lord seems to comprise all sacrifices under the name of *gifts*. Now, this service of the legal high priest is also ascribed to Christ, who is “a merciful and faithful high priest in things *pertaining to God*, to expiate the sins of the people,” chap. ii. 17. But his offering was infinitely more effectual than all the sacrifices offered according to the law, “which could never take away sins,” chap. x. 11 ; “for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified,” ver. 14. Again, the Aaronical high priest must be one

Ver. 2. *Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and them that are out of the way,—*] The original may be rendered, “Who is able in due measure to compassionate the ignorant and erring,” or wandering. The word *metriopathein* is, in the margin, rendered *reasonably bear with*. Some consider the *ignorant* and *erring* as two different sorts of sinners, namely, those who sin through mere ignorance of the rule of duty, and those who, through

the strength of temptation, commit sin against their light, but not habitually, or from deliberate choice. But there seems to be no foundation here for such a distinction. The ignorant and erring appear to be the same persons, that is, those who err, or sin, through ignorance. Not indeed such ignorance as arises merely from want of instruction or natural capacity, but from a culpable defect in the will, and want of due attention to the rule of duty, which is the source of much sin; still, however, sins of this kind are distinguished from sinning (*ekousios*) *wilfully, presumptuously*, or according to the Hebrew phrase, *with a high hand*, such as reproaching or blaspheming the Lord, or contemptuously despising his law: For such sins there was no sacrifice appointed, but the sinner was to be utterly cut off, and die without mercy under two or three witnesses, Num. xv. 30, 31; Heb. x. 28. But for those who sinned through ignorance, the high priest was bound to offer sacrifice and make intercession, that they might be forgiven, Lev. iv. and v. To perform this service aright, he must be one who can moderate his anger, that he may not be so incensed against the ignorant and erring, as to be unable to offer willingly, and intercede affectionately on their behalf. In this qualification Christ greatly excels all the legal high priests, as we have already had occasion to observe more than once; see chap. ii. 17, 18, and chap. iv. 15, with the notes. It well became the Aaronical high priest to have compassion on his ignorant and erring brethren,

—*for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.*]

Not only with *natural* infirmity, such as the afflictions and trials incident to this mortal state; but also with *moral* or *sinful* infirmity; and so was taught by experience what measure of compassion he ought to exercise towards his fellow-sinners, that he might not be immoderately severe against them. The apostle gives an exhortation which serves to illustrate this: “Brethren, if any man be overtaken in a fault, ye who are spiritual, (*pneumatikoi*,

*i. e.* persons endowed with spiritual gifts), restore such an one in the spirit of meekness ; considering thyself, lest thou also be tempted," Gal. vi. 1.

Ver. 3. *And by reason hereof, he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.*] That is, because the legal high priest is himself compassed with sinful infirmity, and being a sinner, needs pardon as well as his brethren, he ought to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for theirs. And indeed, the law required that he should first offer for himself, that he might be purified and accepted in offering for the people ; see Lev. iv. 3, ix. 7, xvi. 6. But herein Jesus greatly excels the legal high priests : for he is "such an high priest as became us, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners ; who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins (for he had none, chap. iv. 15), and then for the people's ; for this he did once when he offered up himself," chap. vii. 26, 27. His being without sin was necessary to the perfection and efficacy of his sacrifice and priesthood.

Ver. 4. *And no man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.*] No man can warrantably assume to himself the honour and dignity of the high priest's office, and offer gifts and sacrifices for sin with acceptance, but he who is called of God to that office, and authorised by his special and immediate appointment to execute it, as was Aaron at the first institution of the Levitical priesthood. We read of Aaron's call to that sacred office, Exod. xxviii. 1, and of his being actually separated to it, arrayed in the high priest's garments, anointed with the holy oil, and purified by solemn sacrifice, Lev. viii. and ix. In the call of Aaron, his sons were also designed to succeed him, and the law of succession established the priesthood in his family : So that no man of another tribe or family could, according to that law, take the honour of priesthood unto himself, but by a change of that law, and such an immediate call

from God as Aaron had. Farther, as the design of that office is to propitiate an offended God, and to make reconciliation for sin, and as God is under no obligation to accept of every one who shall of his own head take upon him to offer gifts and sacrifices for himself or others; so no man can promise, or has ground to expect, that God will accept of his offerings, unless he has given him a commission to offer them, and has declared that he will be placated by them. The Lord not only appointed Aaron and his succeeding sons to the high priest's office, but debarred all others, even of the tribe of Levi, from either interfering or sharing with them in it. He destroyed Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, with two hundred and fifty of their rebellious confederates, for presumptuously attempting to intrude themselves into that office, and cut off fourteen thousand seven hundred of the children of Israel for their murmuring at this; and he also confirmed the priesthood to Aaron, by causing his rod to blossom, Num. xvi. and xvii. Afterwards Uzziah the King, his heart being lifted up to his destruction, attempted the peculiar work of the priesthood, by offering incense unto the Lord; but was severely rebuked and punished for his presumption, 2 Chron. xxvi. 6—22. It is evident, then, that no man could warrantably take this office to himself without his being called to it and appointed of God, nor could his services be at all accepted of God without this. Now, as Aaron was not a self-created high priest, but was immediately called to that office by God;

Ver. 5. *So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an High Priest,—*] He did not intrude himself into that high office, nor assume it without an express call and commission. The Hebrews knew how solemnly Aaron was called and appointed of God to that office, that it was established exclusively in his family; and how dangerous it was for any of another tribe, or even of the ordinary priests of the tribe of Levi, to take the office of high priest to himself without the most express appointment of

God: They also knew that the Christ was to spring from the tribe of Judah, of which Moses spake nothing concerning the priesthood, chap. vii. 13, 14, and so might be at a loss to see how Jesus could be a high priest. Indeed the apostle admits that there could be no change of the priesthood without a change also of the law, chap. vii. 12, and a disannulling of the commandment going before respecting the Aaronical priesthood, ver. 18. It was therefore highly necessary that he should instruct the Hebrews with regard to Christ's right to the priesthood, and by whose authority he was appointed to that high office; and here he shews them that Christ did not, by his own authority, take that office to himself;

—*but he that said unto him, "Thou art my Son, to-day have I begotten thee."*] That is, God the Father glorified him with that office; and this he proves from the words by which he addressed him, as predicted, Psalm ii. 7, which words shew his right both to the kingdom and priesthood, as being God's begotten Son, his First-born, to whom belongs the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power, Gen. xlix. 3. These words, therefore, are not intended to prove either his eternal generation, or that he was a priest on earth; for they follow the account of his sufferings and death, ver. 1, 2, as explained, Acts iv. 25—29, and are connected with his exaltation as a king, ver. 6, and so are elsewhere cited as a proof of God's having raised him from the dead, Acts xiii. 33, and exalted him above the angels, Heb. i. 5, and are here adduced as a proof, that God hath constituted him an High Priest in that exalted state; for whatever proves him a king, proves him a priest, these two offices being conjoined in him, who is a royal priest, a priest on his throne. This clearly appears from the following words:

Ver. 6. *As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec:*"] These words are taken from Psalm xc. 4. This prophetic Psalm is acknowledged by the Jews to relate to the Messiah, and

begins thus, "Jehovah said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," ver. 1, which are the words of Jehovah to David's Lord the Messiah; for to him they are applied by Christ himself and his apostles, Matt. xxii. 42—46; Acts ii. 34, 35; Heb. i. 13. It was when Jesus entered into heaven with his own blood, that the Father testified his highest satisfaction in him, and acceptance of his sacrifice, by inviting him to sit at his right hand; and on that occasion he also swore to him with an irrevocable oath, saying, "Thou art a Priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec," ver. 4. The apostle afterwards comments upon every word in this oath, chap. vii., to which we shall speak in its proper place, and shall here only observe, that the words are express to the apostle's purpose, and fully proved that Christ glorified not himself by making himself a high priest, but was constituted such by the solemn oath of Jehovah. He had before stated it as a necessary qualification of an high priest, that he can have a due measure of compassion on the ignorant and erring, as being himself also compassed with infirmity, ver. 2, and here he proceeds to shew that Christ also was fully qualified to sympathize with and assist his tempted and suffering brethren, by the severity of his own sufferings in this world on their account, and by the need he found for support under them.

Ver. 7. *Who, in the days of his flesh,*—] That is, while he was here upon earth, clothed in mortal flesh and blood, in which he partook with God's children, (chap. ii. 14), and so was subject to the innocent infirmities, trials, and sufferings of human nature. Some, by *flesh*, understand the law of Moses, which is sometimes so called as opposed to the *spirit* or gospel revelation, Gal. iii. 3, and so make the *days of his flesh* to be the time during which he was subject to that law, in fulfilling it, and bearing its curse. But we nowhere find that the law is called *his flesh*. It plainly means his *body* in its weak,

suffering, and mortal state while in this world ; and is opposed to his state now in heaven, where he appears not in corruptible mortal flesh, but in his risen, glorified, and spiritual body ; for flesh and blood in its present state cannot inherit the kingdom of God ; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption, 1 Cor. xv. 50. Christ in the days of his flesh, and especially in the last scene of his sufferings,

—when he had offered up prayers and supplications,—]

The word *deeseis*, rendered *prayers*, signifies *deprecations*, or prayers against evil ; and *supplications* are prayers for assistance or deliverance from distress. Christ offered up both these. Because the word *prosenegkas*, which is translated *offered up*, is frequently used for bringing, presenting, or offering up sacrifice, some think that Jesus here, as a priest, was in the act of offering up the sacrifice of himself to God, and accompanying his offering with these prayers. It is true, Jesus was now suffering in his soul, and going to yield himself up to be slain as a sacrifice for sin ; but as this word is often applied to other things besides offering sacrifice, and as deprecations and supplications are expressly said to be what he offered up, I see no ground for this opinion.

Jesus offered up many prayers during his suffering state in this world, and sometimes continued whole nights in prayer to God ; but I apprehend that the deprecations and supplications here mentioned, are chiefly those which he offered up in the garden of Gethsemane, and also on the cross. We have an account of the exceeding greatness of his soul-sufferings in the garden, as related by the Evangelists, and expressed by himself. “He began to be sorrowful and very heavy,” and this he expressed, saying, “My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death,” Matt. xxvi. 37, 38. On which we may observe,—1. That the seat of his sufferings at this time was his *soul*, his body being no otherwise concerned than as it was affected by the distress of his mind ; for as yet there was no human



hand upon him. 2. The words set forth the greatness of his soul-sufferings : His soul was not only sorrowful, but (*perilupos*) exceeding sorrowful. The word signifies to be beset with sorrow round about, and is well expressed in the Psalms, "The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me," Psalms cxvi. 3, xviii. 5, 6. His soul was now besieged with sorrow and sore amazement on every side, so that there was no evasion for him : Turn which way he will, nothing but the bitter cup presented itself to him in all its dreadful ingredients. His soul was thus sorrowful, *even unto death* : It was a deadly sorrow ; the sorrows of death ; and this sorrow seems actually to have killed him before the time in which the tortures of the cross could have effected his death. He is said to be *sore amazed, and very heavy*, Mark xiv. 33, which sets forth the greatness of his fear, terror, and consternation. This we may conceive to arise from his clear apprehensions of the evil and demerit of sin, of the infinite opposition of the divine holiness and justice to it, and of the power of God's wrath as the curse threatened against it, which he now saw ready to be inflicted upon him as the devoted victim ; for "the Lord made to meet upon him the iniquities of us all," Isaiah liii. 6. In the full view of all this, it is no wonder that his human soul was filled with the most dreadful amazement and fear. Again, he is said to be *in (agonia) an agony*, Luke xxii. 44. An agony is the conflict of nature in the extremity of distress. The Lord was now bruising him and putting him to grief. So great was the agony and conflict of his soul, that it produced the most wonderful effect upon his body ; for we are told that "his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground." A common sweat in the open air, and exposed to the cold damp of night, when those within doors required a fire of coals to warm them (Luke xxii. 55), must have been the effect of very great fear and agony : what then must his agony have been, which induced a bloody

sweat, and so copious as to fall down in great drops to the ground.

The greatness of his fear, sorrow, and agony, may likewise be discovered in the *prayers and supplications* which he offered up to God. On a former occasion, when anticipating his sufferings, he said, "Now is my soul troubled, and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name," John xii. 27, 28. And now that he was actually entered upon his last sufferings, he prays, "O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt."—"O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done," Matt. xxvi. 39, 42. Mark hath it, "Abba, Father, all things are possible unto thee: take away this cup from me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what thou wilt," chap. xiv. 36. In Luke the words are, "Father, if thou be willing, remove this cup from me: nevertheless, not my will, but thine be done," chap. xxii. 42. These prayers he repeated thrice, and with increasing earnestness, first kneeling, and afterwards falling prostrate on his face; but still with the most unreserved submission and resignation to the will of his Father. Farther, his prayers are said to be accompanied

—*with strong crying and tears*—] Though we have no account of his strong crying and tears while in the garden, yet it is likely these might burst from him while he was putting up his prayers with increasing earnestness: but whatever be in this, we are told that he thrice cried with a loud voice on the cross. In the first of these cries, he repeated the first words of the 22d Psalm, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Matt. xxvii. 46; and thereby made that prophetic Psalm his own prayer, in which he mentions his crying, and the words of his roaring, ver. 1, 2; also the manner of his death, which was by piercing his hands and feet, ver. 16—the taunts and insults with which he was treated while on the cross, ver.

7, 8—their parting his garments among them, and casting lots upon his vesture, ver. 18. He also represents the exceeding greatness of his sufferings, ver. 14, 15—prays for help and deliverance, ver. 19, 20, 21—expresses his hope of being heard, and vows praises to God in the midst of his redeemed church, ver. 21, 22, 25. His last loud cry upon the cross, was after he had received the vinegar; and the words he expressed in that strong cry were, “It is finished,” and “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit,” John xix. 30, Luke xxiii. 46; and then he immediately bowed his head and gave up the ghost. Thus we see the cause of his strong crying and tears, and that they were offered up in the time of his extreme sufferings, —*unto him that was able to save him from death,*—] That is, he prayed unto his God and Father, who was able to save him from death, that he would deliver him from or out of it. This seems to be the plain purport of the prayer in the garden, “O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me; nevertheless, not as I will, but as thou wilt.” And again, “O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.” Here he prays for salvation from death; but whether to be saved from it without drinking the cup, or not except he drink it, this he submits entirely to his Father’s will: “not as I will, but as thou wilt—thy will be done.”

But how shall we account for that fear, sore amazement, and reluctance, which he felt at drinking the cup? Shall we suppose that he was possessed of less fortitude, patience, and resolution, than many of his followers were, who have suffered for his sake, and, through his strength, have been enabled to meet the most cruel deaths with joy and triumph? Such a supposition would be equally absurd as it is impious. There is no accounting for this but by admitting what the Scriptures constantly affirm, viz., that he suffered as a sacrifice for sin, and that the sufferings necessary to expiate and take away the sin of the world

were, in their nature and degree, peculiar to himself. There were bitter ingredients in his cup of sufferings for the sins of men, which none of them can taste in their sufferings for him by all that man can inflict on their bodies. It was death, as the effect of the wrath of God against sin, that filled his soul with deadly sorrow, amazement, and fear, and drew from him these prayers, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him *from, or (ek) out of* such a death. These prayers, indeed, shew that this cup was the object of his aversion, and the cause of his extreme distress and fear; but they also show his entire submission to, and acquiescence in, the will of his Father with respect to his drinking it; and so demonstrate the perfection of his obedience, which in other circumstances could not be so fully manifested. His prayers on this occasion were not in vain; for the apostle adds,

—*and was heard in that he feared.*] The original words are *kai eisakoustheis apo tes eulabeias*, which literally are, “and being heard from the fear.” Now, to be *heard* in prayer is to obtain a favourable answer; so it is said, 1 John, v. 14, 15, “If we ask anything according to his will, he heareth us: And if we know that he heareth us, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him.” And when *being heard* relates to prayer for deliverance from evil, it is frequently used for the very act of deliverance, see Psalm xxxiv. 4, 6, liv. 2, 3, lv. 2, 16, in the LXX. Some render the words, “and was heard for (or on account of) his piety;” and indeed the word *eulabeias* will bear that sense when the connection requires it, and so it is rendered *godly fear* in chap. xii. 28, but as the preposition is not *uper, for*, but *apo, from*, (which seldom, if ever, refers to the meritorious cause), so it cannot possibly mean that he was heard in being delivered *from* godly fear, but from something that was painful and distressing. Others are of opinion, that he was immediately heard or delivered from that fear and sore amaze-

ment which seized upon his soul in the garden, when an angel was sent from heaven to strengthen him, Luke xxii. 43. And indeed, from that time, his human passions seem to be more composed, and his mind strengthened, as appears from his courageously meeting his enemies, John xviii. 4—9, and from his words to Peter, when he attempted to use the sword in his defence, Matt. xxvi. 53, 54, John xviii. 11; and this composure of spirit appears throughout the whole course of his trial, and under all the maltreatment he sustained. But I cannot think that this is all that is intended by his being heard or delivered from fear: for we find him afterwards crying out on the cross, “My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?” Some account for this by supposing that his divinity for a season withdrew its influence from his human nature, which they ground on chap. ii. 9, where, instead of his tasting death, *chariti Theou, by the grace of God*, some copies read *choris Theou, without God*. Others are of opinion, that he was not afraid of dying, but of lying under the power of death; but it is not easy to reconcile this fear with his faith expressed in prophecy, Psalm xvi. 10, 11, nor with his own repeated declarations, that he would rise again on the third day, and that he had power to lay down his life and to take it again, unless we venture farther to suppose, that the recollection of this was also withdrawn from his mind for a time, that his sufferings might be the more intense. It becomes not us to pry with an unhallowed curiosity into this matter; but the following things are obvious. 1. That he offered up deprecations, and supplications, with strong crying and tears, unto him that was able to save him from or out of death. 2. That these prayers were heard, or answered in his deliverance. 3. That he was not delivered without his drinking the cup which his Father had given him, or by a prevention of his death; for when all the predictions respecting his sufferings were accomplished, he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost. It follows therefore: 4.

That his being heard and saved from death, was by raising him from the dead, God having loosed the pains of death; because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. And so we find him acknowledging his being heard, and calling upon all his redeemed brethren to praise God on that account: "Ye that fear the Lord, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard," Psal. xxii. 23, 24.

Ver. 8. *Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered:*] The apostle, in the preceding verse, having taken notice of the extremity of Christ's sufferings, he here brings to view the divine dignity of his person, as being the Son of God; but he observes, that although he was God's own Son, his well-beloved and only begotten Son; yet he condescended to learn obedience by the things which he suffered. Christ's whole life in this world was a course of perfect obedience to the will of his Father: He came to do his will, and his law was within his heart; his meat was to do the will of him that sent him, and to finish his work. But the *obedience* which is here particularly intended, is his humbling himself and becoming obedient unto death, or his laying down his life at the commandment of the Father, Phil. ii. 8; John x. 17, 18. This obedience, it is said, *he learned*: Not that he learned to obey, or needed to be taught how to obey, or for what end; yet he learned it, that is, he experienced it; he felt what it was, and found the difficulty of it, which he could only do *by the things which he suffered*, i. e. by the fears, sorrows, and agonies he endured in the garden and on the cross. Thus by his sufferings, in becoming a sacrifice for the sins of the people, he acquired a sympathy with them, and an experimental acquaintance with the need they have of help to enable them to bear their trials and sufferings.

Ver. 9. *And being made perfect*—] The word *teleio* frequently occurs in this epistle, and signifies to finish, complete, or perfect anything; and the kind of perfection intended must agree with the nature of the subject spoken of. Here it relates to the qualifications of Christ as an high priest, and imports his being qualified for that office in the highest degree. We are expressly told that he was made perfect through sufferings, chap. ii. 10; and that by these he was qualified to sympathize with his brethren, chap. iv. 15. But as in his sufferings unto death he was the sacrifice slain for their sins, so being raised from the dead to an immortal life, he was perfectly fitted and furnished for entering into the heavenly holy place with the blood of his own sacrifice, to officiate there as their high priest. See the explanation of ver. 10, chap. ii. Being thus made perfect, and completely vested in his office as high priest,

—*He became the Author of eternal salvation*—] The *Author*, or the meritorious and efficient (*aitios*) *Cause*, not of a temporal, but eternal salvation from sin and all its consequences; for “by his own blood he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us,” chap. ix. 12. But to whom is he the Author of eternal salvation? Not to the whole world, but

—*unto all them that obey him* ;] Obedience supposeth a revelation of his will, and this he hath given us in the gospel: It also supposeth faith, or a belief of that revelation; “for without faith it is impossible to please God,” and without faith in Christ, there is no ground to expect salvation by him; for “he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him.” But then, faith in Christ, when real, will always produce obedience to him, it being the principle of all sincere and acceptable obedience. So that by *them that obey him* we are to understand those who, from a principle of faith in, and love to him, as their Lord and Redeemer, unreservedly keep his sayings and follow his example. These are they

to whom he is the Author of final and eternal salvation ; and he is so to *all* of them without exception, he being

Ver. 10. *Called of God an high priest*—] The word rendered *called* here, is not *kaloumenos*, as in ver. 4, but *pro-sagoreutheis*, which signifies that God, *named, pronounced, or styled* him an high priest. In ver. 4, the word signifies that God vested him with, or appointed him to that office, for it is opposed to Christ's taking that honour to himself; but in this verse, it imports his addressing him by the title of high priest, as being already vested in that office. We may notice, however, that in Psalm cx. 4, Messiah is not termed *an high priest*, but simply *a priest*, and that the apostle here hath changed it into *an high priest*, because the ministrations of the Levitical high priest in the inner tabernacle on the great day of expiation were peculiar to him as high priest, and typified Christ's entering into heaven with his own blood, and his ministrations there, which therefore required that he also should be an high priest ; and he is so not after the order of Aaron, but

—*after the order of Melchisedec* :] The Hebrews might be at a loss to understand how Christ could be called an High Priest, unless he had descended from Aaron, in whose family the high priesthood was settled by the law ; but from these words they might learn, that there was a priesthood appointed of God, antecedent to, and of a more excellent order than that of Aaron, and that the priesthood of Messiah, David's Lord, was to be (*kata*) according to that order, namely, the order of Melchisedec's priesthood. This was suited to remove all those objections to Christ's priesthood, which they grounded on the law that settled the legal priesthood exclusively on the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron. But as to the nature of Melchisedec's priesthood, and how it serves to illustrate the priesthood of Christ, these things required to be farther explained to them, and this he proposes to do. In the meantime he introduces a long and important digres-



sion to prepare their minds for it, which he begins in the following verse, and carries on to the end of the next chapter.

Ver. 11. *Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered—*] The translation in the Paraphrase, I think, comes nearer the original, viz. "Concerning whom, (*i. e.* Melchisedec) we have much (speech or) matter to deliver, and of difficult explanation." As *dierneneuo* signifies to *interpret*, as in 1 Cor. xii. 30, chap. xiv. 5, 13, 27; so *dusermeneutos* must signify *of difficult interpretation* or explanation. Perhaps these are some of the things which Peter alludes to in Paul's epistles, and which he says are *dusnoeta*, *things hard to be understood*, and which the unteachable and unstable wrest, 2 Peter iii. 16. But whatever be in this, the difficulty of explaining what the apostle had to say concerning Melchisedec, as a type of Christ in his priestly office, did not arise from the inexplicable nature of the things themselves, nor from the apostle's inability to utter them so as to set them in a clear light, for this he has actually done; but the cause he assigns for it is this,

—*seeing ye are dull of hearing.*] This does not signify any defect in their bodily senses, nor in the natural powers of their minds; but their want of attention, and of a proper disposition of mind to receive instruction; so that the fault lay in themselves: Therefore, before he enters upon the subject proposed, he reproveth the Hebrews for their culpable ignorance, slothfulness, and declining state; sets before them the dreadful consequences of apostacy; exhorts them to perseverance in faith and patience, after the example of those who had gone before them, and encourages them in it by the promise which God made to Abraham, and also by the entrance of Christ into heaven, within the vail, as the high priest and forerunner of his people. All this we may consider as a digression, which he begins in this verse, and carries on to the end of the following chapter: but it is evidently

connected with his main design, and subservient to it, as it tended to rouse and quicken the attention of the Hebrews to those more deep and sublime truths he was about to lay before them. After having blamed them for being dull of hearing, or of slow apprehension in spiritual things, he shews what ground he had for this reproof, and the aggravating circumstances of their case :

Ver. 12. *For when for the time ye ought to be teachers—*] The Hebrews had for a long time been favoured with the gospel ; for to them it was first published, and of them were the first christian churches composed, particularly the church at Jerusalem, which was the original model of all the churches, and from whence the word of God sounded out unto other nations. They were also favoured with the best instruction. Some of them had heard Christ himself in his personal ministry. The most of them had been a long while under the ministry of his inspired apostles, who preached the gospel to them with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. They had also an opportunity of being instructed into the true meaning and application of Old Testament prophecies and types ; and had they improved these advantages as they ought, they might by that time have been qualified to teach others. But so far were they from being fit to be teachers of others, that he tells them,

*—ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God—*] Gr. “teach you again certain elements of the beginning of the oracles of God.” The *soicheia*, *elements* or *first principles*, whether of bodies or science, are the simple primary parts of which they are composed. The word is applied to the constituent parts of the material world, 2 Peter iii. 10, also to the ceremonies of the Mosaic law, Gal. iv. 3, 9 ; and to these as connected with human traditions and heathen philosophy, Col. ii. 8. But here it signifies the elements, rudiments, or first principles of the Christian religion, which are contained in the oracles of God. When the word *oracle*

is used in the singular, it signifies the place where God revealed his will, such as the holy of holies, where the propitiatory was placed; see 1 Kings vi. 5, 19, 20, 21, 31; Psalm xxviii. 2. But when used in the plural, as here, it signifies the revelations themselves which God communicated to his church as the rule of their faith and obedience. God's ancient oracles were delivered to old Israel, Acts vii. 38, Rom. iii. 2; and are contained in the Old Testament, or the writings of Moses and the prophets, Luke xvi. 29. The succeeding and more clear revelations, in which the former are explained, were delivered by Christ and his inspired apostles in publishing the gospel, and are contained in the writings of the New Testament, a great part of which was written previous to this epistle to the Hebrews. So that by *the oracles of God* we are to understand, not only what God in time past spake unto the fathers by Moses and the prophets, but also what he hath in these last days spoken by his Son, whom we are especially commanded to hear, and who is the great end and scope of all the ancient revelations.

Whether by the first principles of the oracles of God, we are to understand the principles of the gospel as figuratively taught in the Old Testament scriptures, or as clearly revealed in the gospel itself, shall afterwards be considered: But it is evident that the apostle blames the Hebrews not only for their slow progress in Christian knowledge, but for their having actually declined in it so far, as to need to be instructed a second time in some of the plainest and most obvious truths of Christianity. He adds,

—*and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.*] By *milk* he means the first principles, or the plain initiatory truths of the gospel in which they had been instructed when they first believed. Many of the Hebrews received these who did not fully understand their import, nor admit their consequences with regard to the Mosaic economy, to which they were still strongly at-

tached ; and they were borne with in that weakness for a considerable time, particularly in their observance of circumcision, their distinction of meats, days, and other Jewish peculiarities, Acts xxii. 20, 21 ; Rom. xiv. ; 1 Cor. vii. 18, 19. By *strong meat* he intends nothing but what was implied in the first principles when properly understood, namely, that the Jewish covenant, priesthood, sacrifices, ceremonies, &c., were but shadows of good things to come, and were now to be set aside to give place to the more excellent, spiritual, and heavenly dispensation of the gospel, which is the truth and substance of all these legal shadows. A full and explicit declaration of this was too strong meat, and hard for the Hebrews to digest, considering their imperfect knowledge even of the first principles, in which they needed again to be instructed. Farther, he shows that their continuing so long at this light and weak diet was a clear proof of their culpable sloth and ignorance.

Ver. 13. *For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness ; for he is a babe.*] Every one that useth milk only, that is, who can receive and digest nothing but the mere elements of the gospel doctrine, however good and necessary in their place, he is *unskilful in the word of righteousness*, viz. the gospel, so called because “therein the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith,” Rom. i. 17 ; and Christ is therein held forth as “the end of the law for righteousness to every one who believeth,” chap. x. 4. The Judaizing teachers were Hebrews, who, though they professed to believe in Christ, yet strenuously opposed the doctrine of free justification by faith without the works of the law, Acts xv. 1, 5 ; and many of the believing Hebrews, through their attachment to the Mosaic law, and unskilfulness in the word of righteousness, were apt to give too much heed to their doctrine. As the apostle compares the first principles to *milk*, so does he liken the Hebrews, who knew nothing else, to *babes* ; not on account of their innocence,

simplicity or teachableness, qualities much recommended to Christians : but on account of their weakness and ignorance, which, considering the advantages they had so long enjoyed, was very blameable. It is in the way of blame that the apostle applies the same epithet to the Corinthians ; “ And I, brethren, could not speak unto you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal, even unto (*nepioi*) babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat ; for hitherto ye were not able to bear it, neither yet now are ye able ; for ye are yet carnal,” 1 Cor. iii. 1—3. To this state of babes he contrasts that of grown up Christians, which the Hebrews by this time should have been.

Ver. 14. *But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age,—* *Strong meat, i. e.* the more deep and sublime truths of the gospel ; or those doctrines which reveal the spiritual sense of the Old Testament types and prophecies, the disannulling of the Mosaic economy, and the superior glory and excellence of the gospel dispensation. These truths may be called *strong meat*, as they serve to strengthen and confirm the mind when properly understood ; and they belong to, or are fit for them that are of *full age*. The original is *teleion, perfect*, but is properly rendered *of full age*, because it is opposed to their being *nepioi, babes* ; and so he says, “ we speak wisdom among them that are *teleioi, perfect*,” *i. e.* fully instructed in the doctrines of the gospel, 1 Cor. ii. 6.

—*even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*] Here he still pursues the metaphor in distinguishing grown up Christians from babes in knowledge. A babe cannot properly distinguish between good and bad food for want of experience ; the use of its senses has not as yet formed its taste and judgment, or taught it to refuse the evil and chuse the good, Isa. vii. 16. But a person of full age, who has had his senses exercised, and taste formed, by long use or habit, can distinguish between good and bad food. So it is

with the full grown Christian, who is skilful in the word of righteousness; the faculties of his mind are exercised in meditation on the word joined with prayer; his judgment and spiritual taste are improved and properly formed for discriminating truth from error, or good from bad doctrine, and so he knows how to embrace the one and reject the other.

## CHAP. VI.

## CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

THOUGH the apostle, towards the close of the preceding chapter, reproves the Hebrews for their culpable ignorance of certain first principles of the oracles of God ; yet he here informs them, that he does not at present mean to insist on these, or to lay again the foundation of repentance from dead works, &c., but to carry them forward to higher perfection in christian knowledge, if God should permit ; therefore he contents himself with barely mentioning these initiatory principles, in which they had been formerly instructed, ver. 1, 2, 3.

Meantime, to make them sensible of the danger of their declining state, and to rouse their attention to the discoveries he was about to make to them, he sets before them the aggravated guilt and dreadful punishment of apostacy, ver. 4, 5, 6, 7, 8.

But lest the severity of his reproof, and what he had said of the awful doom of apostates, should discourage the Hebrews, he softens his reprehension by telling them, that he was persuaded better things of them, and things which accompany salvation, though he thus spake. This persuasion he grounds on the righteousness or faithfulness of God, and on the evidence they had already given, and were still giving, of love towards his name, in ministering to the necessities of the saints : Yet he earnestly exhorts every one of them to persevere in that charitable work to the full assurance of hope unto the end ; and that they be

not slothful, but imitators of the faithful patriarchs, who through faith and patience inherit the promises, ver. 9, 10, 11, 12.

This leads him, for their encouragement, to speak of the promise which God made to Abraham, Gen. xii. 2, 3, and afterwards renewed and confirmed to him, Gen. xxiii. 16, 17, in which he promises to bless him, to multiply his seed, and to bless all nations in his Seed, the Messiah; and he shows that Abraham, after having patiently endured, obtained such an accomplishment of the promise in this life, as to be a sufficient pledge of its full accomplishment in due time. But he chiefly insists upon the confirmation of it by God's oath, the design of which was to assure all true believers who are the heirs of the promise, of the immutability of his counsel, and that they might have strong consolation who have fled to lay hold on the hope set before them: Which hope he compares to an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, where the forerunner hath entered on our account, even Jesus, who is made an High Priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedec, ver. 13—20.

Here the apostle ends his long digression, which began in chap. v. 11; and he gracefully resumes the subject of Christ's priesthood, by a natural introduction of the words in Psalm cx. 4, which he makes the ground of his discourse throughout the succeeding chapter.

#### P A R A P H R A S E.

CHAP. VI. 1. *As you ought by this time to be capable of strong food, and not to continue children in understanding,*



therefore, omitting the discourse of the beginning, or *first principles of the doctrines* of Christ, let us bring you on to perfection ; not laying again the foundation *principles* of repentance from dead works, and of faith towards God,

2. Of the doctrine of immersions, and of the laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment, *in all which you have been already instructed ; and therefore I shall at present wave these initiatory principles, and proceed to instruct and establish you in the more deep and sublime truths of the gospel.*

3. And this will we do, if God permit *this letter to reach you in time, and attend it with his blessing. But, if any, having utterly apostatized, pay no regard to it, the case of such is indeed hopeless.*

4. For *it is impossible for those who have been once enlightened in the knowledge of the truth, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, some influence of the Spirit accompanying the word, and have been made partakers of the Holy Spirit, in his supernatural gifts, such as prophecy, discerning of spirits, several kinds of tongues, &c.*

5. And have tasted the good word of God, *receiving it with joy, and have witnessed and been partakers, of the powers of the world to come, or the powerful miracles which were performed in confirmation of the gospel, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, casting out demons, &c.*

6. And yet have fallen away, *by openly renouncing Christ, and joining with his enemies ; I say, it is impossible to renew such again unto repentance ; seeing they crucify again to themselves the Son of God, making a public example of him.*

7. For the earth which imbibes the rain that often cometh upon it, and bringeth forth herbage fit for *the use*

of them by whom it is cultivated, receiveth a blessing from God; *and such is the case of true believers.*

8. But that *ground* which, *though daily cultivated and watered*, bringeth forth *only* thorns and briars, is rejected, and nigh to a curse; whose end *is* to be burned: *and such will be the dreadful doom of apostates from the faith.*

9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things concerning you, even *things* which accompany salvation, though we thus speak *to warn you of the danger of falling away.*

10. For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love which ye have shewed toward his name, having ministered to the saints *in their needy, persecuted circumstances*, and are *still* ministering to them.

11. Yet we earnestly desire that each of you do shew the same diligence, to the full assurance of hope, unto the end *of your lives.*

12. That ye be not slothful, but imitators of them who through faith and long-suffering, are inheriting the promises, *in the heavenly country.* See chap. xi. 14—17.

13. For God, making promise to Abraham, seeing he had none greater to swear by, he sware by Himself,

14. Saying, “Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee,” Gen. xii. 2, 3, chap. xxii. 17, 18.

15. And so having long patiently waited, he obtained *the begun accomplishment of the promise, in the supernatural birth of Isaac, the pledge of his numerous seed, and particularly of his Seed, the Messiah, in whom all nations were to be blessed; and having finished his pilgrimage in this world, he obtained the enjoyment of eternal life.*

16. For men verily swear by the greater, or by one superior to themselves, and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all contradiction.

17. Therefore, in accommodation to human sentiments, God, willing more abundantly to shew, not only to Abraham, but to his spiritual seed, the heirs of the promise, the immutability of his counsel, he confirmed (Gr. mediated) it with an oath.

18. That by two immutable things, his promise and his oath, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we, the heirs of the promise, might have strong consolation, who have fled to lay hold on the object of hope set before us in the promise, namely, Christ ;

19. Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both secure and steadfast, and which entereth into the inner place of the vail, where Jesus the forerunner hath entered on our account, being made, by the oath of God, an high priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedec.

#### COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. VI.

Ver. 1. *Therefore*—] *q. d.* Since by this time ye ought to be capable of receiving and digesting strong food, or the more deep and sublime truths of the gospel, chap. v. 12, 13, 14, therefore,

—*leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ*—] *Leaving*, not relinquishing or giving up with them, but waving the consideration of them at present. The things which he here declines insisting on, are termed *the principles of the doctrine of Christ*, or *ton tes arches tou Chrisou logon*, literally, “the word of the beginning of Christ,” that is, the first and plain initiatory truths of the gospel in which new converts were instructed previous to their

baptism.—These I take to be the *soicheia*, “elements,” or “first principles of the oracles of God,” chap. v. 12, and which, in the next clause of this verse, he terms *the foundation*.

The learned Peirce, and after him Dr Macknight, and some others, have, by the first principles, understood the principles of Judaism, and particularly of the ceremonial law, which gave a shadowy representation of good things to come, and laid a foundation for the fuller discoveries that were to be made of them under the gospel dispensation; and so they have recourse to the Old Testament for the different particulars mentioned in this and the following verse.

But though the ceremonial law contained *soicheia*, elements or rudiments which had a reference to the gospel, and which the apostle terms “beggarly elements,” Gal. iv. 9, and “the rudiments of the world,” Col. ii. 20. Yet I do not find that the law is ever termed “the word of the beginning of Christ.” This must surely mean the gospel itself, which had not its beginning till the ministry of John the Baptist, Mark i. 1, 2, nay, strictly speaking, did not begin till the ministry of our Lord and his apostles, after the baptism which John preached, Acts x. 36, 37, chap. xiii. 24, 25, Heb. ii. 3; and which is expressly called the “word of Christ,” Col. iii. 16. Nor is the ceremonial law, though it prefigured the gospel, ever termed “the foundation,” as is the doctrine of the apostles and prophets, Eph. ii. 20. It was Christ, or the doctrine concerning him, that Paul laid as the foundation among the Corinthians, 1 Cor. iii. 10, 11. Neither is the law, that I can remember, ever compared to “milk,” but the gospel is termed “the sincere milk of the word,” 1 Peter ii. 2, and especially the first principles of it; for it was with these, and not with Judaism, that Paul fed the Corinthian converts, who were “babes in Christ,” and unable to bear strong meat, or that wisdom which he spake “among them that were perfect,” or full grown men in

Christian knowledge, 1 Cor. iii. 1, 2, chap. ii. 6. I am therefore of opinion, that "by the word of the beginning of Christ," he means the gospel properly so called, and particularly its first or initiatory principles. Leaving these, says the apostle,

—*let us go on to perfection,*—] *q. d.* Let me proceed in this discourse to bring you forward from the first principles to a more enlarged, spiritual, and perfect knowledge of the mysteries of the gospel;

—*not laying again the foundation*—] What in the former part of the verse he had called *the word of the beginning of Christ* he here terms *the foundation*; consequently, *leaving* the former must be of the same import with *not laying again* the latter, but proceeding to build upon it as a foundation already laid. He elsewhere distinguishes between laying the foundation and building upon it. The foundation he laid in preaching the gospel was Jesus Christ, but he cautions succeeding teachers against building unsuitable materials upon that foundation, 1 Cor. iii. 10—16. To lay the foundation is to teach men the first principles of the gospel, and to build thereon is to expound to them the way of God more perfectly, Acts xviii. 26, to perfect that which is lacking in their faith, 1 Thess. iii. 10. Now, as the foundation was laid among the Hebrews when the gospel was first preached to them, and they had embraced it, the apostle therefore declines to lay it again, by insisting upon the first principles in which they had been already instructed.

By the *foundation* or *first principles*, the generality of commentators understand the six particulars which are specified in this and the succeeding verse; and no doubt some of them may justly be viewed in that light, such as the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. But as there is an evident distinction between a foundation and the things founded on it; as the particulars mentioned are all in the genitive case, and must be understood as possessing one common foundation on which they rest;

farther, as four of the particulars do not appear to be parts of the foundation, if by that be meant the first principles of the Christian faith; I am therefore of opinion, that the different particulars specified are things connected with and grounded on the foundation, rather than the foundation itself. We find that the first principles which Peter taught in preaching the gospel to the Jews at Jerusalem were such as these: That Jesus is the Christ or promised Messiah—that he was crucified—that he rose again from the dead—was exalted at the right hand of God, being made both Lord and Christ; and that whosoever believeth on him should receive the remission of sins, Acts ii. 22—37, chap. iv. 9—13. These principles he also laid as the foundation in preaching the gospel to Cornelius and his house, chap. x. 36—44. Paul laid the very same foundation in his discourses at Antioch, chap. xiii. 23—40, and he reminds the Corinthians of the principles which he first taught them: “For I delivered unto you first of all, that which I also received, how that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures; and that he was buried, and that he rose again the third day, according to the Scriptures,” 1 Cor. xv. 3, 4. These, therefore, are the first principles which constitute the foundation of the following particulars, viz.

—*of repentance from dead works*—] Dead works are mortal sins, or works deserving death, and which, without repentance, will issue in everlasting punishment, which is the second death. Repentance from these is a change of mind (*metanoia*) consisting of a humbling conviction and hatred of sin, accompanied with hope in divine mercy through Christ, and followed by an actual turning from dead works to the obedience and service of the living God. Now the word of the beginning of Christ is the foundation of this repentance, as it is the word of reconciliation, which holds forth the only effectual motives and encouragements to true evangelical repentance. Accordingly, wherever the gospel was preached, sinners were

immediately called to repentance, as being a leading design, as well as genuine effect of its doctrine; see Mark i. 15; Acts ii. 38, chap. iii. 19, chap. xvii. 30. And so Paul, in preaching the gospel, "testified both to the Jews, and also to the Greeks, repentance towards God," Acts xx. 21, chap. xxvi. 20. The first principles of the gospel are also the foundation

—*of faith towards God*;] Faith and repentance, though they may be distinguished, can never be separated; for as the repenting sinner forsakes his sins and idols, and *by faith* turns unto God; so the believing sinner turns unto that God in whom he believes, *by repentance*. Faith in God is not merely a belief that he is, and that he is the rewarder of them that diligently seek him; for the Jews, who rejected the gospel, professed that faith; but it is faith in God as he has revealed himself in the gospel, by fulfilling the promise made unto the fathers in sending his Son into the world to save sinners, and that through him he might grant the remission of their sins. It is to believe on God that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification, Rom. iv. 24, 25. Faith in God and faith in Christ are involved in each other. To believe God in his testimony concerning his Son (1 John v. 9—12), is to believe both in God the testifier, and also in his Son, who is the subject of that testimony. To believe the resurrection and glorification of Jesus Christ, is to believe him to be the Son of God in power, Rom. i. 4; and through him to believe in God who raised him up from the dead, and gave him glory, is to have our faith and hope in God, 1 Peter i. 21. It is evident that this faith towards God is founded on the first principles of the gospel, and these are also the foundation

Ver. 2. *Of the doctrine of baptisms*,—] Commentators have been greatly puzzled as to the sense of this and the following particular; and their chief difficulty seems to arise from baptism being here put in the plural, especially

as the apostle says, that there is *one* Christian *baptism*, Eph. iv. 5. Hence they have been led to think, that the apostle here does not mean Christian baptism at all, but the various immersions prescribed in the ceremonial law of Moses. But though baptism is expressed in the plural, it will not warrant such an interpretation. There is the double baptism of water and of the Spirit mentioned, Matt. iii. 11, Acts i. 5, chap. xi. 16, which may be termed *baptisms*. All true Christians are by one Spirit baptized into one body, 1 Cor. xii. 13, but this does not set aside the outward baptism in water, see Acts x. 47. And though the extraordinary baptism of the Spirit has now ceased, yet not when the apostle wrote this epistle; and it still remains a truth, that "if any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his," Rom. viii. 9; and that "except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God," John iii. 5. Farther, the baptism of a number of persons may with great propriety be termed *baptisms*; for each of them is a distinct and separate immersion. It may also be observed, that the sacred writers frequently use plural nouns to express things that are singular: Thus, in the original, we have *dexion, right hands*, for right hand, Mark xvi. 19, *oiktirmon, mercies*, for mercy, Heb. x. 27. God hath made of *one blood* all nations of men, Acts xvii. 26, yet *blood* is plural in John i. 13. Christ's sacrifice is but *one*, Heb. x. 12, yet it is termed the *thusiais, sacrifices*, chap. ix. 23. Many other examples might be produced of the plural number being put for the singular; and perhaps it was from observing this, that the authors of the Ethiopic and Syriac versions have changed *baptisms* in this place into *baptism*, unless we suppose that the MSS. from which they translated, had that word in the singular.

By the *doctrine of baptisms* I understand, that doctrine which is emblematically represented or signified in baptism, namely, our communion with, and conformity to, Christ in his death and resurrection, by the remission of



sins, and the regenerating and sanctifying influences of the Spirit. As to remission of sins, new converts are exhorted to be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, Acts ii. 38, and to be baptized and wash away their sins, chap. xxvi. 16. And with respect to regeneration and sanctification of the Spirit, baptism represents the laver of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, or being born of water and of the Spirit, Tit. iii. 5, John iii. 5, and so a being dead to sin and alive unto God through Jesus Christ, to walk in newness of life, Rom. vi. 3—7; Col. ii. 11—14. Now, this doctrine or import of baptism plainly shews, that baptism itself has its foundation in the first principles of the word of Christ, which, when any professed to believe with the heart, they were immediately baptized, it being the very first ordinance of the gospel, and the sign of their entry into the kingdom of God. These first principles include the promise of the Spirit, which is the foundation

—of *laying on of hands*,—] Some think this refers to the laying hands on the head of the sin-offering, which was accompanied with confession of sins, Lev. xvi. 21. But as that typical ceremony of the law denoted a transfer of guilt to the victim which was to bear away the sins of the people, it could never in that view, be performed on converts to Christianity, as a ceremony connected with their reception of the first principles of the gospel: Nor can it refer to laying on of hands in curing the sick, Mark xvi. 18, Acts xxviii. 8, or which was used in ordaining men to offices in the church, Acts vi. 6, 1 Tim. iv. 14, chap. v. 22, for such imposition of hands was on particular occasions, and not common to all Christians, nor was it joined with baptism, nor a token of initiation into the Christian faith. I am therefore of opinion, that the laying on of hands here referred to, and which is placed after baptism, is that by which the apostles conferred the Holy Spirit upon baptized converts, see Acts viii. 15—18, chap. xix. 6. This was indeed peculiar to the apostolic age, and,

so far as it conveyed miraculous gifts, cannot now be used for that purpose; but the Hebrews were well acquainted with these extraordinary gifts of the Spirit, and made partakers of them, as our apostle intimates, ver. 4, 5. This is what Peter gave them to expect when he at first exhorted them to repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ, Acts ii. 38, 39, and which, in allusion to literal baptism in water, is termed baptizing in the Holy Spirit, Matt. iii. 11; Acts i. 4, 5, chap. xi. 15—17.

—*and of resurrection of the dead*—] It is a most important article of the Christian faith, “that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust,” Acts xxiv. 15. A future state was not so clearly revealed under the Old Testament; yet we find that the Pharisees confessed a resurrection, Acts xxiii. 6—9, and this is now clearly brought to light through the gospel. Christ declares that “the hour is coming in the which all that are in the graves shall hear his voice, and shall come forth; they that have done good unto the resurrection of life; and they that have done evil unto the resurrection of damnation,” John v. 28, 29. But though both the just and unjust shall be raised, yet it is the resurrection of the just that is particularly described and chiefly insisted on in the New Testament. It is only those who are Christ’s, who sleep in Jesus, or die in the Lord, that shall come forth unto the resurrection of life. Now, the foundation of this blessed resurrection of the dead, as well as the example and pledge of it, is the resurrection of Christ himself, which is one of the first and fundamental principles of the gospel, and upon the truth of this fact the apostle grounds it; see 1 Cor. xv. 12—24; 1 Thess. iv. 14. To this he adds,

—*and of eternal judgment*.] Some explain this of the ancient judgments inflicted upon Pharaoh and the Egyptians, and also upon rebellious Israel in the wilderness, for the confirmation and establishment of the Jewish religion: But this is a forced and unnatural sense, arising from the

notion that all the foregoing particulars are Jewish principles. It is evident that the judgment here mentioned is that which succeeds the resurrection of the dead, and therefore must be the final and general judgment of the quick and dead at the last day. The doctrine of the judgment was clearly taught by Christ himself, who says, "The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son: and hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man," John v. 22—27. He describes the process and final sentence that he shall then pronounce on the righteous and on the wicked, Matt. xxv. 31, to the end; and he commanded his apostles, "to preach unto the people, and to testify that it is he who was ordained of God to be the judge of quick and dead," Acts x. 42. Accordingly, they preached, that "God hath appointed a day in the which he will judge the world in righteousness, by that man whom he hath ordained," Acts xvii. 31, and that "we must all appear before the judgment-seat of Christ, that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad," 2 Cor. v. 10. This judgment is called *eternal*, not because the trial or process will be endless, but because the sentence will be final and irreversible, and so the consequent rewards and punishments eternal; for the wicked "shall go away into everlasting punishment; but the righteous into life eternal," Matt. xxv. 46. The resurrection of Christ is also the foundation of faith as to his being ordained to judge the world; for of this God hath "given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead," Acts xvii. 31.

The apostle having declined to lay again the foundation of the forementioned particulars, in which the Hebrews had been already instructed, and proposed to bring them on to perfection in knowledge, such as was suited to adult Christians, ver. 1, he adds,

Ver. 3. *And this will we do if God permit:] q. d. If*

God shall be pleased to bless for your instruction what I am going to lay before you, by opening your understanding and inclining your hearts to receive it; and if some of you have not already apostatized so as to become proof against all my instructions, in which case the condition of such must be exceedingly awful:

Ver. 4. *For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened,—*] In this and the following verse the apostle mentions some of the gifts and influences of the Spirit, which were conferred upon the Hebrews for confirming the truth of the gospel, and which must exceedingly heighten the guilt of such as, after being made partakers of these, and in the face of such evidence, should apostatize from the faith, and so harden their hearts as to render it impossible to renew them again unto repentance.

They are described to be those who were *once enlightened*. Some explain this of baptism, and indeed it was termed, *photismos*, *illumination*, very early, as is evident from the writings of Justin Martyr, Irenæus, and Clement Alexandrinus; but it is very doubtful if it was so termed in the days of the apostles. There is a parallel passage in this epistle setting forth the irrecoverable and dreadful state of apostates; and I apprehend, that their being *enlightened* here, is of the same import with their having *received the knowledge of the truth* there; see chap. x. 26. This is evidently the sense of the original word in other places of the New Testament; see 2 Cor. iv. 6; Eph. i. 18, chap. iii. 9; Heb. x. 32. And Peter supposes apostates to have been enlightened, for he represents them as having had “the knowledge of the Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,” and to “have known the ways of righteousness,” 2 Pet. ii. 20, 21. The next part of the description is,

—*and have tasted of the heavenly gift—*] By the *heavenly gift* some understand *faith*, which is the gift of God, Eph. ii. 8, and because some are said to “believe for a while,” Luke viii. 13. Others by it understand *Christ*, who is

frequently represented as given for the salvation of men, and as having come down from heaven : But I think *the heavenly gift* signifies the Holy Spirit, who is called "the gift of God," John iv. 10, Acts ii. 38, chap. viii. 20, and was "sent down from heaven," 1 Pet. i. 12, and whose influence accompanied the preaching of the gospel with such light and evidence as to induce some to believe for a while, and make a profession of the faith, who in the time of temptation fell away, Luke viii. 13.

—*and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost.*] That is, of the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit. They were not only witnesses of these in others, but were made partakers of them themselves ; particularly such gifts and endowments as qualified men in that early period to be teachers of others, such as the word of wisdom, the word of knowledge, the gifts of prophecy, discerning of spirits, divers kind of tongues, the interpretation of tongues, &c. ; see 1 Cor. xii. 8—10. None of these, nor all of them together, could profit the possessor without charity, chap. xiii. 1, 2.

Ver 5. *And have tasted the good word of God,*—] Tidings or promises of good things are frequently termed "*the good word,*" see Joshua xxi. 45, chap. xxiii. 15, Jer. xxix. 10, Zech. i. 13 ; and the gospel is so called by way of eminence, Isa. lii. 7, it being the most salutary and comfortable news that ever was proclaimed to men. To have tasted this good word imports that they had some perception of its excellence, and some experience of its comforts, and so it agrees with what our Lord mentions in the parable of the sower, "he heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it ; yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while," Matt. xiii. 20, 21. To these attainments the apostle adds,

—*and the powers of the world to come.*] *The world to come*, or rather (*mellontos aionos*) *the age to come*, signifies the gospel age, or age of Messiah, one of whose titles, which in our English Bible is translated *the Everlasting*

*Father*, is in the LXX. *Pater tou mellontos aionos*, the *Father of the age to come*, Isa. ix. 6. The (*dunameis*) *powers* of this age, particularly during the days of the apostles, I take to be those *external* operations of the Spirit by which some were enabled to perform miracles on the bodies of others, such as instantaneously healing diseases, raising the dead, ejecting demons, &c. Though all the extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were miraculous, yet the apostle seems to distinguish *powers* from other extraordinary gifts, and calls them *energemata dunameon*, rendered, by our translators, *the working of miracles*, but literally are *the operations of powers*. These powers of the gospel age were witnessed by multitudes, and also conferred on many at first for the confirmation of the gospel, who yet might, after all, turn out apostates. Accordingly our Lord says, "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many (*dunameis*)" literally *powers*, *i. e.* *miracles*, or "wonderful works? And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity," Matt. vii. 22, 23. Our apostle supposes, that those who have had such striking and experimental proofs of the truth of the gospel, not only may fall away, but that some of them had actually apostatized.

Ver. 6. *If they shall fall away,—*] This is not a proper rendering of *kai parapesontas*; for *kai* cannot be rendered *if*, nor is *parapesontas* in the future, but an aorist in the past tense, and should be rendered, *and have fallen away*; and as it is put in opposition to the advantages mentioned in the two preceding verses, the conjunction *kai* with which it is introduced, must have its adversative signification, and the words be rendered, *and yet have fallen away*.

The apostle is not speaking of the falling away of mere nominal professors, who never were in any degree convinced or influenced by the gospel; for such have nothing to fall away from, but an empty name, or a mere hypo-

critical profession, which they had better want; and therefore to affirm, as some do, that none shall fully fall away who have ever known anything about the gospel, is a palpable mistake. Those who are here supposed to have fallen away, are described as having had singular and supernatural attainments, and it is by these that their guilt in apostatizing is so exceedingly aggravated. But neither, on the other hand, is he speaking of the partial declines or backslidings to which Christians are liable in this imperfect state, such as their having left their first love, like the Ephesian church, Rev. ii. 4, or their being lukewarm and insensible to their wants, like the church of the Laodiceans, chap. iii. 15—20. Nor does he mean such occasional or particular sins as Christians may fall into through the strength of temptation, or the power of some worldly or fleshly lust, as we find was the case with some in the Corinthian church, 1 Cor. v. 1, 2 Cor. xii. 20, 21. These things, indeed, have a tendency to apostacy, and if continued in without repentance, must land men in everlasting misery; but still the Lord deals with such, and calls them to repentance. But the falling away which is here mentioned, is a total apostacy from the Christian faith, and a reverting to Judaism or infidelity; it is an open and avowed renunciation of Christ, arising from enmity of heart against him, his cause, and people, approving in their own minds of the deeds of his murderers, as we shall see afterwards: and all this after they have been once enlightened, have received the knowledge of the truth, and tasted some of its comforts. This is the description of those of whom it is said, that it is impossible

—to renew them again unto repentance,—] The verb (*anakainizein*) to renew, in this 6th verse, connects in construction with (*adunaton*) impossible at the beginning of ver. 4, and governs all the intervening accusatives; therefore Macknight, in his translation, has placed it before them, carrying it back to ver. 4, thus, “For it is

impossible to renew again by repentance, those who have been once enlightened," &c. This is a good translation ; but I think our common translation, which follows the order of the original, is equally plain, when ver. 4, 5, 6, are read without stopping.

But, it may be asked, How comes it to be impossible to renew such apostates again unto repentance? Not, I apprehend, because it is impossible with men to do it without the concurring grace of God ; for that is equally true in ordinary cases : Nor because it is impossible for the power of God to do it ; for his almighty power can effect everything that he pleases, or is not inconsistent with his own perfections : Nor is it because the blood of Christ is insufficient to obtain pardon for this sin if applied to by faith and repentance ; for God never refuses pardon to the greatest sinners upon their repentance and faith in the atonement ; and this is what we are assured of by innumerable promises. To account for this impossibility we may observe, 1. That they have had the advantage of the highest evidence of the truth of the gospel that God ever intended to give. They have been enlightened, and tasted of the good word of God, and have not only been eye-witnesses of the miraculous operations of the Spirit, but have themselves been partakers of them ; yet having under such circumstances renounced the gospel, and as there remains no higher evidence or stronger motives to persuade them to repentance, so their case in that respect must appear desperate. 2. The nature of their sin appears to preclude repentance. It is not a single act through the force of temptation, or the fear of their lives, as was the case with Peter when he denied his Master ; but a wilful, voluntary, and deliberate apostacy, after having received the knowledge of the truth, arising from a rooted enmity against Christ and his cause. This, in its very nature, is opposite to repentance, and to everything that leads to it. 3. This impossibility may also be resolved into the righteous judgment of God, in giving



them up to impenitence and hardness of heart. If God thus gave up with many of the Jews in our Lord's time, before the evidence of the gospel was completed, John xii. 37—42, and if it is foretold that he would permit others to fall under the strong delusions of the man of sin, that they should believe a lie, and be all damned, because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, 2 Thess. ii. 10—13, there must certainly be good reason for such a judicial proceeding of God against those in the apostolic age, who, after having had the highest evidence of the truth, wilfully renounced it, and turned out its inveterate opposers. The apostle insists chiefly upon the enormity of their sin, which nothing can exceed,

—*seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh—*]

They approve of and consent to the treatment he received from his murderers, and, as it were, crucify him over again to themselves, or in themselves, by renouncing and blaspheming him as one justly put to death as an impostor.

—*and put him to an open shame.*] The word *paradeigmatizantas* signifies their exposing him to infamy, or making a public example of him, see Matt. i. 19, doing all that in them lay (partly, perhaps, to justify their apostacy) to expose the Son of God, and the religion he taught, to the contempt of the world. In the parallel place, the apostle represents them as having trodden under foot the Son of God, counted his blood a common thing, and done despite unto the Spirit of grace, chap. x. 29, on which we shall have occasion to make some remarks in their proper place.

It was chiefly on the authority of this awful passage that the Novatians refused to re-admit into their communion those who, to avoid torture in time of persecution, gave up the outward profession of the gospel, however penitent they might appear afterwards: But the Hebrew apostates here mentioned, are not supposed to have had

any such temptation, but are represented as voluntary in their apostacy; and as to their repentance, it is represented as impossible; so that these cases are not similar.

This passage has also given much uneasiness to many sincere, but weak-minded Christians, through their mistaken views of it, as well as of their own case, apprehending from their partial backslidings, that they have sinned wilfully after they have received the knowledge of the truth, and fearing that there is no mercy for them; but if they would only attend to the account given of the nature of this sin, that it is a total and voluntary renunciation of Christ and his cause, and a joining with his enemies, it might effectually relieve them from such apprehensions.

Those also who maintain that the elect may finally fall away, have, among other texts, adduced this to prove that opinion: But this is to take for granted that the apostates here mentioned had been elected unto salvation, and were possessed of such special and saving influences and fruits of the Spirit as are peculiar to the elect: But nothing can be gathered from this passage but what may be found in the stony-ground hearers, Luke viii. 13, in those who are destitute of true Christian love, 1 Cor. xiii. 1—4, and in such as Christ shall at last disown as workers of iniquity, Matt. vii. 22, 23. The final perseverance of the real children of God, is a doctrine clearly taught in the Scriptures, and it is part of their distinguished character, that instead of drawing back unto perdition, they believe unto the saving of the soul, Heb. x. 29, and amidst all their trials and occasional failings, endure unto the end, Matt. xxiv. 13. If they were chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, Eph. i. 4, if they were given by the Father to him to redeem and bring unto glory, Heb. ii. 10, 13; if he has promised to give unto them eternal life, and that they shall never perish, nor any pluck them out of his and his Father's hands, John x. 15, 17, 28, 29; in short, if they are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, or to the enjoyment of that inheri-

tance which was prepared and is reserved for them in heaven, 1 Pet. i. 4, 5; these things must exclude every idea or supposition that they shall finally fall away. But, though it is a certain truth that the elect shall obtain; yet no man ought to presume upon his own particular election or perseverance without proper evidence. Mistakes on this head are dangerous; tend to foster spiritual pride and presumption; fortify the mind against the scripture motives to watchfulness and cautious fear, often lull men in fatal security, or at least tend to slacken their diligence in making their calling and election sure, as they are directed, 1 Pet. i. 10.

The apostle proceeds to illustrate the difference between true believers, and those who are only partakers of the forementioned illumination and miraculous operations of the Spirit, by a similitude taken from a fruitful and barren soil, in order to shew the justice of God's procedure with the latter.

Ver. 7. *For the earth, which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it,—*] The metaphor is taken from husbandry or agriculture, which is frequently used to illustrate moral and religious subjects both in the Old and New Testaments; see Isaiah v. 1—8; Jer. ii. 21; Hos. x. 12, 13; Matt. xiii. 19—24; 1 Cor. iii. 6—10. By the earth or soil is here intended the hearts of men, and by the rain that cometh oft upon it is meant the means of grace, such as the word, ordinances, and influences of the Spirit. Now, the ground which imbibes the fructifying showers which so frequently water it,

*—and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed—*] By *herbs* we must here understand every kind of fruit or product which is fit for the use, or answerable to the design, of them by whom it is cultivated; such ground

*—receiveth blessing from God:]* Some consider this as referring to the original blessing pronounced upon the whole earth, Gen. i. 11, "And God said, let the earth

bring forth grass, the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after his kind, whose seed is in itself upon the earth; and it was so." And surely the fertility of any portion of the earth, is the effect of God's blessing, and not to be attributed merely to the external means, or to the labour of the husbandman; though that is necessary in its place, in order to his obtaining a sufficiency of that kind of fruit which is fit for his use. By the similitude of fruitful ground, the apostle evidently means true believers, "who in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, keep it, and bring forth fruit with patience," Luke viii. 15. These receive blessing from God, who by the influences of his Spirit accompanying the culture of his word and ordinances, gives the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 7, 8, so that they grow in grace, and are filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are by Jesus Christ unto his praise and glory, Phil. i. 11. They are blessed in doing his will by farther manifestations of his love, James i. 21, John xiv. 21, 23; and as they are kept by his power through faith unto salvation, they at last obtain the blessing of eternal life, 1 Pet. i. 4, 5; Matt. xxv. 34—37.

Ver. 8. *But that which beareth thorns and briars is rejected—*] That ground which, after being duly watered and cultivated, instead of bringing forth good and useful fruit produces nothing but unprofitable, and even hurtful weeds and shrubs, such as thorns and briars, is (*adokimos*) rejected and abandoned by the husbandman who bestows no more labour upon it, —*and is nigh unto cursing, whose end is to be burned.*] Being thus given up, it soon falls under the full effects of the ancient curse pronounced upon the ground for the sin of man, Gen. iii. 17, 18, and in the end will be entirely scorched and burnt up with heat and drought.

This represents the dreadful guilt and awful punishment of such apostates as he had before described, ver. 4—7. They had been once enlightened, had tasted of

the good word of God, and of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit in his miraculous gifts and operations. Here they had every kind of culture which tended to make them fruitful ; but instead of bringing forth acceptable fruit, they, on the contrary, brought forth thorns and briars. Well might the Lord complain of them as of his ancient people, "What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?" Isa. v. 4. Apostates from the faith are not merely unprofitable servants, but are represented as inveterate and malicious enemies of the Son of God. Therefore they are rejected and given up in the righteous judgment of God to final impenitency and hardness of heart, so that they go on in their rebellion, till the fiery indignation of the living God shall at last overtake and devour them as his adversaries, when they shall be consigned to everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels, Matt. xxv. 41.

Though I have explained the similitude of the fruitful and barren ground, the one of true believers in Christ, the other of apostates from the Christian faith, as the scope and connection of the whole passage seem to require ; yet it may be proper to notice, that some consider these two verses as a prophecy respecting the state of the Jewish church at that time, and its dreadful end which was approaching, and actually took place in less than ten years after this epistle was written. By the *earth* or *ground* they understand the church of the Jews, which is frequently represented in prophecy as God's vineyard, and also in some of our Lord's parables, Psalm lxxx. 15 ; Isa. v. 7 ; Jer. ii. 21 ; Matt. xxi. 33—42. The *rains* which came often upon it were the revelations of the divine will, and especially the preaching of the gospel by Christ and his apostles, with all the supernatural attestations given to it by the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven : This was the culture bestowed on it. In this ground were

plants of God's special planting, viz., true believers in Christ, who brought forth the fruits of repentance and new obedience; these received *blessings* from God.— There were also obstinate unbelievers, who never professed the faith of Christ, and these composed the bulk of the nation: Besides these, there were apostates from the faith, who fell back to Judaism, and both of them brought forth thorns and briars, and so were *rejected* and forsaken of God, as was prophesied of them, Isa. v. 6; Matt. xxi. 43. They are said to be *nigh unto cursing*, which imports not only (as it sometimes does) their being given up to barrenness, but their being on the point of destruction; and it is added, *whose end is to be burned*, which is explained to be the universal destruction of their church and state, as foretold, Matt. xxiv., and which is an emblem of the punishment of unbelievers and apostates at the last day. As both these views of the passage are according to truth, the reader is left to judge for himself which to prefer.

While the Apostle sets before the Hebrews these awful things to rouse them out of that sloth and inattention which hindered their growth and stability in Christian knowledge, and tended to apostacy, he, at the same time, takes care not to weaken their hope: he neither uses so much lenity as to enervate his reproof and warning, nor so much severity as either to discourage or irritate them, but proceeds to address them in a most affectionate, encouraging, and winning manner.

Ver. 9. *But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.*] He was persuaded better things of them than what he had mentioned respecting apostates in the preceding verses, though he saw it needful to mention these things by way of caution, and to put them on their guard.

By the *ta kreittona*, *better things*, some understand him to mean things better than those of apostacy; but there can be no proper comparison between things absolutely

evil, and those which are in any degree good. He had mentioned some good things which apostates had been possessed of, and particularly various kinds of spiritual gifts, ver. 4, 5, but he was persuaded that his beloved Hebrews to whom he writes were possessed of still *better things* than these extraordinary gifts, such as the saving influences and fruits of the Spirit, which are things peculiar to the true children of God ; and so he describes them as things that *echomena soterias, accompany salvation, or are inseparably connected* with it in the Divine purpose and promise, Mark ix. 41, which the former were not. In the following verse he mentions the grounds of his favourable persuasion concerning them.

Ver. 10. *For God is not unrighteous, to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name,—*] He does not mean that God was engaged in strict justice to reward their work and labour, or that they could claim it of him in point of merit, or as a reward of debt. But as God has freely and graciously promised to reward the services of true believers, so he is not unrighteous, *i e.* unfaithful to his promise, that he should forget or neglect to reward them ; for *adikos* sometimes signifies *unfaithful*, and is opposed to *pios, faithful*, Luke xvi. 10, and *unrighteousness* is opposed to *truth*, Rom. ii. 8, and this seems to be the sense more immediately intended here.

As a solid evidence of their being true believers, he mentions their *work and labour of love*. Some ancient MSS. and versions have only *your work and love*, leaving out *labour* ; but though this were the true reading, the sense must be the same, as is more fully expressed in 1 Thess. i. 3, “Your work of faith and labour of love.” By their *work* we must undoubtedly understand the work of their faith, or which proceeds from it as its principle, and manifests it to be genuine ; for as without faith it is impossible to please God, Heb. xi. 6, so faith without works is dead and unprofitable, James ii. 14, *ad fin.* He

mentions also their *labour of love*: Men may abound in the most extraordinary gifts; they may bestow all their goods to feed the poor, and give their bodies to be burned; yet, if destitute of love, they are nothing, 1 Cor. xiii. 1—4. On the other hand, the apostle John denies that the love of God dwells in that man who has the ability, but refuses to relieve the wants of his poor brother, 1 John iii. 17, and gives this exhortation, “My little children, let us not love in word, neither in tongue, but *ergo*, in work and in truth. And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him,” ver. 18, 19. The “work of faith and labour of love,” seem to be much the same with “faith working by love,” Gal. v. 6, which is also termed “a new creature,” chap. vi. 15. The Hebrews had shewed this work and labour of love *towards his name*, i. e. God’s name, being influenced by a religious and reverential regard to his authority, a concern for his honour and glory, and an attachment to his cause and people. In the next clause he specifies that work and labour of love which he had more particularly in view, viz. :

—*in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.*] The word *diakonein*, rendered to *minister*, signifies to *serve*, either in spiritual or temporal things. Here it signifies to serve the saints in the way of supplying their wants and necessities; and, though it may include giving advice, comfort, and encouragement to their minds, yet the beneficial acts of liberality in relieving their bodily wants is more directly intended. This is distributing to the necessity of saints, Rom. xii. 13, by clothing the naked, and feeding the hungry brother or sister. The Hebrews were at first very remarkable in this ministering labour of love, see Acts ii. 45, chap. iv. 34, *ad fin.*, and the apostle particularly mentions their compassion of him in his bonds, Heb. x. 34, ministering to him probably while he was a prisoner at Cesarea, Acts xxiv. 23. This ministering to the saints, as it was most needed in those times of persecution, so to own and support them then, was more



dangerous than at other times, and therefore a stronger proof of love. The apostle observes, that they had not only ministered formerly to the saints, but *do minister*; they persevered and were still engaged in that good work, which shows that they were influenced by an habitual and deep-rooted principle of love to Christ and his people. Now, if from their work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in the Lord Jesus Christ, the apostle knew that the Thessalonians were elected of God, 1 Thess. i. 3, 4, he had similar grounds to believe the same thing of the Hebrews, and to be persuaded better things of them than all the attainments of such as fall away.

But as the apostle well knew the weakness and instability of man, and that none will persevere unto the end, but those who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, 1 Pet. i. 5, therefore his favourable persuasion concerning the Hebrews must include in it a persuasion that God would confirm them unto the end, and keep them from departing from him. And this he has promised in his covenant with the spiritual Israel; "I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear in their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," Jer. xxxii. 40; see also Christ's promise to his sheep, John x. 28, 29. Hence the apostle frequently mentions the faithfulness of God as engaged to confirm, establish, and preserve believers blameless unto the coming of Christ: "Who shall also confirm you unto the end, that ye may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ. God is FAITHFUL, by whom ye were called unto the fellowship of his Son Jesus Christ our Lord," 1 Cor. i. 8, 9. "I thank my God upon every remembrance of you—for your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; being confident of this very thing, that he who hath begun a good work in you, will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," Philip. i. 3, 5, 6.—"And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your whole spirit, and soul,

and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. FAITHFUL is he who hath called you, who also will do it," 1 Thess. v. 23, 24.—"But the Lord is FAITHFUL, who shall establish you, and keep you from evil," 2 Thess. iii. 3.

From such passages we may learn, that those who possess the real and distinguishing characters of the children of God, have evidence of their own particular calling and election unto salvation, and may take the comfort of God's faithfulness to his promise, that he will not turn away from them to do them good, nor suffer them finally to fall away; but maintain his fear in their hearts that they shall not depart from him; and thus perform that good work which he has begun in them until the day of Jesus Christ, when they shall receive the end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls. But it must also be observed, that the comfort of this cannot, in the nature of things, be enjoyed or retained, but in the way of perseverance and diligence. The encouragements given to believers, are not intended to foster presumption, or to lull them in sloth and indolence: but, on the contrary, to encourage and stir them up to be always abounding in the work of the Lord, and that they may have an increasing evidence of their interest in the divine promises. Therefore the apostle, having mentioned their work and labour of love, exhorts them thus,

Ver. 11. *And we desire, that every one of you do shew the same diligence—*] The words *epithumoumen de* ought to be rendered *but*, or *yet we earnestly desire* that every one of you do shew the same diligence as formerly:—That they would not grow weary in well-doing, or remit and slacken their diligence in assisting and comforting their Christian brethren as their circumstances might require; but that, from love to the name of God, they should persevere in this and in every good work, —*to the full assurance of hope unto the end.*] Some think that the apostle exhorts them to this diligence, in order

that his hope of their perseverance in the faith might continue to the end ; but this does not appear to me to be the sense : Others understand him to mean, that they should continue to shew the same diligence unto the end, *pros ten plerophorian tes elpidos*, " with the full assurance of hope," *i. e.* having the full assurance of hope as the influencing principle of their diligence. It is certain that all who believe the gospel must, in their very believing it, have a degree of hope respecting their own salvation ; for faith is the confidence of things hoped for.

But there is a difference between faith and hope. Faith is the credit we give to the truth of what is testified or promised in the gospel, and is founded on the veracity and faithfulness of God. The assurance of faith is the assurance of nothing else than what the gospel proposes in common to all the hearers of it to be believed by them unto their salvation. The hope which attends this faith is a mixture of desire and joy, and an anticipation of enjoyment in proportion to the probability there is of obtaining the good desired, according to the tenor of the promise. The full assurance of this hope is the assurance which a believer has that he himself shall certainly obtain the salvation promised in the gospel ; but as the promise of that salvation is not made to all the hearers, or even professors of the gospel, but only to those of them who shall believe and obey it ; so this assurance of hope must be supported by the evidence of faith and its fruits.

I therefore understand the apostle to be exhorting the Hebrews to a persevering diligence in the work and labour of love, that so having the witness of the Spirit joined to the approving testimony of their own conscience, their hope of salvation might grow up to a full assurance. This sense agrees with the exhortation given by the apostle Peter, " Wherefore the rather, brethren, give diligence to make your calling and election sure ; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall ; for so an entrance shall be ministered to you abundantly, into the everlasting

kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ," 2 Peter i. 10, 11. From this, and also from ver. 5, 6, 7, we see that diligence in the exercise of every Christian virtue, and especially in the work and labour of love, is required in order to make our calling and election sure, or to attain to the full assurance of hope; and that it is also the way to obtain an entrance at last into the everlasting kingdom of Christ; see Matt. xxv. 34—37. And as this diligence must be exercised *unto the end* of our lives, there is no time in which we may give it over till our course is finished and our warfare accomplished; so that there is no Christian, while in this world, however eminent, and however much his soul may enjoy of peace and rest in Christ, that does not need to attend to the exhortation to "follow after charity," and to "give all diligence" for maintaining and confirming the assurance of hope. The opposite of diligence being slothfulness, the apostle dehorts them from it;

Ver. 12. *That ye be not slothful*—] That is, we earnestly desire that ye be not slothful. The word *nothroi*, rendered *slothful* here, is the same that is translated *dull* in the beginning of this digression, chap. v. 11. It signifies in general persons that are slow or tardy in their motions either of mind or body. In the former place he blames the Hebrews for their small proficiency in Christian knowledge, like persons whose minds are dull or slow of apprehension; but here he cautions them against being slack or remiss in the practice of those duties they were called to,

—*but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.*] The words may be rendered, "But be (*mimetai*) imitators of them who through faith and (*makrothumias*) long-suffering (*kleronomoueton*) are inheriting the promises." It is generally understood that by them who "through faith and patience are inheriting the promises," the apostle means the patriarchs of old, who have died in the faith, and are now inheriting eternal life.

But because he afterwards says of them, "These all died in faith, not having received the promises," chap xi. 13, some have thought that he here intends the Gentiles, who had already believed, and were inheriting all the promises of the gospel which were to be enjoyed in this life, such as that they were become Abraham's seed by faith—that God was become the object of their worship and protector—that they were enjoying the knowledge of God, and the gifts of the Spirit in the gospel church; all which were bestowed on them through Christ, Gal. iii. But that none of Abraham's spiritual seed, not even the Old Testament saints, were inheriting the promise of the heavenly country, nor of having their faith actually counted to them for righteousness; for that these promises can only be obtained after the resurrection and general judgment. See Peirce and Macknight on this place.

But it is not likely that the apostle should refer the Hebrews to the believing Gentiles as a pattern for their imitation; for,—1. It is admitted by those who are of this opinion, that he avoids mentioning the believing Gentiles in that view, lest it should offend the Hebrews; and if so, how could the Hebrews know who he meant? Could they imitate they knew not whom? Or, if he thought they would guess at his meaning, could he expect that they would imitate those, the mentioning of whom would be offensive to them? 2. To be through faith and patience inheriting the promises in this world, was no distinguishing characteristic of believing Gentiles, but equally applicable to believing Hebrews, to whom the promises were first made, and among whom they had their first accomplishment. 3. The examples of faith and patience, which he expressly specifies for their imitation, were believing Hebrews. In the context he particularly mentions Abraham, who, after he had patiently endured, obtained the promise, verse 15. In chap. xi., he sets before them a long list of their Hebrew ancestors, as examples of faith and patience under many trials, and how they were supported by the

prospect of a future recompence of reward ; and down from the patriarch Abraham to the last of the list, not a Gentile is mentioned excepting Rahab the harlot. As, therefore, the apostle warns the Hebrews against unbelief by the awful example of their unbelieving fathers, who fell in the wilderness and came short of the earthly rest ; so he exhorts them here to perseverance in faith, patience, and diligence, after the example of their pious ancestors, who through faith and patience are inheriting the promises ; rightly judging, that their example would have more influence and weight with the Hebrews than that of Gentiles.

Perhaps it will be asked, How the apostle could here represent the patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as actually inheriting the promises, and yet afterwards say, that "these all died in faith, not having received the promises" ? chap. xi. 13. But in this there is no inconsistency. The apostle had no idea of the sleeping or insensible scheme ; for as he believed that when he himself should be absent from the body, he would at the same time be present with the Lord, 2 Cor. v. 6, 8 ; so he also believed that the holy patriarchs had a conscious existence and an enjoyment of blessedness, after they departed this life ; for long after that God, who is not the God of the dead, but of the living, declared himself to be their God, Exod. iii. 6, 15, 16 ; Matt. xxii. 32. Therefore the death of their bodies could not hinder them from inheriting the promises in due time. Till then, the spirits of these just men, and indeed of all the Old Testament saints, enjoyed a state of blessed rest in heaven, while they waited there for the accomplishment of the promises, respecting Christ's first coming, and the good things to be brought in by him : But when these things came to be fulfilled, then they inherited the promises which they died in the faith of, and which must have been a great accession to their happiness ; so that when the apostle wrote this epistle, they were actually inheriting the promises in a more perfect manner

than they could have enjoyed them on earth, being now present with the Lord. The remaining promises which are to be fulfilled, and which they are still waiting for, are the second coming of Christ, the redemption of their bodies from the grave, their being openly approved of in the judgment, and the complete felicity of their whole persons in the eternal possession of the heavenly kingdom. This is the glorious hope, the ultimate and consummate happiness of all the redeemed.

But to deny that either Abraham, or any of his spiritual seed, had their faith counted to them for righteousness while in this life, nor till after the resurrection and general judgment, is to contradict what the scriptures declare on that head. Moses informs us, that Abraham (who was originally an idolater, Josh. xxiv. 2), "believed in the Lord, and he counted it to him for righteousness," Gen. xv. 6. We are not here at liberty to alter the time, or change the words, *he counted*, into *he will count*: for the apostle Paul takes particular notice of the time when Abraham's faith was counted to him for righteousness, and says, it was while he was in *uncircumcision*; and he draws an argument for the justification of believing uncircumcised Gentiles from that very circumstance, Rom. iv. 10, 11. It is plain, therefore, that Abraham was justified in this life when he believed on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 5, and that all his spiritual seed are justified, or have their faith counted to them for righteousness when they "believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead, who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification," ver. 24, 25. Yet it is admitted, that neither their justification nor adoption will be fully manifested till the resurrection and general judgment, when they shall be openly acknowledged and approved of by Christ the judge of the quick and dead.

Having exhorted the Hebrews to be imitators of their godly ancestors, who, through faith and patience, are in-

heriting the promises, he encourages them to this, by setting before them the promise which God made to Abraham, which he confirmed with an oath, and which respected not Abraham only, but also all his spiritual seed who walk in the steps of his faith.

Ver. 13. *For when God made promise to Abraham—*] God had made several promises to Abraham, both of a temporal and spiritual kind: Some of them peculiarly to himself, others of them relating to him and his seed, and which he renewed to him on different occasions; see Gen. xii. 2, 3, chap. xv. 4, 5, chap. xvii. 1—8. But as the apostle is setting before them the example of Abraham, he adduces the renewal of that promise which was made to him after he had given the highest proofs of his faith and obedience in offering up his son Isaac upon the altar, Gen. xxii. 17, 18, for on no other occasion do we find that God confirmed his promise to him with an oath.

—*because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.*] There was (*oudenos*) no one equal to, far less greater than himself, to whom he could appeal, or to whom he was answerable for the truth of what he said, as we are to him in our solemn oaths; therefore he swore by himself, appealing to his own being and perfections, and, as it were, pledging them for the truth and performance of his promise, so that he could as soon cease to be, as to break it. He swore to him

Ver 14. *Saying, "Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee."*] The apostle quotes only the first part of the oath, but his reasoning is founded on the whole of it. Also, for *multiply thy seed*, he has only, *multiply thee*; but this makes no difference in the sense, for Abraham could be multiplied only in his seed. The oath in full, as recorded by Moses, is in these words, "By myself have I sworn, saith the Lord, for because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son; that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the



heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore ; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies ; and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed ; because thou hast obeyed my voice." Gen. xxii. 16, 17, 18. On these words we may observe,

1. That when the Lord says, " Because thou hast done this thing," or " because thou hast obeyed my voice—in blessing I will bless thee," &c., it is not to be understood as if Abraham by that extraordinary act of obedience had properly merited the promised blessing ; for this promise was made to him long before this time, and when God at first called him from the idolatry of his father's house, Gen. xii. 1.—4, which could not be on account of any merit in him. Upon a renewal of the same promise, particularly respecting his seed, we are told, that " Abraham believed in the Lord ; and he counted it to him for righteousness," Gen. xv. 5, 6 ; and our apostle produceth this as an instance of free justification by faith, not working, but believing on him that justifieth the ungodly, Rom. iv. 3, 4, 5. But when his faith wrought with his works in offering up his son Isaac at God's command, " accounting that God was able to raise him up even from the dead," Heb. xi. 19, he was highly approved and accepted of God in that work of his faith, and acknowledged as a true fearer of him ; in token of which, the promise of blessing and multiplying him, and of blessing all nations in his Seed, was renewed to him in an ample and affectionate manner, with the additional confirmation of an oath. In this sense I understand the apostle James to affirm, that he was justified by works, and not by faith only, James ii. 21—24. He was first *freely pardoned*, or absolved from the guilt of his ungodly state, by faith in the divine promise without works, or not working, but believing ; and he was afterwards *approved of God* as a faithful servant, when his faith co-operated with his works in offering up his son ; but both were of grace, not of debt, as is also the final reward of eternal life ; for (*charis*) *grace* reigns through

righteousness unto eternal life, which is the (*charisma*) *free gift* of God through Jesus Christ our Lord, Rom. v. 21, chap. v. 23. And so the redeemed ascribe their salvation first and last, not to any merit in them, but to the worthiness of the Lamb that was slain, Rev. v. 9, 10, 12. *See my Essay on the distinction and consistency of justification by faith and works.* WORKS, vol. ii., p. 279—329.

2. The Lord swore to Abraham, "Surely blessing I will bless thee." He blessed Abraham personally in this life, both with temporal and spiritual blessings. As to temporals, he blessed him in all things, Gen. xxiv. 1, 35, so that though he did not obtain the possession of the land of Canaan, but was a stranger and sojourner in it, chap. xxiii. 4, yet such was his substance and the number of his servants, that the Canaanites looked upon him as a mighty prince among them, ver. 6. As to spiritual blessings, he counted his faith to him for righteousness, and entered into a covenant with him to be his God, Gen. xv. 6, chap. xvii. 4—8, which, so far as it respected him and his spiritual seed, included all spiritual and eternal blessings, Matt. xxii. 32; Heb. xi. 16. He also promised him a numerous offspring; "In multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand which is upon the sea shore." He had repeatedly promised this to him before, chap. xiii. 16, xv. 5, xvii. 6, and there can be no doubt that by these, in the first place, are intended his natural posterity in the line of Isaac and Jacob, of whom, as concerning the flesh, the Messiah was to come, Rom. ix. 5. But under the type of his natural seed, his spiritual seed by faith are also intended, which consist not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, ver. 24, chap. iii. 29, 30; Gal. iii. 29. It is added, "and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies." This was literally fulfilled when his posterity conquered the Canaanites, and took possession of their cities and country, Josh. xxiv. 13. There is a similar expression, Gen. xxiv. 60, but it may also import the victories of his Seed the Messiah over all his enemies.

3. The last promise contained in the oath requires to be particularly considered, as in it, we are informed, the gospel was preached before to Abraham, Gal. iii. 8. The words are, "And in thy Seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." This promise is the same in sense with that made to Abram while he was in Ur of the Chaldees, viz. "in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed," Gen. xii. 3; but on Abraham's offering up his son, it was renewed to him with the additional confirmation of an oath. Three things are noticeable in this promise, namely, the Seed—the blessing promised in him—and the objects of the promised blessing; which particulars are fully explained in the New Testament.

(1.) The *Seed* here mentioned does not mean Abraham's numerous seed, either natural or spiritual, but an individual person, who was to spring from him according to the flesh. This the apostle takes particular notice of; "He saith not, And to (*spermasin*) seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy (*spermati*) Seed, who is Christ," Gal. iii. 16. Here we see that it was neither in Abraham's numerous seed, natural or spiritual, nor in any individual of them, such as Isaac, in whom his seed was to be called, that this promise was to be fulfilled, but only in his Seed Christ. And though the word *seed* is a collective noun, and frequently includes many, yet it is also used for a single person. Thus, Eve when she bore Seth, said, "God hath appointed me another SEED instead of Abel whom Cain slew," Gen. iv. 25; and Christ himself was originally promised as the SEED of the woman, chap. iii. 15. Nor is the apostle Paul singular in this interpretation. Zacharias, in his prophetic song, says, that it was to perform the mercy "promised to our fathers, to remember his holy covenant, the oath which he swore to our father Abraham," that God "hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David," Luke i. 68—74. The apostle Peter, also, when calling the Jews to repentance, quotes this promise and applies it thus, "Unto you first,

God having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities," Acts iii. 25, 26. So that the Seed in whom men were promised to be blessed is God's Son, Jesus, and in him only; for "there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby ye must be saved," chap. iv. 12.

(2.) The *blessing* promised to the nations in Abraham's Seed, includes several particulars answerable to the exigencies of man's fallen state. All mankind, both Jews and Gentiles, have transgressed the holy law of God, whether made known to them by the light of nature or revelation; and having incurred its curse, cannot be justified by any future obedience they can yield to it, Rom. iii. 9, 10, 20, 23; Gal. iii. 10, 11, 12. To deliver them from the guilt and punishment of their sins, it was necessary that Christ should redeem, or buy them off from the curse of the law, by becoming a curse for them, "that the blessing of Abraham might come on (*ta ethne*) the nations through Jesus Christ," Gal. iii. 13, 14.

This blessing of Abraham includes—1st, JUSTIFICATION; for so the apostle explains the promise, "The scripture foreseeing that God would justify (*ta ethne*) the nations by faith, preached before the gospel to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed," Gal. iii. 8.

2d, Another end of Christ's redeeming us from the curse was, "that we might RECEIVE THE PROMISE OF THE SPIRIT through faith," ver. 14. This is implied in the promised blessing, and mentioned by the prophets as what was to be conferred at the accomplishment of the promise, Isa. xlv. 3; Joel ii. 28, with Acts ii. 16—34. The extraordinary gifts of the Spirit were bestowed at first for the spread and confirmation of the gospel, and as an evidence that God received and justified uncircumcised Gentiles through faith as he did Abraham, Acts v. 32, chap. xi. 15—19, chap. xv. 8—12. And though these extraordinary gifts have ceased, yet the regenerating, sanctifying, and comforting influences of the Spirit, are

still bestowed on all believers, and essential to their being so, Rom. viii. 9, 14.

3d, Another part of the promised blessing is ADOPTION ; for Christ was "made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons," Gal. iv. 4, 5. By the covenant with Abraham, his natural seed were typically adopted as a nation, Exod. iv. 22, 23 ; Rom. ix. 4. But the mere children of the flesh, these are not the true children of God, ver. 8 ; and, therefore, when Christ the promised Seed came to his own nation, it was only to those of them who received him and believed on his name, that he gave power to become the sons of God ; and these are described not as mere children of the flesh, but as born of God, John i. 11—14. As a present evidence of their adoption, the Spirit of his Son is sent forth into their hearts, Gal. iv. 6, Rom. viii. 15, 16, which is also the earnest of their inheritance, as heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ, Eph. i. 13, 14 ; Rom. viii. 17. And as they are the children of God, being the children of the resurrection, and heirs of immortality, Luke xx. 36, so they are waiting for the consummation of their adoption, to wit, the redemption of their body, Rom viii. 23.

4th. Lastly, Being the sons of God, they are heirs of THE HEAVENLY INHERITANCE. The Land of Canaan was promised to Abraham and his seed, for an everlasting possession, Gen. xvii. 7, 8. The patriarchs understood this as only a type of the eternal inheritance, and by confessing themselves to be strangers and pilgrims on the earth, plainly declared that they sought and desired a better country, that is, an heavenly, and looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And as God hath prepared this heavenly country and city for them, where they shall enjoy eternal life and happiness, he hath acted worthy of the relation in which he stands to them, and is not ashamed to be called their God, Heb. xi. 13—17. This is that inheritance to the

hope of which believers are begotten by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and is described as incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, and which is reserved in heaven for them, 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. These are the chief particulars of the blessing which God promised to Abraham and his spiritual seed, and which promise he confirmed with an oath.

(3.) As to the *objects* of this promised blessing, the expression is very extensive, viz. "all the nations of the earth." By the *nations* we are not to understand such political bodies of men as constitute worldly nations; nor by *all nations* are we to understand every individual in all such nations, nor indeed in any one whole nation of this world. Christ foretels that his disciples would be hated of all nations for his name's sake, Matt. xxiv. 9, that the world would hate them even as it hated him, John xv. 18—22; and the nations are represented as angry at the cause of Christ till the latest period, Rev. xi. 18. The particulars of the blessing promised are spiritual, heavenly, and eternal, as we have seen. They are promised to those who are Christ's, Abraham's seed by faith, and heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 29, and so do not apply to any one earthly nation as such, far less to all earthly nations. The word of God constantly distinguishes the people of God from the world which lieth in wickedness, or believers from unbelievers; and though the gospel is commanded to be preached to all nations, to every creature, yet the promised blessedness is restricted to him that believeth; for it is declared that he that believeth shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned, Mark xvi. 15, 16. Accordingly, when God proceeded to perform the oath which he sware to Abraham, by visiting the nations, it was not to take them by whole nations for his church and people, but to *take out of the nations* a people for his name, Acts xv. 14; from all which it is evident, that by "all the nations of the earth" we are to understand all who are redeemed by

Christ out of every nation. Thus it is expressed in the song of the redeemed, "Thou wast slain, and hast redeemed us to God by thy blood, OUT OF every kindred, and tongue, and people, and nation," Rev. v. 9; and they are represented as "a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues," chap. vii. 4, 9. They are termed "the nations of them that are saved," chap. xxi. 24, as being collected out of all nations; and as they are the spiritual Israel of God, who were typified by the earthly nation of Old Israel, so the same titles in their true and highest sense, are applied to them, such as "a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar (or purchased) people;" compare Exod. xix. 5, 6, with 1 Peter ii. 9.

Now as the extensive terms of the promise made to Abraham cannot be understood of the universal redemption of all mankind, so neither can the universal expressions in the prophets respecting the nations, nor those in the New Testament respecting the extent of Christ's death, be so understood; for all these refer to the original promise made to Abraham, and afterwards to David, and are only enlargements on it. The expressions, *all nations, all men, the whole world, &c.* are evidently opposed to the limitation of the blessing to Abraham's natural seed, the nation of Israel, and extend it to all his spiritual seed of all nations, who are constantly distinguished from worldly nations as such, and described to be all who, like him, believe, be they Jews or Gentiles, Rom. iv. 11—14; for it is they who be of faith that are blessed with faithful Abraham, Gal iii. 9, and that are heirs according to the promise made to him, ver. 29. Thus we see the import and extent of the promise made to Abraham;

Ver. 15. *And so after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.*] Abraham patiently endured or waited many years before there was any appearance of the accomplishment of the promise, and even when every natural or visible probability of its accomplishment was

gone ; but his faith in God's promise and power to accomplish it remained unshaken ; so that after he had long patiently waited he obtained the promise, that is, the begun accomplishment of it in the supernatural birth of Isaac in whom his seed was to be called, and who was pledge of his numerous seed both natural and spiritual, and especially of his seed the Messiah, in whom all nations were to be blessed ; for he rejoiced to see his day, and he saw it and was glad, John viii. 56. But though he obtained the fulfilment of that promise, yet he could not in this life obtain the accomplishment of the other promises of which it was a pledge. These he saw afar off, as to be accomplished in distant and successive ages of the world ; and so he died in the faith of them, and was received into the happiness of heaven (Luke ix. 30, 31, chap. xvi. 22, 23), where he waits for, and obtains the accomplishment of them in their due time and order. But the apostle chiefly insists on the condescension of God in confirming his promise to Abraham by an oath, and on his gracious design in doing so. And first he takes notice of the use and design of oaths among men.

Ver. 16. *For men verily swear by the greater ; and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.*] He had said before, that because God could swear by none greater, he swore by himself ; but here he observes that a human oath differs in its form ; *men verily swear by the greater*, that is, by one infinitely greater than themselves, namely, by God, who knows their hearts, to whom they are answerable, and to whose vengeance they subject themselves, if what they declare be not the truth. The use of an oath among men is *for confirmation* of the truth of what is affirmed or denied, testified, or promised, and is justly held by them to be the strongest and most decisive evidence ; and as it gives the highest satisfaction as to the truth of what is declared, so it is to them an end of all farther strife, debate, or contradiction on the subject.

The following qualifications belong to a lawful oath :—



1. It must be *in truth*, in opposition to insincerity, falsehood, and guile. 2. *In judgment*, not lightly, rashly, or without a just cause, and for determining judgment on the matter. 3. It must be *in righteousness*, in a just cause, and to confirm right and equity among men ; see Jer. iv. 2.

But as there are many who understand our Lord's words, "Swear not at all," Matt. v. 34, and those in James v. 12, "But above all things, my brethren, swear not," to be an absolute prohibition of all swearing in any case, or upon any account whatever, as altogether unlawful ; it may therefore be proper to observe,

1. That an oath was used by the pious patriarchs before the law. Abraham sware to Abimelech, Gen. xxi. 15, and took an oath of his servant, chap. xxiv. 3, 9. Jacob sware with Laban, chap. xxxi. 52, and Joseph unto his father Jacob, chap. xlvii. 31.

2. In the law, God expressly appointed the use of swearing in judgment when necessary, Exod. xxii. 11, Num. xxx. 2, Deut. vi. 13 ; and oaths are mentioned with approbation in the Psalms and Prophets, Psal. lxxiii. 11 ; Isa. lxxv. 16 ; Jer. iv. 2. But as it may be thought that though they were used by them of old time, they are unlawful under the gospel, I observe,

3. That under the gospel, Jesus himself answered to the adjuration of the high priest, concerning his being the Christ the Son of God, which was a most solemn oath, Matt. xxvi. 63, 64 ; and the apostle Paul repeatedly swore to the truth of his own affirmations concerning himself, Rom. ix. 1 ; 2 Cor. i. 23, chap. xi. 31 ; Gal. i. 20. The angel also solemnly swore, Rev. x. 5, 6. And the apostle in this place mentions it with approbation as a practice among men for ending strife, and a method by which God himself hath confirmed his promise to give us strong consolation. From all which it is evident, that an oath is not sinful or immoral, but lawful and useful, even among Christians, when sworn in truth, in judgment, and in righteousness.

4. Christ does not forbid the use of a solemn oath upon proper occasions, but only the irreverent and profane custom of swearing among the Jews in their ordinary (*logos*) *speech* or *discourse*; such as swearing by the temple, by the altar, by heaven, the earth, or their head, which they did not consider as binding, and when there was no occasion for anything beyond a simple affirmation or denial; see Matt. v. 34—38, chap xxiii. 16—23. And what our Lord says on this occasion, equally condemns all that common and profane swearing of which many are guilty in our day; which discovers an irreligious and disregardless state of mind, and must greatly weaken the credit of their most solemn oaths. It may be farther observed, that the unnecessary frequency even of judicial oaths, has a tendency to wear off the solemnity and awe of an oath, till at last it is considered by many as a mere form or matter of course.

But though oaths may be abused by ungodly men, as the best things often are, this affords no argument against the proper use of an oath, when it serves to confirm the truth, and to put an end to all contradiction: And as men consider it as the highest confirmation that can be given of a testimony or promise,

Ver. 17. *Therefore God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath ;]* Though *en o* may be rendered *wherein*, or *in which*, viz. manner; yet the word *therefore* seems more properly to connect this with the foregoing verse, as it assigns a reason for the divine oath. God's simple promise was abundant security; but as men justly looked upon an oath as the strongest confirmation, *therefore* God condescended to swear to the truth of his promise, "being willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise," that is, to all the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith (Gal. iii. 29, Rom. iv. 13—17), "the immutability of his counsel," or the unchangeableness of his purpose to fulfil what he had promised, "he confirmed

it with an oath." *Emesiteusen orko* literally signifies, *he mediated with an oath*, which may import, that he made an oath, the mediator, surety, or ratifier, of his promise ;

Ver. 18. *That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation,—*] The "two immutable things," are the promise, and the oath of God, "in which," either singly or together, it "was impossible for God to lie," any more than he can cease to be ; for truth is essential to his being : he cannot deny himself. This impossibility argues no want of power in God, but shews the highest perfection of it. It is a deficiency of power or goodness in men which makes them falsify their word. They either cannot make good what they sincerely promise, or they propose some interest to themselves by falsehood ; but this can never be the case with God, who is possessed of infinite power, goodness, and faithfulness ; so that there is an absolute impossibility, arising from his nature and perfections, that his promise should fail. His gracious design in confirming his promise was, "that we might have strong consolation : " That is, that we believers, the heirs of the promise, might have full security, and so abundant comfort in it. The consolation arising from a promise, is in proportion as we perceive its certainty, its goodness, and the concern we have in it. In all these respects the promise made to Abraham is calculated to give the fullest security and the strongest consolation to all who believe it, as it affords the firmest possible grounds for faith, hope, and joy, even joy unspeakable and full of glory. And especially if we take into view what has been already accomplished of it in the coming of the promised Seed, the Messiah, the work he has finished in his life, death, and resurrection, as the procurer, ratifier, pledge, and bestower of all promised, spiritual, and eternal blessings, as clearly held forth in the writings of the New Testament ; and which gives the strongest evidence, that all which yet remains of the promise to be accomplished, will also be fulfilled in due

time. But as all do not enjoy the consolation of the promise through their unbelief, there is a description given of those to whom it belongs; and they are those, —*who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us:*] The word *refuge* is a supplement, though not distinguished as such by italics. The original is *kataphugontes kratesai, who have fled to lay hold, &c.*, yet it evidently signifies a flying away from danger to obtain safety; and some consider it as an allusion to the manslayer, who was to fly for his life from the avenger of blood to the city of refuge, Num. xxxv. 11, 12, which perhaps our translators had in their eye. When believers are said to *have fled*, it does not signify bodily motion, but is metaphorically applied to the mind, and imports an *apprehension of danger*, arising from a conviction of guilt, and of the punishment which we justly deserve, viz. the infliction of the curse of the law; for without such a conviction we could perceive no urgent reason to induce us to fly, which is the case with many insensible sinners, though they are on the brink of destruction. It also imports a *perception and belief* of the revealed way of escape, without which we could not know how or where to fly from the wrath to come, or to whom to betake ourselves for safety; hence many, to quiet the alarms of conscience, betake themselves to false refuges, overlooking or rejecting the sole and all-sufficient remedy which God hath provided for perishing sinners. But true believers are described as having “fled to lay hold on the hope set before,” or proposed to them in the gospel. By *hope* here we are not to understand anything internal in us, or what is called the *grace* of hope; for it is the hope set before us to which we fly, and on which we lay hold, and must therefore mean the *object* or *ground* of hope. That eternal life which God, who cannot lie, hath promised before the times of ages, is certainly the object of a believer’s hope, Tit. i. 2; but as this promise is made only in Christ, the Seed in whom all nations are blessed; as eternal life is in him,

procured and bestowed by him, 2 Tim. i. 1, 1 John v. 11, John x. 28, and is the gift of God through him, Rom. v. 23; so there is no ground to hope for eternal life, but only through Christ, in whom alone the promise of it is made. Therefore he is here termed "the hope set before us," i. e. the object and ground of hope proposed to us; and by the like figure of speech he is expressly called "the hope of Israel," Acts xxviii. 20, "our hope," 1 Tim. i. 1, "the hope of glory," Col. i. 27. It is to Christ that convicted and believing sinners fly for deliverance from the wrath to come; it is on him, and on the promise of God through him, that they lay hold as the sure ground of their hope of eternal life; and it is such alone who can enjoy strong consolation from the confirmation of the promise.

Ver. 19. *Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and stedfast,—*] Some think that in this verse the apostle continues the metonymical use of the word *hope*, by which it is put for the object or ground of it; and indeed *the hope set before us* is the antecedent to the relative *which*, that begins this verse and connects it with the foregoing: But as we cannot be said to *lay hold* on Christ as the ground of hope, unless we place our hope in him, I apprehend that both the ground and grace of hope must be here intended; and the metaphor of an anchor, to which it is here compared, serves to illustrate this. An anchor is not intended to fix in anything within the ship, but to take hold of firm ground without it, and so to keep it fast from drifting and being wrecked on shoals or rocks: So Christ, or the promise of God in him, is the sure and firm ground on which our hope, as an anchor of the soul, fixes its hold, and not in anything in ourselves; and thus true believers are held safe and stedfast amidst all the dangers and troubles of this life, as well as amidst all the winds of false doctrine by which unstable professors are constantly tossed to and fro. Of this anchor of the soul it is added,

—*and which entereth into that within the veil;]* Peirce

thinks this should be rendered, "and is entered within the veil," understanding it only of Christ, who has entered into heaven, which was prefigured by the place within the second veil of the Mosaic tabernacle. But it appears to me that Christ is not directly intended in the succeeding verse, and that it looks too like a tautology to say, that Christ is entered within the veil, whither the forerunner is entered. He is speaking of the hope which believers have as an anchor of the soul; and here, I apprehend, he mentions the place where that anchor is cast, or has its hold; it enters into (*to esoteron*) the interior or inner place of the veil, namely, the holiest of all, or heaven itself; and then to shew what sure and firm ground it has to fix its hold on there, he adds,

Ver. 20. *Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus,—*] A forerunner is one who goes before to do some service for those who are to come after him. Mac-knight thinks "the allusion here is to one sent from a ship to fix its anchor in the place to which it is to be drawn." This indeed suggests a very comfortable truth; but I question much if the person who fixes the anchor of a ship, is ever termed a *forerunner*, so as to give propriety to such an allusion. I rather think that, in this verse, the apostle drops that metaphor, and represents Christ as our forerunner, because he hath gone into heaven before us to perform the service of high priest on our account, and so to make way for our entrance there after him. He had said that hope, as an anchor of the soul, entereth into that within the veil, and here he shews that this is the place where a forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus; plainly alluding to the entrance of the Jewish high priest into the inner apartment of the tabernacle, to perform the service on the great day of atonement. It is true, the Jewish high priest did not enter into that typical holy place as the forerunner of the people, to prepare it for their reception, or to introduce them into it; for it was not designed for any to enter there but himself alone, though on their

account: But Jesus entered into heaven, not merely to present the one offering of himself to God for the expiation of the sins of the people, and to make continual intercession for them, chap. vii. 25, 27, by which he procured their pardon, and has laid open the way of their present access to, and acceptance at, the throne of grace in their worship, chap. x. 17, 23; but he has also entered there to take possession of it for them as their forerunner, that he might bring them all at last after him into the everlasting personal possession of it with himself. This he has expressly promised, "I go to prepare a place for you: And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also," John xiv. 2, 3. And, indeed, this is the ultimate design and issue of all his present priestly ministrations in heaven. The apostle having said that Jesus our forerunner hath for us entered within the vail, represents him to be there

—*made an high priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.*]

In this verse the apostle, after having finished his long digression, resumes the subject of Christ's priesthood, which he had broke off in chap. v. 11; and as he had there quoted, Psalms cx. 4, to prove Christ's appointment to the priesthood, ver. 6, and to shew that God had denominated and addressed him by the title of Priest, after the order of Melchisedec, ver. 10, he here begins where he had left off, by adducing this passage again, with a view to explain it particularly, as he actually does in the following chapter, where he comments upon it at large.

## CHAP. VII.

## CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

IN this chapter the apostle gives a minute explanation of the oath recorded, Psalm cx. 4. "The Lord hath sworn and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedec."

But first he takes notice of some particulars relating to Melchisedec himself, as they are recorded in the Mosaic history, Gen. xiv. 17—21, such as, That he was a priest of the Most High God, being appointed to that office by the only true God, and so opposed to all the idolatrous priests of the nations:—That he was a king as well as a priest, according to the sense of his name and titles, *Melchisedec* signifying king of righteousness, and *king of Salem* meaning king of peace; which import both the righteousness of his administration, and the effects of it in the peace and happiness of his subjects:—That, as to his priesthood, he did not derive it from his father or mother, he being without priestly descent, nor did he transmit it to a successor; but, that he might be a more fit type of the Son of God, he continued a priest in his own person during the whole date of that priesthood, ver. 1, 2, 3.

He calls the Hebrews to consider how great this priest was to whom Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils, and observes, that his authority was more extensive than that of the Levitical priests, who had only a right by the law to tithe and bless their brethren, the Israelites; whereas Melchisedec tithed and blessed those to whom he had no



civil or blood-relation, and so was superior even to Abraham their renowned patriarch, in whose seed all nations of the earth were to be blessed ; for he both tithed and blessed him, which are undoubtedly the acts of a superior ; consequently, he must have been greater than the Levitical priests, who all descended from Abraham, and whose father, Levi, virtually paid tithes in the person of Abraham to Melchisedec, ver. 4—11.

He comes next to speak directly to the words of the oath in Psalm cx. 4, by which he sets forth the excellency and dignity of Christ's priesthood above the Aaronical ; and argues from it, That as the oath mentions another priest that was to arise according to the order of Melchisedec, it must import, that the Aaronical priesthood was to be set aside, and the Mosaic law disannulled, which settled that priesthood in the tribe of Levi, and family of Aaron, and by which all its ministrations were prescribed and regulated :—That the reason why the Levitical priesthood was abrogated, was the weakness and unprofitableness of it for obtaining real pardon of sin, purification of conscience, and free access to God ; for the law, by all its sacrifices and external purifications made none perfect in these respects ; but that the oath intimates the introduction of a better hope, namely, Christ's priesthood, by which we draw near to God with acceptance, ver. 11—20.

That the sons of Aaron were made priests without an oath, and so their priesthood was liable to be changed or repealed ; whereas Jesus was made a priest with a solemn and irrevocable oath, by him that said unto him, "The Lord swear, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever," &c., which was a declaration that his priesthood was to be unchangeable ; and by so much was he made

the surety of a better covenant than that of which the Aaronical high priests were sureties, ver. 21, 22.—That the sons of Aaron were made priests according to the law of a carnal commandment, accommodated to weak mortal men, whereby that office went by descent and succession from father to son; hence they were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death: But Jesus, being raised from the dead, was by the oath made a priest in his own person for ever, according to the power of an endless life (ver. 16, 17); and because he continueth for ever, he hath an unsuccessive priesthood, and so is able to save for ever them who come unto God through him, as he is always living to make intercession for them, ver. 23, 24.—That, in respect of character and qualifications, he is such an High Priest as is perfectly suited to our exigencies, being holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and stationed not on earth, but made higher than the heavens, ver. 26.—That he needeth not from time to time, like the Aaronical high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins (for he had none, chap. iv. 15), and then for the sins of the people; for this he did effectually at once, when he offered up himself, ver. 27. For the law constitutes men high priests who have sinful infirmity, and therefore needed to offer for their own sins; but the word of the oath, which was since the law was given, constitutes the Son an High priest, who is consecrated for evermore, ver. 28.

On this chapter, Dr. Owen makes the following general observations: “The force of the apostle’s reasonings doth not absolutely depend on any such method of arguing as we have framed to ourselves. There is something in

it more heavenly and sublime, suited to convey the efficacy of spiritual truth, as to the understanding, so to the will and affections also. The ancients never attempted to reduce this discourse into any precise logical analysis.

The design of the apostle in this chapter is not to declare the *nature* or the *exercise* of the priesthood of Christ. To the *nature* of it he had spoken, chap. 5, and of its *use* he treats at large, chap. ix. But it is of its *excellency* and *dignity* he here treats; and that not *absolutely* neither, but in *comparison* with the Levitical priesthood. This was conducive to his main end with the Hebrews; and this he proves upon principles received by themselves, the faith and principles of the ancient church of Israel."

#### PARAPHRASE.

CHAP. VII. 1. Now this Melchisedec, king of Salem, and priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him;

2. To whom also Abraham imparted a tenth of all *the spoil*; being first, by interpretation of *his title*, king of righteousness, and next also king of Salem, which, by *interpretation*, is king of peace:

3. *Who, in respect of his priesthood, was* without father, without mother, without *priestly* genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life *in that respect*, but made like to the Son of God, *who* abideth a priest continually.

4. Now, observe how great *this priest was*, to whom even Abraham the patriarch gave a tenth *part* of the spoils.

5. And they verily of the sons of Levi, who receive the

priesthood, have a commandment to tithe the people of *Israel*, according to the law (Num. xviii. 24—31); that is, to *tithe* their brethren, though they have come forth of the loins of Abraham *as well as themselves*; and by this law a distinguished honour was conferred upon them;

6. But he (*Melchisedec*) whose descent is not counted from them, or from any of their progenitors, tithed Abraham, their renowned patriarch, and blessed him who had the promises.

7. Now, without all contradiction, it must be admitted, that the less is blessed of the better; so that in this transaction, *Melchisedec* acted as Abraham's superior.

8. And here verily, under the law, men who die receive tithes; but there *Melchisedec* received them, as representing one who was to arise after his similitude, and of whom it is testified in *Psal.* cx. 4, that he liveth a priest for ever.

9. And, as I may so say, Levi also who receiveth tithes, not in person, but by his posterity, from the nation of *Israel*, was himself tithed by *Melchisedec* in Abraham his representative;

10. For he was yet in the loins of his Father Abraham when *Melchisedec* met him.

11. If therefore indeed, perfection, as to pardon and acceptance with God, were really to be obtained by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what farther need was there that another priest should arise ACCORDING TO THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron?

12. For a change being made of the priesthood, of necessity there is made a change also of the law itself, by which it was settled in the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron:

13. For *he* to whom these things are said *in the oath*, partook of another tribe *than that of Levi*, and of which tribe no one ever gave attendance at the altar, nor had any right to do so by the law of Moses.

14. For it is very plain, that our Lord, *to whom God said*, “*thou art a priest*,” hath sprung up from Judah, to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

15. And it is yet more exceedingly plain *from the oath*, that according to the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest ;

16. Who is made a *priest*, not according to the law of a carnal commandment, *entailing that office on a succession of mortal men* ; but according to the power of an indissoluble life, *which admits of no succession*.

17. For he (*God*) testifieth, “*Thou art a priest FOR EVER*, according to the order of Melchisedec.”

18. For, *in these words*, there is verily a disannulling of the foregoing commandment *respecting the Levitical priesthood*, because of its weakness and unprofitableness *in procuring real pardon of sin and purification of conscience*.

19. For the law, *by the services of its priesthood*, made none perfect *in these respects* : but the oath intimates the introduction of a better hope, *namely, Christ's priesthood*, by which we draw near to God *with acceptance*.

20. And in as much as not without a *solemn and irrevocable oath* *Jesus was made a priest* ;

21. (For verily they, *Aaron and his successors*, were made priests without an oath, *which left their office in a repealable state* ; but he *was made priest* with an oath, by him who said to him, “*The Lord SWARE*, and will not repent, *Thou art a priest for ever*, according to the order of Melchisedec ;” )

22. By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better covenant, *in point of permanency and efficacy, than that which was made with Israel at Sinai, of which the Levitical high priests were sureties.*

23. And they truly are become many priests *succeeding one another*; because by death they were not suffered to continue *in their office*;

24. But he (*Jesus*), because he continueth FOR EVER, hath an unsuccessive priesthood, *which doth not pass from him to another.*

25. Hence he is able to save even to the uttermost them who come to God by him, *seeing he is always living at the right hand of God*, to make intercession for them.

26. For such an high priest *as he* became us, *who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens, and all its angelic inhabitants.* See 1 Pet. iii. 22; Eph. i. 20—23.

27. Who hath not need, like the Aaronical high priests, from time to time, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins (*for he had no sin*), and then *for those of the people*; for this he did once when he offered up himself.

28. For the law constituted men high priests who have *sinful* infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was *declared long* after the law *was given*, constituted the Son *an high priest*, who is perfected for evermore.

#### COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. VII.

Ver. 1. *For this Melchisedec—*] The apostle having repeatedly quoted Psalm cx. 4, to shew that Christ was made a priest for ever, according to the order of Melchisedec, proceeds here to give some account of Melchisedec

himself, in which he refers to the short account given of him by Moses, Gen. xiv. 18—21. And first he takes notice of his offices ; he was

—*king of Salem*,—] Some think this was that Salem where Jacob pitched his tent and built an altar when he returned from Padan-aram, Gen. xxxiii. 18, 19, and where John baptized near Enon, John iii. 23 ; but it is more probable that it was Jerusalem, which was anciently termed Salem, Psalm lxxvi. 2. Be that as it may, we are told that Melchisedec was king of the place here mentioned, being vested with royal dignity and authority ; and that he was also

—*priest of the Most High God*,—] So that both these offices were united in him. The Hebrew word *Cohen*, translated a *priest*, sometimes indeed signifies a *prince* ; but the ambiguity is removed by adding the words, *of the Most High God*, and by his *tithing*, and *blessing* Abraham, which were acts belonging to the office of a priest. Though he lived among the Canaanites, yet he was not a priest of their idols or false Gods, but a “priest of the Most High God, the possessor of heaven and earth,” Gen. xiv. 18, 19. From this the Hebrews might learn, 1st, That as Melchisedec was not a priest by descent, he could not be a priest of the Most High God, nor officiate with acceptance, unless he had been *immediately called* and appointed by him to that office, Heb. v. 4. 2d, That his priesthood was more *universal* than Aaron’s, as it was not, like his, confined to any one nation, or stock of people, but authorised him to officiate for all the worshippers of the true God everywhere, who applied to him from among the Gentiles, and even for Abraham, the Father and root of the nation of Israel. 3d, That Melchisedec’s priesthood was of *greater antiquity* than that of Aaron, he being appointed by the Most High God to that office several ages prior to the appointment of the Aaronical priesthood. These considerations might lead them to see, that the Aaronical priesthood was neither the first nor only priesthood which

God had appointed, and so make them attend to what he had to say concerning the change of that priesthood, to make way for another priest according to the superior order of Melchisedec,

—*who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him ;*] He blessed Abraham officially as a priest, that is, he solemnly pronounced a blessing upon him from the Most High God, whose priest he was, saying, “Blessed *be* Abraham of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth :” And he also blessed God for giving him the victory ; that is, he offered up praise and thanksgiving to him on that account, saying “And blessed *be* the Most High God, who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand.”

Ver. 2. *To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all ;*—] Moses has it, “And he gave him tithes of all.” Not of all that he possessed, but of all the spoils which he had taken from the enemy, as the apostle afterwards explains it, ver. 4. Here we see that tithing was long before the law of Moses ; and we may also observe, that Abraham’s paying him tithes was to acknowledge him his superior as a priest of the Most High God. The apostle next proceeds to explain his name and titles ;

—*first being by interpretation king of righteousness,*—] We find in Scripture that it was usual to give names to persons expressive of their qualities or character, and that their original name was sometimes changed for that purpose. Here we are told that the name *Melchisedec* signifies *king of righteousness*, or a righteous king ; which name seems to have been given him on account of the righteousness or justice of his administration ; so that herein he was a type of Christ, the true king of righteousness, the sceptre of whose kingdom is a right sceptre, and who loveth righteousness and hateth wickedness, Psalm xlv. 6, 7 ; Heb. i. 8, 9.

—*and after that also king of Salem, which is king of peace :*] *Salem*, which signifies *peace*, was the name of



the place or city, over which he reigned ; but I see not why the apostle should interpret it, unless it were to show that it was so called on account of the remarkable peace and happiness which its inhabitants enjoyed under Melchisedec's righteous government, and so in that respect also was an eminent type of Christ, whose name was to be called *the Prince of peace*, Isa. ix. 6, 7, the work of whose righteous administration was to be peace, and the effect of it quietness and assurance for ever, Isa. xxxii. 17, 18. Having shown wherein Melchisedec typified Christ as a king, he now comes to show, in various particulars, wherein he prefigured him as a priest.

But before entering upon this, it will be proper to observe, that the following account given of Melchisedec as a priest is so extraordinary in some particulars, that it hath led many to think that he was the Son of God himself, appearing to Abraham in human likeness. But I cannot adopt this opinion. 1. Because he is said to be *made like* unto the Son of God, ver. 3, to arise another kind of priest than the Levitical, and *according to the similitude* of Melchisedec, ver. 15, and to be made a priest, *according to the order* of Melchisedec, ver. 17. Now, if Melchisedec were the Son of God, this manner of speaking would be altogether improper : It would be saying that the Son of God was made like unto himself, and a priest according to his own similitude and order. 2. Because it behoved the Son of God to assume human nature, and be a real man, made in all things like unto his brethren, in order to his being a priest : This the apostle sets forth at large, chap. ii. 10—18. But though Christ was before Abraham in his divine person ; yet he was not a man in the days of Abraham, and so could not be a real priest, as Melchisedec evidently was ; and to suppose that Melchisedec was not a real priest, is to sap the foundation of the apostle's argument from that priesthood.

2. The apostle argues the excellency of Christ's priesthood above the Levitical, from its being according to a

superior order, namely, that of Melchisedec ; but if Christ were Melchisedec, and the priesthood identically the same, there could be no argument drawn from the one for the other. 4. If Melchisedec were Christ, then Christ must have been twice consecrated a priest, for it makes him a priest, and to officiate as such in the days of Abraham, and afterwards to be made a priest by the word of the oath, which was long after the giving of the law ; and not fully accomplished till he rose from the dead, chap. v. 5—7, chap. vii. 28, chap. viii. 1, 2. 5. Lastly, It is contrary to the apostle's design to prove that Melchisedec was more than a man : his intention is to prove, that even *among men* there was a priest prefiguring Christ, prior and superior to any of the legal priests, which would have no argument in it had he been more than a man. Besides, he lays it down as a principle, that every high priest must be taken from *among men*, chap. v. 1. These reasons convince me, that Melchisedec was not Christ, but a mere man, and that, in his priesthood, he was made more like unto the Son of God, or a more perfect type of him than Aaron or any of his successors were. Agreeably to this view, I shall proceed to explain the account here given of him. He is said to be

Ver. 3. *Without father, without mother, without descent—*] These expressions I understand to signify one and the same thing. They are generally understood to mean, that his parents and genealogy are concealed, or not mentioned in the Mosaic account of him : But I cannot think that the mere concealment of his parentage will fully justify the assertion that he was without them. I take these expressions to relate purely to his priesthood, of which only the apostle is speaking ; as if he had said, Melchisedec had neither father nor mother of any priestly order, and was without descent from any race of priests. The genealogy of the priests was of great importance under the law for ascertaining their right to the priesthood, so that those who could not instruct their priestly

descent by a register, were put from that office as polluted, until the Lord should give counsel in the matter by Urim and Thummim ; see Ezra ii. 62, 63 ; Neh. vii. 63, 64, 65. But Melchisedec was not a priest by descent or pedigree, but by the immediate appointment of God. When the apostle says, that "his descent is not counted from them," viz. the sons of Levi, ver. 6, he is not denying his *natural*, but only his *priestly* descent ; and in this respect he typified Christ, who was without priestly parentage or descent, for he sprang, according to the flesh, out of Judah, not of the priestly tribe of Levi, ver. 13, 14. It was necessary, in writing to the Hebrews, to take notice of this particular relating to Melchisedec, in order to remove any objection they might have to the priesthood of Christ upon that ground. Another particular relating to Melchisedec was his

—*having neither beginning of days nor end of life,—*]

This also I consider as applicable only to his priesthood. As a priest, he had neither the beginning of the days of his priesthood, nor the end of his life in it limited by any particular law, as was the case with the Levitical priests, whose time of officiating was limited to twenty years. They were admitted to attend the tabernacle, and serve the officiating priests at the age of twenty-five, but did not enter upon the service proper to the high priest till they were thirty, which was the *beginning of the days* of their priesthood, in which they continued to officiate till they were fifty, after which they were to serve no more in that kind of work ; see Num. iv. 3, chap. viii. 24, 25. This was an *end of life* to them as officiating priests : But Melchisedec's priesthood was under no particular limitation of years or age, either as to its beginning or ending ;

—*but made like unto the Son of God—*] That is, made a type or resemblance of the Son of God, with respect to the perpetuity of his priesthood ;

—*abideth a priest continually.*] If these words refer to

Melchisedec, they signify that he continued a priest all his life ; or that he remained a priest continually throughout the whole time of that priesthood in which he had no successor. But I rather think these words refer to the Son of God, and that the article *os, who*, which is frequently left out, ought to be supplied here, and then it will read thus, “but made like to the Son of God, *who* abideth a priest continually ;” which agrees in sense with verse 24.

Ver. 4. *Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.]* To exalt their conceptions of the dignity and super-excellency of the priesthood of the Son of God, he calls them to consider how great a priest his type, Melchisedec himself was, to whom even their renowned patriarch Abraham, the father of their nation, gave the tenth of the spoils, and thereby acknowledged him to be his superior as a priest.

Ver. 5. *And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they come out of the loins of Abraham.]* The sons of Levi, who received the priesthood, were the sons of Aaron, for they received it by right of descent from him. These had a commandment to take tithes of the people of Israel, not immediately, but by tithing the tithes which the Levites collected from the people, for this was according to the law, as recorded at large, Num. xviii. So that those who received the office of priesthood tithed not only their brethren the people of Israel, but their more immediate brethren the Levites, though all of them, both tithers and tithed, came forth of the loins of Abraham, and so, in that respect, were on a level. His design in this verse, I apprehend, is to magnify the dignity of the Levitical priesthood, with a view to set forth the superior dignity of the priesthood of Melchisedec ; as if he had said, It was indeed a distinguished honour which was con-

ferred on the Levitical priests, to have authority by the law to tithe their brethren, the whole nation of Israel; and this was the greater honour, when it is considered, that these their brethren came forth of the loins of Abraham, and in that respect were equal in dignity with themselves:

Ver. 6. *But he whose descent is not counted from them,—*] But Melchisedec, though he did not derive his pedigree from the sons of Aaron or any of their progenitors, nor his right to tithe any of Abraham's posterity from the law of Moses; yet such was the superior nature of his priesthood, that he

—*received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.*] His tithing Abraham was a proof that he was Abraham's superior as a priest of the Most High God; and Abraham's paying tithes to him was a plain acknowledgment of this. And this is farther evident from his blessing him that had (or *ton echonta*, the holder of) the promises. He pronounced a blessing upon that father of the faithful, who was so eminently distinguished as not only to have the promises relating to his natural seed, but also the promise that in him and in his Seed, the Messiah, all nations should be blessed, and so was made, as it were, the source of blessings to others: Yet, from Melchisedec's blessing Abraham, the apostle lays it down as an incontrovertible principle, that he was his superior;

Ver. 7. *And without all contradiction, the less is blessed of the better.*] Inferiors may indeed wish or pray for a blessing on their superiors; but the blessing here meant is the action of a person authorized to declare God's intention to bestow good things on another. Thus Isaac and Jacob blessed their children under a prophetic impulse; and the priests under the law were authorized officially to bless the people. It was in this manner that Melchisedec, priest of the Most High God, blessed Abraham; and in this case it is an undoubted principle, that he who blesses officially as commissioned of God, is greater than he whom he blesses.

Ver. 8. *And here men that die receive tithes ; but there he receiveth them, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.*] This verse has always appeared to me the most difficult to explain of any in the whole passage. The first clause is perfectly plain, "And here men that die," or dying men, "take tithes:" That is, under the law, the Levitical priests, who are mortal dying men (or as some explain it, who at fifty years of age cease to officiate, and so are dead as to the office), take tithes ; but the difficulty lies in the following words, "but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth."

The commonly received interpretation of these words is, That as the Scripture is wholly silent as to Melchisedec's death, so the only thing that it witnesseth of him is, *that he liveth* ; that is, he is only spoken of as a living priest that he might be a fit type of the Son of God, who ever liveth to make intercession. But I cannot see that either the concealment of his death, or recording a few of his actions while in life, can amount to a testimony *that he liveth*. Some think that the testimony referred to is in Gen. xiv. 18—21, others, in Psalm cx. 4, but the former of these passages only shews, that he once lived as a priest, when he blessed and tithed Abraham, not that he continues to live ; and the latter does not testify that Melchisedec is a priest *for ever*, but that David's Lord was to be a priest for ever, according to his order.

Others, observing that the verb *est* is not the present, but the imperfect of the indicative, understand the testimony to be, *that he lived*. This, indeed, makes it more applicable to Melchisedec ; but how does this distinguish him from the Levitical priests ? Is it not testified that all of them once lived ? To solve this it has been said, that they did not live as priests *all their lives*, far less during the continuance of the Levitical priesthood, but were to cease from officiating as priests at the age of fifty, leaving it to be carried on by their successors ; whereas Melchisedec lived a priest *all his life*, and during the con-

tinuance of that priesthood, without leaving it to a successor, his life being commensurate to the whole term of that institution. And if the words really apply to Melchisedec, I think this is the best explanation that has yet been given of them.

But as our apostle sometimes passes from one part of his subject to another without giving express notice of it, perhaps there is here a transition from Melchisedec the type to the antitype, the Son of God, whom he has chiefly in view in all that he says of Melchisedec, and that his meaning is, that here, under the law, men that die receive tithes; but there he (*viz.* Christ, by his type Melchisedec, received them of Abraham), of whom it is witnessed in Psalm cx. 4, *that he liveth*, he being there declared to be *a priest for ever*. And though it is true that Christ was not then a man, nor actually a priest, while he was typified and prophesied of under that character; yet, as the blessed effects of his priesthood reach backward to the entrance of sin, and forward to the end of time, and as he was in a peculiar manner represented by Melchisedec, so he might be said to bless and tithe Abraham by him as his most eminent type, both as a priest and in the order of his priesthood.

It is evident that the apostle, to set forth the excellency of Christ's priesthood, magnifies the Melchisedecian priesthood, while he dwells upon the imperfections of the Aaronical; and though the Aaronical priests were also types of Christ, yet not as Melchisedec was: They were priests by descent and succession; were not made like unto the Son of God; they did not represent him as a royal, universal, and immortal priest, as he did; nor was Christ made a priest according to the order of Aaron, but of Melchisedec. These things considered, we may see how great a priest Melchisedec was in comparison of the legal priests, particularly in his being a more perfect type of Christ. Now, when anything is done by a person who represents another, and acts in his name and by his authority, that

action may justly be ascribed to the person whom he represents, though he did not perform it in person. Thus, it is said, "that Jesus made and baptized more disciples than John; though," it is added, "Jesus himself baptized not, but his disciples," John iv. 1, 2. That is, Jesus baptized by means of his disciples; which explains chap. iii. 22. So here the apostle's meaning may be, that Christ blessed and tithed Abraham by means of his representative Melchisedec.

Though I am not absolutely certain that I have found out the true sense of this difficult passage, yet the view I have given of it seems to be supported by its connection with the following words,

Ver. 9. *And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes in Abraham.*] The phrase, *os epos eipein*, I think, is rightly rendered *as I may so say*, and answers to the English phrase *so to speak*, or, *as one may say*, which is commonly used to soften some expression which goes before or follows it, and which is not to be taken as strictly applicable in all respects, but in a certain sense or manner. Now, if the sense I have given of the last clause of the preceding verse be admitted, the connection will stand thus, "Christ, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth, tithed Abraham by his type Melchisedec (*kai*), even as I may so say, that Levi also, who received tithes, paid tithes in Abraham." It is certain that Levi did not receive tithes but by his posterity, and it is as certain that he did not pay them but in Abraham; yet the apostle speaks as if Levi himself both received and paid tithes; though he qualifies that manner of speaking by the phrase, *as I may so say*, and by shewing that it was *in Abraham* that he paid tithes: He also explains how it may be said that he was tithed in Abraham;

Ver. 10. *For he was yet in the loins of his father Abraham when Melchisedec met him.*] As Levi descended from Abraham by natural generation, he may be said to have been seminally in the loins of Abraham when



Melchisedec met him : But to be blessed and tithed by Melchisedec in Abraham, requires also that Abraham should have there stood as his representative by a special constitution. We are told that Melchisedec blessed Abraham, who had the promises, ver. 6, referring to the original promises, Gen. xii. 1—4. But these promises did not respect Abraham only, but also his seed after him, in their generations, as is afterwards more fully expressed, chap. xvii. 4—9. Abraham, therefore, was not merely the natural, but covenant father of his seed, and had received the promises for them as well as for himself ; and as he represented his posterity in being blessed and tithed by Melchisedec, that eminent type of Christ, so Levi paid tithes to Melchisedec in him, not only as his natural, but federal representative. Though Abraham represented all his natural seed in the line of Jacob, yet none of them are here mentioned but Levi, his great grandson. The reason is plain—Levi was the father of the priestly tribe, consisting of Levites and the family of Aaron, who had a command to tithe their brethren, the whole nation of Israel. Now, as the apostle's design is to prove that Melchisedec was a superior priest to any of the Levitical or Aaronical order, he does it by showing that their father Levi paid tithes in Abraham to Melchisedec.

It may be thought that this reasoning makes Christ himself inferior to Melchisedec his type, as he came of the seed of Abraham according to the flesh. But it should be observed, that Christ did not spring from Abraham in the ordinary course of generation, but by the miraculous operation of the Holy Spirit, and was without any human father ; nor was Abraham his federal representative : So that this reasoning, by which Abraham and his posterity are shewn to be inferior to Melchisedec, does not apply to Christ at all. On the contrary, the whole of this reasoning goes to establish the following conclusion, That if Melchisedec, who was

only a type of the Son of God, was so much superior to the Levitical priests, it must undoubtedly follow, that the Son of God himself, the great antitype, must be infinitely superior to them.

The apostle having discussed what he had to say of Melchisedec, and shewn that the order of his priesthood was superior to that of Levi, proceeds to shew, that Christ's being made a priest after this order, as declared Psalm cx. 4, plainly implies, that the Levitical priesthood was not calculated to perfect the church, and that, therefore, it is changed for another altogether different; and that this again necessarily infers a change of the whole law, so far as it had any respect to, or connection with it.

Ver. 11. *If, therefore, perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law),—* By (*teleiosis*) *perfection* here, we are not to understand absolute perfection, but such a perfection as God intended to bring his church to in this world, and answers to the state of the church under the Levitical priesthood, as the substance to the shadow, the perfect man to the babe or minor, the mystery or truth to the type or figure. The foundation of this perfection is the perfect expiation of sin by the sacrifice of Christ, which could never be effected by the legal sacrifices and purifications, chap. x. 4, 14. Through this the believer has complete forgiveness of sins, peace with God, perfection of conscience, freedom of access, with filial boldness and confidence in worship, which he performs in spirit and in truth, as opposed to the carnal rituals of the law; and has also a more perfect discovery and lively hope of a future state of immortality and glory. See Rom. v. 1, 2; Eph. iii. 12; Heb. ix. 14; 1 Pet. i. 3, 4.

To the supposition that this perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, the apostle adds, *for under it the people received the law*. The original words are *o lacs gar ep aute nenomotheteto*. Those who adopt the common translation, understand by the law here, the ceremonial

law, respecting the rituals of divine service, termed, "the law of commandments contained in ordinances;" for the law of the ten commandments, and many other precepts, were given to the people previous to the appointment of the priesthood, and therefore cannot be said to have been received by them *under it*. Some render the words, "for concerning it the people had a law given them;" which restricts it to the law respecting the priesthood itself. Others paraphrase the words thus, "because on account of *establishing* that priesthood, the Israelites received the law;" and to support this sense they affirm, that "the Jewish people themselves were separated from the rest of mankind, and made a people by the law, merely that they might as a nation worship the only true God, according to the Levitical ritual, in settling which, most of the precepts of the law were employed." The last two glosses may be partly admitted; but, as I do not think that either the law signifies *only* the law which instituted the priesthood, or that the Israelites were separated from the rest of mankind and made a people, *merely* that they might worship God according to the Levitical ritual, though that was one end of their separation, and served to maintain it, therefore I, upon the whole, prefer the first gloss.

But the question is, what has this clause to do with the apostle's argument, which is to prove that the Levitical priesthood was to be abolished? To this I answer, that his design is not merely to prove that, but also to prove, that everything connected with that priesthood, or depending upon its ministrations, such as, the law of religious worship, consisting of sacrifices, ceremonies, and other ordinances of divine service, stood or fell with that priesthood, and so were to be abolished along with it; so that in this clause, he brings the whole worship of the law under the same argument with the priesthood, viz. that it was weak and unprofitable, made none perfect, and therefore was to be disannulled, ver. 18, 19. This (as

Dr Owen observes) was hard to digest even by the believing Jews; but they must be led on to perfection, and give up with Judaism.

Now, if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, because under it the people had the whole ritual of their religious worship (*nenomotheteto*) established by law, in that case the apostle asks,

*—what farther need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? By another priest he means one of a different sort, quality, tribe, and order from the Levitical priests, and for which there would have been no need, had the Levitical priesthood fully answered all God's designs or man's need; but it is clearly foretold in Psalm cx. 4, that another kind of priest was to arise, who was to be according to the order of Melchisedec, and not to be called according to the order of Aaron; which plainly demonstrates the inefficacy of the Levitical priesthood, and God's intention to change it.*

Ver. 12. *Wherefore, the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*] The change of the priesthood, which had been settled exclusively on the family of Aaron, necessarily drew along with it a change or abolition of all the priestly services and ministrations which were attached to, and depended upon it; such as offering the sacrifices of beasts, and performing all the various rites prescribed for purifying the bodies of the Israelites from ceremonial uncleanness, in order to fit them for joining in the public worship of God; see chap. ix. 9, 10, 13. In short, that priesthood being changed, the whole ceremonial law was also changed, that is, entirely abolished; and it was so of no necessity, because it was essentially connected with, and depended upon that priesthood. Now, that God intended to change the priesthood from the tribe of Levi is plain,

Ver. 13. *For he of whom these things are spoken—*] Or, "he to whom these things are said," namely, the

things declared in Psalm cx. 4, "Thou art a priest for ever," &c. These things were not only *spoken of him*, but *said to him*, in an address of Jehovah to David's Lord, ver. 1. He who is there declared to be a priest, —*pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.*] He (*metescheken*) partook of another tribe than that of Levi, and so of a tribe of which no one ever officiated as a priest at the altar; nor was permitted by the law to do so.

Ver. 14. *For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah,*—] That the Messiah was to (*anatotalken*) spring up from Judah, is evident from Jacob's prophecy, Gen. xlix. 10, and from the various promises made that he was to come of the royal family of David according to the flesh, 2 Sam. vii. 12; Psalm lxxxix. 3, 4; Isaiah ix. 6, 7, chap. xi. 1. The Jews believed that he was to be David's son, though they did not see how David could call him his Lord, Matt. xxii. 42—46; and it is also evident from the account of his birth and genealogy, that he actually came of that tribe and family, both by his virgin mother and supposed father, Matt. i.; Luke iii.

—*of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.*] Or, *eis en phulen*, "to which tribe," &c. Moses, in delivering and settling the law of the priesthood, and all that pertained to it, never gave the least intimation to the tribe of Judah that any of them should obtain the priesthood. On the contrary, it was restricted entirely to the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron, and settled on them exclusively for an everlasting priesthood, Exod. xl. 12—16, and all others were prohibited from intermeddling with it at their highest peril; so that when Uzziah the king, who was of the tribe of Judah, presumed to burn incense, he was immediately struck with a leprosy, 2 Chron. xxvi. 16—21. It is plain, therefore, that our Lord, who sprang up from Judah, cannot be a priest according to the law of Moses.

Ver. 15. *And it is yet far more evident, for that after the similitude of Melchisedec, there ariseth another priest,*] The

point he is proving is this, that both the Levitical priesthood and the law are changed, that is, abrogated, as he had asserted, ver. 12. This he hath partly proved by shewing that the person addressed as a priest in Psalm cx. 4, is of a different tribe from that of Levi, to which the law had restricted the priesthood, and therefore that law must be changed, ver 13, 14. And here he farther shews, that this change of the priesthood and of the law, is yet (*perissoteros*) more exceedingly evident from the oath of God, which declares that there ariseth another priest, according to the similitude of Melchisedec ; and so not only of another tribe than that of Levi, but also of a quite different order. This demonstrates that the Levitical priesthood, and the whole ceremonial law which depended on its ministrations, are entirely abolished. This was necessary to give place to the priesthood of Christ, who sprang up of the royal tribe of Judah, and is both a king and a priest, according to the similitude of Melchisedec.

Melchisedec is said to be, *aphomoiomenos*, made like unto the Son of God, ver. 3, and here the Son of God is said to arise another priest after the *omoioteta*, similitude of Melchisedec ; on which Peirce justly observes, " That this shews in what sense the word *taxis*, order, so often used before and afterwards in this matter, is to be understood. There was no such order of men to manage the Melchisedecian priesthood, as there was for the Aaronical, wherein one succeeded another ; which would be contrary to the whole strain of our author's discourse. Nor can our Lord be considered as succeeding Melchisedec in his priesthood. All that is meant is, that there was a great resemblance in the priesthood of these two. And such a resemblance there was in many respects. The priestly and kingly offices were joined together in both : They neither of them came by the priestly office, as being descended from any in that office ; nor had they either of them any to succeed them therein ; besides other things which might be mentioned. Whence the Syriac uses the

same word, *damutha*, which signifies *similitude*, not only here, but in rendering of *taxis*, *order*." To this I have only to add, That this *likeness* or *similitude* between Melchisedec and Christ, was not *accidental* but *intentional*. It was God's design that Melchisedec should stand related to Christ as his type in his kingly and priestly offices; for without this no argument could be founded on some mere *accidental* resemblances. But to return to the subject in hand. As the sons of Aaron were made priests by a carnal temporary institution, accommodated to mortal men, the apostle shews that the case was quite different with respect to Christ,

Ver. 16. *Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment—*] The whole law respecting the Aaronical priesthood, may be termed *the law of a carnal commandment*. They were to be free from bodily blemishes, Lev. xxi. 17—24, to be consecrated by carnal ceremonies, Exod. xl. 12—17, Lev. viii., and were appointed to officiate in outward carnal ordinances, which required a considerable degree of bodily strength, and which sanctified only to the purifying of the flesh, but had no real effect as to the pardon of sin or inward purification, Heb. ix. 9, 10, 13. But I apprehend that, by *the law of a carnal commandment*, the apostle has more immediately in view that law by which the continuance of the Aaronical priesthood was provided for, namely, the law of succession by natural generation. The sons of Aaron were mortal dying men, and no individual of them, by reason of death, was suffered to continue during the whole date of that priesthood: a succession, therefore, was necessary to its continuance, and in this sense it is termed "an everlasting priesthood, throughout their generations," Exod. xl. 15, it being continued by a series of mortal priests succeeding each other. But Christ was not made a priest according to that law, or for so short a time as the life of a mortal man, —*but after the power of an endless life.*] Though Christ suffered death as a sacrifice, yet not as a priest.

For though he was crucified through the weakness of his mortal flesh, yet he liveth by the power of God (2 Cor. xiii. 4), who raised him from the dead in power to be an immortal high priest in the heavens: So that he is made a priest according to the power of an (*akatalutou*) indissoluble life, by virtue of which he always holds that office in his own person, without ever giving place to a successor. Now, to prove this, the apostle again cites the testimony recorded in Psalm cx. 4.

Ver. 17. *For he testifieth, "Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec."*] *For he*, namely, Jehovah, the Father, who had said unto the Son, "Sit thou at my right hand," &c. ver. 1, *testifieth, "Thou art a priest for ever,"* &c., ver. 4. The emphasis must be placed on the words (*eis ton aiona*) *for ever*, for there lies his proof, that Christ is made a priest according to the power of an indissoluble life: But it may be observed, that this *for ever*, as it relates to his priesthood, answers to the *for ever* under the law, each of them being commensurate to the covenant to which they respectively pertain, and so not absolutely eternal; for though the life of Christ is absolutely eternal, as will also be the effects of his priesthood, yet his exercise of that office will cease when all the glorious ends of it are completely answered in the eternal salvation of the redeemed; even as he shall then deliver up the kingdom to the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 24. He is a priest for ever, as he shall continue the only priest of the people of God so long as they have any need of the priest's office. Now, if Christ is constituted a priest for ever, according to the power of an indissoluble life, as is testified in Psalm cx., then it is plain that the Aaronical priesthood, and all that depended upon it, must be superseded by his priesthood, and that for ever, as he gives place to no successor in it.

Ver. 18. *For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before—*] By the *commandment* we are to understand not merely the commandment by which



Aaron and his sons were separated to the priesthood, but the whole system of Mosaical institutions, which were so inseparably connected, that loosing any part of them was to dissolve the whole system; so that this commandment is not only the law which established the priesthood, but all its ministrations, on which the worship of the whole nation depended, and is termed, ver. 16, "the law of a carnal commandment." Some are of opinion, that even the decalogue, or what is called *the moral law*, considered as part of these institutions, and as pertaining to the Sinai covenant with that earthly nation, may also be here included; for though it retains its full obligatory force under the gospel as a rule of life, and is more fully explained as to its spiritual extent, and obedience to it enforced by more powerful motives, yet it hath not that place, nor is appointed for the same end, as under the Mosaic dispensation; and, in short, that *the commandment* is that whole law which has for its sanction, "Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them," Deut. xxvii. 26; Gal. iii. 10. But though what is said of the moral law may be admitted in part, yet it would require farther explanation to guard it against Antinomian errors. Whatever is included in the commandment here mentioned is declared to be *disannulled*; but the moral law cannot be said to be disannulled, except in certain respects. Believers in Christ are not under its curse, Gal. iii. 13, nor are they under it as it requires perfect personal obedience as the condition of life, Rom. x. 5; Gal. iii. 12. Christ hath delivered them from it entirely in both these respects: But that law being essentially holy, just, and good, they are still under it as an indispensable rule of life, and of that holiness without which no man shall see the Lord. But as to the commandment respecting the Levitical priesthood, and the whole law of ceremonies, the case is very different, for it is entirely and in all respects abrogated: And this is what I understand the apostle more directly

to mean, and which agrees with the whole scope of his argument.

This commandment which is now disannulled, is said to be the commandment (*proagouses*) *going before*, or preceding the gospel state of things: Not that it was prior to the promise of the gospel, for the law was not given for four hundred and thirty years after the promise was made to Abraham, in which the gospel was preached to him, Gal. iii. 8, 16, 17, but it was long prior to the intimation in Psalm cx. of God's design to establish another priesthood, and longer still before Christ was actually vested in that office; during all which time the whole worship of the Jewish church was regulated by it; but when Christ was made a priest according to the similitude of Melchisedec, unless there could be two different kinds of priesthoods over the house of God at the same time, the former institution must of course give place to the latter. But the reason here assigned for abrogating the Levitical establishment with the whole ceremonial law, is

—*for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.*] He insists much upon this reason for changing the priesthood and the law, and had said before, that if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, there would have been no need for such a change, ver. 11; even as he argues with the Galatians that, "if there had been a law given which could have given life, verily, righteousness should have been by the law," chap. iii. 21. But it may be said that, as God was the Author of that establishment, it seems to cast a reflection on his wisdom to consider it as weak and unprofitable. Far from it: For though it was weak and unprofitable when applied to purposes for which God never designed it, yet it answered many valuable ends, which were subservient to his main design. It was an intermediate dispensation between the promise made to Abraham of blessing all nations in his Seed the Messiah, and the accomplishment of that promise to which it had a reference; and was

calculated to keep the Israelites a distinct and separate people from the heathen ; to preserve them from idolatry ; to make them sensible of their sin, and the curse due to it, and so of their need of the Saviour held forth in the promise ;—and in general, it was a typical economy, having a shadow of good things to come, which was imposed upon that people until the time of reformation, and under which they were shut up together, or kept in durance, unto the faith which should afterwards be revealed. For these ends of the Mosaic economy, the reader may consult the following passages—Rom. iii. 19, 20, chap. v. 20, chap. x. 4 ; Gal. iii. 19—25 ; Eph. ii. 14 ; Heb. ix. 9, 10, chap. x. 1. But, as the Jews in general applied that law to purposes for which it never was intended but in a typical sense, and rested in its priesthood sacrifices of beasts and ceremonial bodily purifications, as sufficient to procure real pardon of sins, acceptance with God, and access to him in worship ; and as even the believing Hebrews were still strongly attached to it, the apostle here informs them, that it was altogether insufficient and unprofitable for such purposes, and, therefore, was now entirely abolished ; adding,

Ver. 19. *For the law made nothing perfect.*] These words, I apprehend, contain a general assertion respecting the whole Mosaic law, with a view to clear and confirm what he had said in the preceding verse concerning the Levitical priesthood and its services, namely, that it was weak and unprofitable ; for if the law in general made nothing perfect, it could not make the priesthood perfect, so as to procure those spiritual benefits which were to be expected from the office, such as forgiveness of sins, purification of conscience, and access to God with acceptance : —*but the bringing in of a better hope did, by the which we draw nigh unto God.*] The word *did* is a supplement, and makes the sense to be, that the bringing in of a better hope made things perfect, and so opposes it to what is said of the law in the first clause of this verse,

viz. that it made nothing perfect. This indeed is a good and sound sense ; but it may be questioned if it suits the construction of the original. We should keep in view that the apostle is commenting on Psalm cx. 4, which he had again just cited, ver. 17, and observes, that on the one hand it intimates “a disannulling of the commandment going before,” and on the other, “bringing in of a better hope.” This appears to be the connection of ver. 18, 19, according to the Greek usage of the particles *men* and *de* ; and the sense may be thus paraphrased, for that Psalm not only intimates a disannulling of the preceding commandment respecting the Levitical priesthood, on account of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the law made nothing perfect), but it intimates the bringing in of a better hope, by the appointment of Christ to the priesthood, through which hope we draw nigh to God with boldness and confidence, having access into the holiest of all with acceptance through Christ’s sacrifice and intercession.

He next proceeds to notice another remarkable difference in the manner of Christ’s appointment to the priesthood from that in which the Levitical priests were appointed.

Ver. 20. *And in as much as not without an oath* he was made priest ;] What he intends by mentioning the oath, is to prove the unchangeableness and perpetuity of Christ’s priesthood ; and his argument rests on this principle, that God never interposed his oath, except to shew the certainty and immutability of the thing sworn. Thus, he swore to Abraham, That in his Seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xxii. 16—18, and to the rebellious Israelites, That they should not enter into his rest, Deut. i. 34, 35, and to David, That his Seed should endure for ever, and his throne unto all generations, Psal. lxxxix. 4, 35, 36. Therefore, since Christ was made a priest *not without an oath*, that he should be a priest for ever, it shews God’s immutable purpose never to change or abolish his priesthood, nor the covenant which was established on it.

Ver. 21. *For those priests were made without an oath ;]* Aaron and his sons were immediately called of God, and solemnly consecrated to the priesthood, and there successors were also solemnly set apart to that office ; but God never confirmed it to them by an oath. It is true the Lord commanded Moses to say unto Phinehas, “ Behold I give unto him my covenant of peace, and he shall have it, and his seed after him, even the covenant of an everlasting priesthood,” Num. xxv. 12, 13. This indeed is a promise, but not an oath ; and the perpetuity of the priesthood promised to him and his seed after him, must be understood only of a duration as long as the covenant of the law itself should continue, but no longer : So that “ those priests were made without an oath,” which left their office, and all that depended on it, in a repealable state ; and accordingly, both their priesthood, and the old covenant to which it belonged, have long ago been set aside.

—*but this with an oath—]* Or, *but he*, viz. Jesus, was made a priest with an oath, in which an unalterable priesthood was conferred on him.

—*by him that said unto him, “ The Lord sware, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec.”]* This oath fully proves the immutability of Christ’s priesthood, and that it shall never give place to another ; for here the Lord swears, not only that he is a priest, but that he is a priest *for ever*, *i. e.* until the consummation of all things ; and that he will *not repent* of the appointment, nor ever revoke his oath by which it is unalterably established. Therefore, in as much as an unchangeable priesthood was conferred upon him by the oath of God,

Ver. 22. *By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.] q. d.* In proportion to the superior security given by the oath for the stability, unchangeableness, and perpetuity of his priesthood ; by so much was Jesus made the mediator of a better (*i. e.* a more permanent and effectual) covenant, than that made at Sinai, of

which the Aaronical high priests were mediators. This I take to be the sense ; but as I have altered two words, viz. *surety* and *testament* into *mediator* and *covenant*, it may need some apology. Let it therefore be observed,

That the word *diatheke* here rendered *testament*, though in classical Greek it may have that signification ; yet, as the LXX. have, by that word, uniformly translated the Hebrew *berith*, which properly signifies a *covenant* (as all the translators of the Jewish scriptures have understood it), so the Jews, in writing Greek, would naturally use the word *diatheke*, instead of *suntheke*, to signify a *covenant*. Our English translators have constantly rendered it *covenant* throughout the Old Testament, where it often occurs ; and in the New Testament, where it occurs about thirty-one times, they have also rendered it *covenant*, except in seven places, where, following the Vulgate, they have translated it *testament*, but without the least necessity, and in some places different from what they have rendered it in parallel passages. Thus, in Exod. xxiv. 8, where the Hebrew is *berith*, and the Greek *diatheke*, though they have there translated it *covenant*, yet, where our Lord alludes to that passage in instituting the Supper, Matt. xxvi. 28, Mark xiv. 24, Luke xxii. 20, 1 Cor. xi. 25, and where the apostle expressly cites it, they have rendered it *testament*, Heb. ix. 20. The only passage which affords any colour for such a translation is Heb. ix. 16—19, which shall be considered in its place. It does not appear that the Mosaic constitution, established at Sinai, and ratified by the blood of brute animals, nor its antitype, the new constitution of grace which was established and ratified by the blood or sacrifice of Christ, were either of them of the nature of a proper testament or latter-will. We never find that a testament was made upon sacrifice or ratified by blood ; but we know that covenants were anciently so made, see Gen. xv. 9—19 ; Exod. xxiv. 3—9 ; Psal. i. 5 ; Jer. xxxiv. 18. Therefore when *diatheke* is connected with sacrifice or blood, it should always be

translated *covenant*, and to translate it *testament* in that case, as in the institution of the Supper, and in Heb. ix. 20, seems very improper. Again, wherever *diatheke* is connected with a mediator, it should be rendered *covenant*; for a mediator belongs to a covenant, not to a testament, though it is so rendered in chap. ix. 15.

As to the word rendered *surety*, the original is *egguos*, which comes from *egguos near*, and signifies *one who draws near*, or who *brings others near*. It occurs nowhere else in the New Testament; and in the LXX. *surety* is generally expressed by another term. In the Apocrypha, this word is translated *surety*, Ecclus. xxix. 15, 16, and *pledge*, 2 Maccab. x. 28, which, from the connection, appears to be its true meaning there; yet, as it is here applied to Christ as High Priest, and by way of comparison with the Levitical high priests, and also in relation to a better covenant than that of which they were sureties, it must be equivalent to *mesites*, a mediator, by which word the Greek commentators on this place explain it, and which the apostle afterwards substitutes in its place, terming Christ "the mediator of a better covenant," chap. viii. 6, and "the mediator of the new covenant," chap. ix. 15, and xii. 24. But as he had said, ver. 19, that there is, "the bringing in of a better hope, by which *eggizomen* WE DRAW NEAR unto God," he very properly here calls Jesus *egguos*, as being the person who *brings us near* (Eph. ii. 13, 17, 18), or through whose sacrifice and mediation *we draw near* and have access to God with acceptance.

But I would not here be understood as meaning to set aside the idea of Christ's being a Surety: Far from it. In all that he has done, or is still doing as Mediator, and in all the characters he sustains as such, he may justly be viewed as the Surety of a better covenant, and as affording the greatest Security to believers, that all things being given into his hand, will be effectually managed, and that all the exceeding great and precious promises of the covenant will be accomplished. God formerly inter-

posed his oath as a security for the performance of the promise made unto Abraham, to give strong consolation to the heirs of the promise, chap. vi. 13—19. But in performing the mercy promised unto the fathers, the oath which he swore to Abraham, he spared not his own Son, but delivered him up to the death for us, to procure the blessings and ratify the promises of the new covenant, and has raised him from the dead, placed him at his own right hand, and, by a solemn oath, constituted him an everlasting High Priest and intercessor, thereby giving us the highest pledge and security, that with him also, he will freely give us all things, *i. e.* all spiritual and eternal blessings, Rom. viii. 32, 35. In this sense Christ may well be considered as the Surety of a better covenant than the covenant made at Sinai, and of which the Levitical high priests were sureties, as the comparison plainly implies. The apostle states another important difference between the legal high priests and Jesus the High Priest of our profession. Of the former he says,

Ver. 23. *And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death:]* By the law there could be but one high priest at a time, but being a mortal man, his life as an individual was not commensurate to the whole time of that priesthood, he being hindered by death from continuing in office, and his place was supplied by a successor; so that, by the law of succession, they were become many priests. The Jews reckon about eighty-three of them, from Aaron to Phinehas the last of them, who perished at the destruction of the temple by the Romans. This constant change of the priests, occasioned by death, shewed the weakness and unprofitableness of the Levitical priesthood; that it was of a temporal and worldly nature, subject to the law of mortality, and did not extend its influence to the concerns of the life to come: That it made no proper reconciliation for the sins of the people; did not bring them really nigh to God, nor procure spiritual or eternal blessings



either to the priest or people ; and that, during its continuance by a succession of many priests, all that depended upon it was in a state of imperfection and mutability.

Ver. 24. *But this man because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.*] Christ, in consequence of his resurrection from the dead, is made an immortal high priest at God's right hand in heaven, according to the oath, "Thou art a priest for ever ;" and because he continueth for ever to officiate as priest in his own person, after the power of an endless life, he hath (*aparabaton*) an unsuccessive priesthood, which passeth not from him to any other on account of incapacity or death.

Ver. 25. *Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.*] The ability of Christ to save sinners, is a truth of the highest importance. It is the foundation of all faith and trust in him ; and the great end of the gospel revelation concerning him is to demonstrate that truth. All that is said concerning the divine dignity of his person ; his being the Maker and Upholder of all things ; his design in assuming human nature ; his almighty power displayed in the miracles which he performed on earth ; his resurrection from the dead, and the universal power and dominion committed to him as Mediator, &c., these things fully demonstrate that he is mighty to save. But it is not the design of the apostle in this place to state all the proofs of Christ's saving power. This he has sufficiently done towards the beginning of this epistle. He is here upon the subject of Christ's priesthood ; and it is from his having an unchangeable priesthood, and his living for ever to execute it, that he, in this verse, infers his ability to save, and that for ever ; for thus the connection stands : The Aaronical priests were hindered from continuing in their office by reason of death ; but Christ, because he continueth living for ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood : *Othen*, hence also, he is able to save, *ei to panteles* to the utmost, or for

ever, them who approach to God through his mediation, as he is, *pantote zon*, always living an high priest to make intercession for them.

Christ's intercession in heaven pre-supposeth his death on earth as a sacrifice for sin, his resurrection from the dead, and his entering as high priest into the heavenly holy place in the immediate presence of God, and there presenting it to him as an atonement, Heb. ix. 12—24, as was typified by the peculiar service of the Aaronical high priest, when, on the day of the yearly atonement, he entered within the vail with the blood of the slain animals, and there presented it and sprinkled it on and before the mercy-seat, Lev. xvi.; Heb. ix. 7. Jesus has at once effectually and for ever fully satisfied divine justice, by making a complete atonement for sin, and by one offering hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified; so that there is no more offering for sin, nor any farther need to repeat his offering, chap. x. 10, 14, 18. But then his priestly service did not end here: He is constituted a priest for ever, to manage all the concerns of his people with God in the way of intercession on their behalf, which intercession is founded on the merit or worth of that one offering by which he hath obtained (not a yearly, but) eternal redemption for us, chap. ix. 12, and it has for its object the actual application of the benefits of that redemption to all for whom he died. Though his intercession is not that which satisfies the justice of God; yet it is a real, eminent, and continual declaration that satisfaction is already made, it being a pleading on that ground. Next to his sacrifice itself, what could give a more striking impression of God's just hatred of sin than such a holy constitution, that none of the blessings of God's covenant are bestowed on sinners, but through the actual and continual interposition of him who made atonement for their sins? His continual intercession, in connection with his oblation, on which it is founded, is the support of the soul against the fears of former guilt, or the imperfection of

present duties : It is the ground and medium of access to God ; the encouragement to draw near unto him with full assurance of faith, and joyful hope of being heard and accepted. In looking up to the throne of God, to view it as a throne of grace, a mercy-seat, where we have such a great, merciful, and compassionate high priest, ever living, and continually ministering for us in the heavenly sanctuary, and where his efficacious blood is constantly speaking and pleading for the communication of all the blessings which it hath procured for sinners ; what an encouragement does this afford in our approaches to God, and what an enlivening influence must the faith of it have upon our whole worship ! In short, Christ's continued intercession is suited to the continual need which his people have of pardoning mercy and grace to help, and so for maintaining a friendly intercourse between heaven and earth throughout all ages of the church, during its militant state in this world. Christ, by his entering heaven with the blood of his own sacrifice, and by his continual intercession on that ground for his people, has opened heaven to their prayers and worship in this present life, and to their persons in the life to come. So that he is able to save for ever them that come unto God through him, as he is always living, and, in the exercise of his office, making intercession for them.

In the two following verses of this chapter, the apostle mentions the holy character and qualifications of Jesus, as necessary to his being such an high priest as our circumstances required ; in which he also sets forth his superior excellence to that of the Levitical high priests.

Ver. 26. *For such an high priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.*] It is not easy to shew wherein some of these characters differ from others. The first that is mentioned is his being holy. The original word is not *agios*, but *osios*, and as the LXX. often render the Hebrew *chesid*, which signifies *kind* or *merciful*, by that word,

some are of opinion that it bears that sense here ; and undoubtedly his being *merciful* is a necessary qualification in our high priest, and is ascribed to him, chap. ii. 17. But as *osios* is frequently used in the New Testament, where it cannot have any other sense than *holy*, as in Acts ii. 7, chap. xiii. 35, 1 Tim. ii. 8, Rev. xv. 4, where we have also the substantive *osiotēs*, *holiness*, Luke i. 75, Eph. iv. 24, and the adverb *osios*, *holily*, 1 Thess. ii. 10. I am fully persuaded that our translation gives the true sense. —It was absolutely necessary that our high priest should be perfectly holy in heart and life, altogether pure and free from the least taint of sin, without which his sacrifice and mediation would not be accepted of a holy God on our account. This holiness must have a particular respect to God as its object, including in it the exercise of every religious and pious disposition of soul towards him.

He is *akakos*, *harmless*. This character has a respect to his disposition and conduct towards men. He is no way injurious to any, nor disposed to do them evil ; there is no malice, guile, or deceit in him, 1 Pet. ii. 22. And this negative character implies the positive, as well as the negative precepts of the law do ; and imports that he is full of benevolence, goodness, mercy, sympathy, and compassion towards men.

He is *amiantos*, *undefiled* ; not only perfectly pure and spotless in himself, but has contracted no defilement by means of other persons or things, as the legal high priests often did, and so is never interrupted in the performance of his priestly office, nor unfitted for constantly appearing with acceptance in the immediate presence of God for his people.

He is *kechorismenos*, *separated from sinners*. He indeed conversed freely with sinners while in this world, for he came to save sinners, to call them to repentance, and to give his life a ransom for many ; but he had no communion with nor conformity to them in sin ; and as he has left this world and gone into heaven, he is also locally separated

from sinners, for none can enter there but such as are written in the book of life, and are washed from their sins in his blood, Rev. v. 9, chap. xxi. 27. Farther,

He is *made higher than the heavens*. The *heavens*, by a common metonymy, is frequently put for its *inhabitants*, the angels, see 1 Chron. xvi. 17, Psalm xcvi. 11, Isaiah xlix. 13, and our apostle has fully proved that Christ is advanced far above the angels in dignity, authority, and glory, chap. i.; so that in this sense he may be said to be made higher than the heavens. But as he is here describing him under the character of high priest, I apprehend that he has a particular view to the *place* into which he hath entered to officiate for such, and which was prefigured by the holy of holies on earth: This place is higher than the heavens; for when Jesus entered there, he *dieleluthota*, *passed through* the heavens, chap. iv. 14, and ascended, *uperano*, *far above* all heavens, Eph. iv. 10, into the glorious and immediate presence of the Divine Majesty, to present his offering, and where he is now for ever seated at the right hand of God, in the highest station of dignity and honour, chap. x. 12, 13. Now, as Christ is perfectly holy, and absolutely free from all sin, he is a priest

Ver. 27. *Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's—*] As the apostle is here comparing Christ with the Aaronical high priests, and as these did not offer up sacrifices *daily*, like the ordinary priests, but *yearly*, on the tenth day of the seventh month, which was the day of the annual atonement, it is likely that the expression, *kath emeran*, *daily*, signifies *yearly* in this place, and is equivalent to *kat eniauton*, *year by year*, chap. x. 1, 3. The passover was to be observed *yearly*; yet, both in the Hebrew and Greek, the expression is, *from days to days*, Exod. xiii. 10. The Aaronical high priests, being sinners themselves, had need to offer sacrifice for their own sins, before they made an atonement for the sins of the people, Lev. xvi. 11—15; but Christ being entirely free from all

personal sin of his own, had no need to offer any sacrifice for himself, but only for others. Again, they offered sacrifice from time to time, or yearly on the great day of expiation, to make atonement for the sins of the whole nation of Israel; and this yearly repetition of sacrifices shewed their insufficiency to take away sins, or to perfect the worshippers, chap. x. 1, 4, 11. But Christ's sacrifice being fully satisfactory, and of perpetual efficacy, there was no need for repeating it in order to make atonement for the sins of the people;

—*for this he did once, when he offered up himself.*] The word *ephapax* should be here rendered, *once for all*, as in chap. x. 10, it being opposed to the annual repetition of the legal sin-offerings, and for which Christ's perfect sacrifice left no farther need; "for by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified," chap. x. 14. Farther, the sacrifices which the legal high priests offered were of calves and goats, which could never expiate sins; but the sacrifice which Christ offered up, was of *himself*, which sufficiently accounts for its perpetual efficacy.

Ver. 28. *For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity*;—] In this verse, the apostle gives, as it were, in one word, the substance of his preceding discourse respecting the weakness and imperfection of the sons of Aaron, who were constituted high priests by the law, in comparison of the Son of God, who is made a priest for ever by the word of the oath. *For the law*, namely, the law of Moses, by which a successive priesthood was established in the family of Aaron, and which he had before termed "the law of a carnal commandment," ver. 16, this law maketh men high priests who have infirmity; who are weak, mortal men, by which their priestly function soon comes to an end, as they are hindered from continuing in the exercise of it by death, ver. 23. Besides, they have also moral infirmity, and are sinners like other men (chap. v. 2, 3), hence they need to offer up sacrifice for their own

sins, ver. 27, as the law of their priesthood required, Lev. iv. 3.

—*but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.*] The Son of God was not constituted a priest by the Mosaic law, but by the *word of the oath* in Psalm cx. 4, which was since the law, being not declared till upwards of four hundred years after that law was given, nor indeed actually accomplished till after Christ rose from the dead and ascended into heaven, chap. viii. 4, chap. ix. 24, which was more than fifteen hundred years after the Aaronical priesthood was instituted. Now this oath declares, that he was to be “a priest after the order of Melchisedec,” and so a king as well as a priest, verse. 2, and as such was to sit at God’s right hand till he should finally subdue all his enemies, Psalm cx. 1. It declares that he was to be “a priest for ever,” after the power of an endless life, ver. 16; which imports, that he was to be an immortal high priest in the heavenly sanctuary; that his one offering was to be of perpetual efficacy; that he was to be free of all imperfection or defilement which might disqualify him for constantly appearing in the presence of God for us, ver. 26, as also from all the natural and sinless infirmities, as well as sufferings, to which he was subject during the days of his flesh; and so able to save for ever them that come unto God through him, seeing he is always living to make intercession for them, verse 25. Thus the oath constitutes the Son of God, David’s Lord, a priest who is consecrated for evermore. The word *teteleiomenon* signifies either his being consecrated or perfected. It is used for the consecration of Aaron and his sons to the priesthood, and by which they were fitted for executing that office.

## CHAP. VIII.

## CONTENTS AND SCOPE.

THE apostle in the preceding chapter having explained the oath, Psalm cx. 4, and shewn from it that Christ, in various respects, greatly excels the Aaronical high priests, he proceeds in this chapter to a farther comparison of him with those priests, and sets forth his superior excellency in respect of the dignity and power to which he is exalted, the glorious sanctuary in which he officiates, and the efficacy of his ministrations as Mediator of the new and better covenant.

In handling these particulars, he observes, that the chief of the things which have been spoken concerning Christ's priesthood, is this, That in Jesus we have such an high priest, who is set down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, ver. 1. That he is an officiating high priest there; a minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man, ver. 2. That as every Aaronical high priest is ordained to offer both gifts and sacrifices when he enters into the earthly holy place; so it was necessary that Jesus should also have some sacrifice to offer when he entered into heaven, the only place appointed for him to perform that priestly service, ver 3. For that if he were on earth, he could not be a priest to offer sacrifice there; seeing that service, as well as the place in which it was to be performed on earth, were appropriated exclusively to the Aaronical priests, who offer gifts there according to the law, ver. 4. That these priests were



appointed to serve in the earthly tabernacle, which was but a representation and shadow of the heavenly tabernacle and its service; as appears from what God said to Moses, when about to construct the tabernacle, "See, (saith he) that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount," ver. 5. But that now Jesus, being a minister of the heavenly sanctuary, hath obtained a more excellent ministry than that of the Levitical high priests, in as much as he is the Mediator of a better covenant than that made at Sinai, and which is established upon better promises, ver. 6.

That the new covenant, of which Christ is the Mediator, is better than the Sinaitic covenant, he proves from Jer. xxxi. 31—34, where the Lord promises to make a new covenant, altogether different from the former, for which there would have been no need, had that former covenant been faultless, and made sufficient provision for the pardon and sanctification of sinners; but in these respects it was deficient, as appears from what the Lord says of Israel's not continuing in that covenant, and of his not regarding them, ver. 7, 8, 9. That the new covenant is established on better promises than the former, he proves from the same passage, where God expressly mentions these better promises, ver 10, 11, 12. Lastly, he observes, that God, by terming it a *new covenant*, had made the former *old*, which imports that it was decaying and ready to disappear, and so intimates that the whole Mosaic economy was to be abrogated.

## P A R A P H R A S E.

CHAP. VIII. 1. Now of the things spoken concerning

*Christ's priesthood this is the chief.* We have such an high priest in *Jesus as became us* (chap. vii. 26), who, *having offered the sacrifice of himself to God for us*, hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of the *Divine Majesty* in the heavens (chap. i. 3), *in token that his sacrifice was accepted as a complete atonement;*

2. *Being a minister of the heavenly holies*, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

3. For every high priest is constituted to offer both gifts and sacrifices, *in the earthly holy place appointed for that purpose*: hence it was necessary for this high priest to have something also which he might offer in heaven.

4. For verily if he were on earth, he could not be a priest to offer sacrifice, there being priests who offer gifts on earth according to the law, which restricts that service to the sons of Aaron.

5. These perform the service in *the only tabernacle on earth, which is but a representation and shadow of the heavenly things*; as appears from the divine admonition given to Moses when he was about to finish the tabernacle, and all its furniture; for "See," saith he, "that thou make all things according to the pattern which was shewed to thee in the Mount," Exod. xxv. 9, 40.

6. But he, *Jesus our high priest*, hath now obtained a more excellent ministry than that of the *Aaronical high priests who serve in the earthly tabernacle*, in as much as he is the Mediator of a better covenant, and which is established on better promises.

7. For if that first covenant had been faultless, so as to have answered the exigencies of sinners, in that case, a place would not have been sought for a second.

8. But finding fault, to them (*the Israelites*) he saith

“Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, that I will complete a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah :

9. “Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers, in the day of my taking hold of their hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ; because they continued not in my covenant, and I neglected them, saith the Lord.

10. “For this is the covenant which I will covenant with the house of Israel after these days, saith the Lord, I will give my laws into their mind, and write them upon their hearts ; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people :

11. “And they shall not teach each one his neighbour, and each one his brother, saying, Know the Lord ; for all shall know me from the least of them to the greatest of them.

12. “Because I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities I will remember no more,” Jer. xxxi. 31—34.

13. By this saying, “A NEW covenant,” he hath made OLD the first : Now that which is antiquated and fallen into old age, is ready to disappear.

#### COMMENTARY AND NOTES ON CHAP. VIII.

Ver. 1. *Now of the things which we have spoken* this is the sum :—] The things spoken in the preceding chapter, were concerning the priesthood of Christ, and here he proposes to give the sum of them, or rather the *chief* of them : for so the word *kephalaion* may more properly be rendered ; and the chief of these things is this, —*we have such an high priest who is set on the right hand*

*of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens ;]* This is the accomplishment of what was declared in that Psalm which foretold his priesthood, "The Lord said unto my Lord, sit thou at my right hand until I make thine enemies thy footstool," Psalm cx. 1. So that the word of the oath constituted him a priest, not on earth, but in heaven, where he is now exalted, even in his human nature, to the highest glory, honour, and dominion, as a royal priest upon his throne. After he had offered one sacrifice for sins, he is said to have "for ever sat down on the right hand of God," chap. x. 12, and to have "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high," chap. i. 3, and here to be "set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." These expressions are of the same import. (See the notes on chap. i. 3.) In this exalted state, he is

Ver. 2. *A minister of the sanctuary.*—] His priestly service was not accomplished on earth. He hath gone into heaven to officiate there as an abiding minister of the heavenly sanctuary, or, *ton agion, of the holies, i. e. of the holy of holies*, which was prefigured by the inner apartment of the Mosaic tabernacle within the second veil, and into which none but the high priest was permitted to enter, and that but once a year, Lev. xvi. 2—17; Heb. ix. 3—7.

—*and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.*] The Mosaic tabernacle included two apartments; the first or outer, called *the holy*; the second, or inner, which was divided from the former by a curtain or veil, was called *the most holy*, it being an emblem of heaven, where the Divine Majesty resides, and displays his glory; so that the *tabernacle* frequently signifies the whole sacred tent or structure, including both the *holy* and *most holy* places: But as the apostle is speaking of the place into which Christ hath entered, where he sits at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, and ministers as high priest, I apprehend that by the *sanctuary* and

*tabernacle*, he means the same thing, or that which was prefigured by the inner apartment of the Mosaic tabernacle, for he afterwards calls the holiest of all, the *tabernacle*, chap. ix. 3. The language is borrowed from the tabernacle erected in the wilderness, but is distinguished from it by being termed the *true* tabernacle, which not only shews its superior excellence, but that the other was only a *figure* of it, chap. ix. 24. It was but a *worldly* sanctuary, chap. ix. 1, but this is *heaven itself*, ver. 24. Another remarkable difference is, that the Mosaic tabernacle was made with *human hands*, by the skill of Bezaleel and Aholiab, and every wise-hearted man in whom the Lord put wisdom to execute that work, Exod. xxxvi. 1—5; but the heavenly tabernacle, in which Christ ministers, *is not made with hands, nor of this building*, Heb. ix. 11, for it is that *which the Lord pitched, and not man*. As, therefore, the place where Christ officiates, infinitely excels the earthly tabernacle in which the legal high priests officiated, his priesthood must infinitely excel theirs. He is a minister of the heavenly sanctuary and true tabernacle, which the Lord himself hath erected in the highest heavens, where he hath prepared his throne, and established a propitiatory or true mercy-seat, where he displays his immediate, glorious, and blissful presence, and from whence he dispenses his choicest blessings, through the mediation of this great High Priest. Now it was essential to Christ's office as High Priest, that when he entered heaven, he should perform what was typified by the service of the legal high priest when he entered within the vail on the day of the annual atonement.

Ver. 3. *For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices :—*] He is, *kathisatai*, constituted an High Priest for the very purpose of offering both gifts and sacrifices. *Gifts* not only signify free-will offerings, but propitiatory sacrifices; see Heb. xi. 4. And though the ordinary priest might offer these in the *holy place*; yet none but the high priest alone was permitted to offer

them in the *most holy place*, when he entered there with the sweet incense, and the blood of the sacrifices; for this was his peculiar work on the yearly day of expiation, Lev. xvi. 13, 14, 15.

—*wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.*] *Man* is a supplement, though not distinguished as such, and if any supplement were necessary, *high priest* would be more proper, as he is speaking of him under that character. He argues from the legal high priest being appointed to offer the blood of sacrifices when he entered within the vail, that it was necessary that Christ, our great High Priest, should also have something to offer in that holy place whereof he is appointed a minister. And he farther shews, that this was a service which could not be performed while he was on earth :

Ver. 4. *For if he were on earth he should not be a priest;—*] He should not be a priest on earth either according to the law or the word of the oath. Not according to the law,

—*seeing there are priests who offer gifts according to the law :*] The law appointed no high priests on earth but those of the tribe of Levi and family of Aaron; but our Lord sprang of the tribe of Judah, and so had no right by the law to be a priest on earth. Again, the sons of Aaron had the exclusive right to offer gifts and sacrifices in the only holy places appointed for that purpose on earth, and they continued to do so during Christ's life in this world; so that there was no holy place on earth appointed for him to offer gifts and sacrifices as an High Priest. And as he could not be an High Priest on earth according to the law, so neither could he be an High Priest there according to the oath; for that does not make him a priest on earth, but an immortal priest in the heavens, seated at God's right hand; and there only is the holy place into which he hath entered as High Priest, with the blood of his own sacrifice, to appear in the presence of

God for us, chap. ix. 12—24. (See Appendix, No. iii.) But as to the Aaronical high priests, who offer gifts according to the law,

Ver. 5. *These serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things ;—*] That is, they *latreuouein*, perform that religious service in the Mosaic tabernacle, which is but a typical representation and shadow of the heavenly tabernacle, and of the service which Christ performs there. That it was only a typical draught of the true tabernacle, appears from the strict charge given as to the frame and fashion of it ;

—*as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle : for, " See," saith he, " that thou make all things according to the pattern shewed to thee in the mount."*] The word *kechrematisai* is here rendered, *admonished of God*, which, though not a literal, is yet a very just translation. *Chrematistheis* sometimes signifies to receive an oracle, a revelation, or divine direction, as in Matt. ii. 12, 22 ; Luke ii. 26 ; Acts x. 22 ; Heb. xi. 7. In the active voice it signifies to deliver an oracle, Heb. xii. 25. The oracular charge given to Moses respected both the tabernacle and its furniture, see Exod. xxv. 4, chap. xxvi. 30 ; Num. viii. 4. It refers him to the (*tupos*) figure or pattern which was shewed to him on the mount, and which he is charged to copy or imitate exactly. It would appear from these words, that Moses had received not merely a verbal description of the form or fashion in which he was to construct the tabernacle, but that he had a visible (*tupos*) pattern or model of it exhibited to his view on the mount : And as that model was itself but a shadowy representation of the heavenly tabernacle ; so the Mosaic tabernacle, with the priestly ministry performed in it, being fashioned according to that model, could be nothing more ; it being but a secondary copy of heavenly things taken by human hands.

Ver. 6. *But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, —*] But Jesus, upon his resurrection from the

dead and entry into heaven with his own blood, to present it there, and officiate in the immediate presence of God for us, hath now obtained a more excellent, *leitourgias, ministry, or priestly service, viz.* than that of the Aaronical high priests, he being appointed to the service of the heavenly sanctuary itself, the true holy of holies; and so his ministry there must be infinitely more excellent, meritorious, and efficacious than theirs,

—*in as much also as he is the Mediator of a better covenant,—*] A mediator is one who acts between two parties, in order to bring them to an agreement, or who intercedes with one party in behalf of another, Gal. iii. 20. The man Christ Jesus is the one Mediator between God and man, 1 Tim. ii. 5. His mediation is just the exercise of his ministry as High Priest, including both his oblation by which he made atonement for the sins of the people, and his continued intercession with God on their account. The apostle had said before, that as Christ was constituted a priest by an oath, he is by so much made a surety of a better covenant (see notes on chap. vii. 21, 22); so here he sets forth the superior excellence of his ministry to that of the Levitical high priests from his being the Mediator of a better covenant than the Sinaitic, of which they were mediators: But this argument required that he should prove the covenant itself to be better than the former; and to evince this he first mentions, in general, that it is a covenant,

—*which was established upon better promises.*] The word *nenomothetetai* imports, that it was legally established, or established as a law. And if this covenant is established upon better promises than the covenant made at Sinai was, it must necessarily be a better covenant, for the promises contain the substance of the covenant. The promises of the Sinaitic covenant respected the earthly inheritance, with the good things of it, and the quiet and peaceable enjoyment of them under the special protection of God, while they abstained from idolatry, and continued to observe



his law, as delivered by Moses ; see Deut. xxviii. 1—15. The substance of these promises was originally made to Abraham with regard to his natural seed, Gen. xv. 18, chap. xvii. 2—9. They were indeed types of spiritual and eternal blessings, but in their own nature they were only earthly and temporal : But the promises upon which the new covenant is established are spiritual and eternal, and are included in the promise made to Abraham respecting his spiritual seed by faith, That in his Seed, viz. Christ, all the nations of the earth should be blessed, Gen. xii. 3, chap. xxii. 18, Gal. iii. ; for it is a promise of blessing them with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, Eph. i. 3. (See the notes on chap. vi. 14.) But the apostle brings the proof of what he had asserted from Jer. xxxi. 31—35, which is full and express to his purpose, as it shews that the Sinaitic covenant was faulty, and that the new covenant is established on better promises, such as are better suited to our exigencies as sinners. With regard to the Sinaitic covenant, he says,

Ver. 7. *For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.*] Though the Lord made that first covenant with the nation of Israel, yet he did not intend it as a perfect constitution which should answer all the purposes of his grace to men. Its law could not justify or give life to sinners, but served only to convince of sin and to condemn, Rom. iii. 20, Gal. iii. 21, 22. Its priesthood was weak and unprofitable, Heb. vii. 18. Its sacrifices could not take away sins, chap. x. 4, make perfect as pertaining to the conscience, or procure access with freedom into the holiest of all, chap. ix. 8, 9. In short, the covenant of the law made nothing perfect, chap. vii. 19. For, though it answered its own particular end, yet it was insufficient to consummate the church of God ; otherwise, as the apostle argues, no place should have been sought for a second covenant, because there would have been no need for it. But that another and better covenant was absolutely necessary, is plain

from what the Lord said by the prophet Jeremiah, chap. xxxi. 31—35.

Ver. 8. *For finding fault with them, he saith,—*] Or, *Finding fault, autois, to them, he saith.* This may signify either his finding fault with the covenant or with the people. Both I think are intended in the context. In the foregoing verse the covenant is not supposed to be faultless, but the contrary, because it left room for another; and this verse comes in as a proof of it. In the next verse the people are also blamed, because they continued not in God's covenant; but then it must be observed, that the people are so blamed as to insinuate that the covenant itself was defective; for the Lord promises to set it aside, and make a new one which should better suit their need. Unless we keep in view the deficiency of the Sinaitic covenant, we lose the main scope of the apostle's argument, and also his design, which was to disengage the Hebrews from their remaining attachment to that covenant. With this view he shews them from their own Scriptures, that the same God who made that covenant with their fathers at Sinai, had long ago, in the way of finding fault both with it and them, declared his intention to make a new covenant altogether different from it.

—“*Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah :*”] It has already been observed, that the Greek word *diatheke* is, throughout the Jewish scriptures, the constant rendering of the Hebrew *berith*, which never signifies a *testament*, or latter-will, but only a *covenant*; see note on chap. vii. 22. It sometimes signifies a solemn promise made by one party to another; but most commonly a league or mutual agreement between two or more parties. When it respects God's covenant with sinful men, it signifies a constitution, settlement, or establishment of things, wherein, by means of a mediator, he reconciles and takes them into a friendly relation to himself, as his own peculiar people; stipulates blessings and

privileges to them ; gives them his laws and ordinances as the rule of their obedience and means of correspondence with him, and the whole transaction is ratified by the blood of sacrifice. The word used in the Hebrew for *making* a covenant, is *carath*, which signifies *to cut off*, because covenants were made by cutting off or slaying sacrifices. Thus the covenant with Abraham was made, Gen. xv. 9—19, so also the covenant with the nation of Israel at Sinai, Exod. xxiv. 5—9. This method of making a covenant, is also mentioned in Psalm l. 5, and Jer. xxxiv. 18. In translating the passage under consideration, the apostle uses the word *sunteleso*, *I will complete* a new covenant, which seems opposed to the deficiency of the former, and to import that it was to be an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; fully adequate to the sinner's need, and ratified by a sacrifice which should both effectually procure and ensure all its blessings to the people of the covenant.

The Lord promises to make this covenant at a future period : “ *Behold the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make, &c.*, and in verse 10, it is promised to be made *after these days*. It was fixed in the purpose of God from everlasting, yet all the Old Testament revelations concerning it, ever since the fall, referred to it as future. It was not actually made till the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ ; for it was made through his mediation, upon his sacrifice, or in his blood, Matt. xxvi. 28, which is the blood of the everlasting covenant, Heb. xiii. 20, and which was not shed for upwards of 630 years after the date of the promise in Jeremiah.

It is termed a *new covenant*, not in respect of a covenant made with Adam, either before or after his fall, but in distinction from the covenant made with the nation of Israel at Sinai, as is afterwards declared : And it is *new* in comparison of that, both in respect of time, as being posterior to it, and in respect of its superior excellence and permanency, as it was never, like that, to wax old or

become useless. But if the new covenant was not made till Christ by his death set aside the peculiar covenant with Israel, and abrogated the distinction between Jews and Gentiles, and if there is no spiritual salvation but by the new covenant, it may be asked, How could those who lived before the making of it, from Adam and downwards, obtain eternal life by it? To this it is answered, That they obtained eternal life by this covenant as existing in the divine purpose, though not yet made, even as they obtained it by the blood of Christ, though not yet shed, but which was set forth before to them (and even before the law) in the promises and types of it, Rom. iii. 25, for Christ died for the redemption of the transgressions that were committed under the first covenant, that they who are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance, chap. ix. 15. So that the benefits of Christ's death, or of the new covenant in his blood, extend to all who believe, according to the measure of revelation given them, and that in every age, as well before as after the covenant itself was actually made.

This new covenant was promised to be made *with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah*. These, in the first place, signify the election among the natural posterity of Abraham, with whose fathers the old covenant was made, ver. 9. To them, in the first instance, belonged the covenants and the promises, Rom. ix. 4, and among them they had their first accomplishment, Acts iii. 25, 26. And though the bulk of that nation were broken off through their unbelief and rejection of the Messiah, Rom. xi. 20, yet this covenant still wears a favourable aspect towards that people in the latter days, when the fulness of the Gentiles shall be come in, for this is God's covenant unto them, when he shall take away their sins, ver. 25, 26, 27. The believing Gentiles are also included in the house of Israel and Judah, they being grafted in among them, and with them partaking of the root and fatness of the olive tree, chap. xi. 17. For the blessing of Abraham was to

some on the Gentiles through Jesus Christ, Gal. iii. 14, who, according to this new covenant, are the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, and so Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise, ver. 26, 29. So that both believing Jews and Gentiles are made one in Christ Jesus, and are jointly denominated *the Israel of God*, chap. vi. 16. The Lord, in the following verse, shews that this new covenant was to be altogether different from the former :

Ver. 9. "*Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt ;—*]" This clearly shews what is meant by the old or first covenant, namely, that covenant which God made with the nation of Israel when he delivered them out of Egypt. Of this transaction we have an account in Exod. xx. and xxiv., and which was four hundred and thirty years after the promise made to Abraham, Gal. iii. 17. Now that covenant was neither what is commonly called the covenant of works, nor the covenant of grace, though in many respects it represented the one and typified the other.

1. The law contained in the Sinaitic covenant represented the original law of life and death under which Adam was placed as the representative of his posterity, and by the transgression of which sin and death entered into the world. And though none of the sinful race of Adam could ever stand in covenant with God upon condition of their personal and perfect obedience to that eternal rule of righteousness, Rom. iii. 20, yet it was awfully exhibited in the transaction at Sinai, both in its *tenor*, as demanding perfect obedience for life, Lev. xviii. 5, Rom. x. 5, Gal. iii. 12 ; and in its *sanction* as denouncing death or the curse against every the least failure, Deut. xxvii. 26 ; Jer. xi. 3, 4 ; Gal. iii. 10. In this view it is termed the law of works, Rom. iii. 27 ; the ministration of death and condemnation, 2 Cor. iii. 7, 9, and is opposed to the promise made to Abraham, Gal. iii. 18 ; to faith,

ver. 12 ; and to grace, Rom. vi. 14, chap. xi. 6. But it may be asked, For what end was this law given to Israel, seeing they were incapable of obeying it perfectly, so as to obtain life by it ? To this the apostle answers, " The law entered that the offence might abound," Rom. v. 23, " that sin by the commandment might become exceeding sinful," chap. vii. 7, " for by the law is the knowledge of sin," chap. iii. 20. " It was added," to the promise, " because of transgressions, till the Seed should come to whom the promise was made," viz. that in him all nations should be blessed, Gal. iii. 19.

It is plain, therefore, that the law was not given to Israel that they might be justified or obtain eternal life by their obedience to it ; but it was given with a view to the promised Seed, who was to spring from that people, and to be made under that very law to redeem sinners of all nations, as well as Jews, from its curse, by being made a curse for them, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations, through Jesus Christ, Gal. iv. 4, 5, chap. iii. 13, 14. Now, that they might be sensible of their need of this great blessing, the law was given to convince them of sin, and the condemnation due to it ; and, in this view, it was not against the promises of God, but subservient to them, Gal. iii. 21, 22, being calculated to lead them to Christ, who was held forth, in the promises and types, as the end of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth, Rom. x. 4. But though the law was not given to Israel that they might obtain justification and eternal life by it, or, as some speak, to give them a trial for life ; yet it was enjoined upon them in the covenant at Sinai, together with all the ceremonial and judicial institutions contained in the book of the law, as the rule of their obedience and religious worship, and enforced by temporal rewards and punishments suited to that earthly state of the church, wherein God stood related to them as their political sovereign or king, and exercised much mercy towards them, notwithstanding all their provocations ; so

that it could not be that very thing which is commonly called *the covenant of works*, though it represented it in several respects.

2. Neither was the Sinaitic covenant what is commonly called *the covenant of grace*, though it was a type or pre-figuration of it. If by the covenant of grace be meant the new covenant in Christ's blood, that covenant was still a matter of promise in the days of Jeremiah, which was long after the transaction at Sinai, and was not to be made according to that, but as much different from it in its whole constitution as the substance is from the shadow, or things spiritual and eternal are from things earthly and temporal. Though God, in making the covenant at Sinai, declared himself to be the God of that whole nation whom he brought out of the land of Egypt and house of bondage, yet he was not spiritually and eternally related to them as he is to the people of the new covenant. There were, no doubt, some among them who believed on Christ to come, and to whom he was their God, as giving them eternal life from the dead, Matt. xxii. 31, 32, but that was not by virtue of the covenant in which God declares himself to be the God of the whole nation of Israel, but by virtue of the promise of blessing all nations in the Seed, Christ. The people of the old covenant were the children of Abraham according to the flesh, and being now increased into a nation, according to God's promise of multiplying his natural seed, of whom Christ was to come, he entered into a covenant with them at Sinai, took them to be his peculiar people above all people, Exod. xix. 5, and was their God in a suitableness to the nature of that covenant, which was temporal, and so is now done away.

But the people of the new covenant are the spiritual children of Abraham, who walk in the steps of his faith, Rom. iv. 11, 12. They are they who believe on the name of Christ, to whom he gives power to become the sons of God; and who are born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God, John i. 12,

13, chap. iii. 3, 5, 1 Pet. i. 23, for they are all the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus, whether they be Jews or Gentiles; and so being Christ's, they are Abraham's spiritual seed, and heirs according to the promise, Gal. iii. 26, 28, 29. Now, to these God stands related as their God in a very different sense from that in which he was related to the earthly nation of Israel by the old covenant at Sinai. I shall endeavour to explain this when I come to verse 12, where the promise itself is cited.

Meantime I would notice, that many seem averse to admit that the old and new covenants are essentially different. They think the Sinai covenant may be called the covenant of grace, it being only clothed with the darkness and terror of the legal dispensation: That the gospel dispensation is called *a new and better covenant*, not absolutely, but only in respect of certain circumstances; and that it cannot properly be said to be *established upon better promises* than the old, as no promise can possibly excel God's declaration to Israel at Sinai, "I am the Lord thy God." By such methods have the two covenants been jumbled and confounded, and the apostle's reasoning on this subject greatly obscured and enervated.

But it is exceedingly plain that the old covenant differs from the new, as the type or figure differs from its substance or truth. "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ," John i. 17. Here we see that *grace* is opposed to the law of works, or ministration of death and condemnation delivered at Sinai, and that *truth* is opposed to the shadows or types of the old covenant. The greater part of this epistle to the Hebrews was written to shew, that the law or old covenant had only a shadow of good things which were to come under the new covenant, Heb. x. 1. Its people, mediator, priests, sacrifices, tabernacle, ordinances of divine service, bodily purifications, its temporal and earthly promises, and, in a word, everything peculiarly pertaining to it, was of a figurative and shadowy nature; consequently the covenant



itself must have been a type or figure of the new covenant in Christ's blood, and so must have vanished away when the latter took place : Besides, as the old covenant was a covenant of peculiarity with the particular nation of Israel, and formed a wall of partition between them and the Gentiles, whom it shut out as aliens ; while, on the other hand, the new covenant extends its blessings to all nations, according to the promise made to Abraham, it is evident that these two covenants could not be both in full force at the same time. The Lord having promised to make a new covenant, which was not to be according to the covenant which he had made with old Israel, at Sinai, adds,

—“*because they continued not in my covenant,*—] Our translation of this clause in the Old Testament runs thus : “Which my covenant they brake.” But our apostle here adopts the translation of the LXX. The particle *oti*, rendered *because*, seems to assign Israel's not continuing in the old covenant as the reason why God was to make a new covenant. But though Israel had continued in that old covenant, it could not have answered the design of the new. The new covenant was promised long before the old was made, and the old was made with a view to the new, or as a temporal prefiguration of it ; and therefore Israel's breaking the Sinaitic covenant could not be the reason why God purposed to make a new one, though it was a good reason why he was to make it, *not according to the covenant* which he made with old Israel, and which made no effectual provision for their continuing in it, or standing in his favour. But, as in the LXX., *oti* has sometimes the signification of (*ote*) *when* ; so here it may signify, “when they continued not in my covenant,” referring to the time in which it was made : For after the people at Sinai had repeatedly consented to the words of the covenant, and promised obedience, Exod. xxiv. 3, 7, and that transaction was solemnly ratified by the blood of sacrifice, ver. 8, Moses was immediately called up to the

mount to receive the tables of the law, ver. 12 ; but before he returned, the people had broken the covenant, by making and worshipping the golden calf, chap. xxxii. The Lord, in delivering his law, had said unto them, " I am the Lord thy God, which have brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage. Thou shalt have no other gods before me. Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth. Thou shalt not bow down thyself to them, nor serve them," &c. Exod. xx. 2—6. But now the Lord informs Moses, who was with him on the mount, " Thy people, which thou broughtest out of the land of Egypt, have corrupted themselves. They have turned aside quickly out of the way which I commanded them : they have made them a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed thereunto, and said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which have brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," chap. xxxii. 7, 8. They might have been guilty of many other faults without absolutely breaking the covenant ; but idolatry was a direct and total breach of it on their part, as it entirely violated the fundamental principles of their allegiance to the only true God, who had condescended to take them into a peculiar relation to himself above all other people : So that the covenant at Sinai was scarcely completed when it was broken. And though the Lord, at the earnest and repeated intercession of Moses, did not utterly consume them, but having punished and humbled them, he in a manner renewed the covenant, and gave them other tables in place of those which had been broken (see chap. xxxii. xxxiii. xxxiv.) ; yet they still remained a stiff-necked and rebellious people. Their heart was not right with God, neither were they stedfast in his covenant. Nor was this the case only with Israel in the wilderness : Their posterity, who got possession of the promised land, also turned back and dealt unfaithfully like their fathers ;

for they provoked God to anger with their high-places, and moved him to jealousy with their graven images : So that they repeatedly violated God's covenant by their idolatry, and the wickedness connected with it. (See a detail of their conduct, Psalm lxxviii. and cvi.) The Lord having said that old Israel continued not in his covenant, adds,

—“*and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.*”] Our translation of the Hebrew is, “although I was an husband to them, saith the Lord.” As the covenant with the nation of Israel is frequently compared to a marriage covenant, Jer. iii. 14, and their breaking of it by idolatry to whoredom and adultery, verses 1, 2, one would naturally think that the mention of his being an husband to them was to give an affecting view of their guilt and ingratitude : But as the LXX. render the words, “and I disregarded,” or (*emelesa*) “neglected them,” and especially as our apostle sanctions this sense, we have reason to believe that it is the sense originally intended by the Holy Spirit, and may be thus paraphrased, “Old Israel quickly brake the covenant by which they were espoused to me, and went after other lovers, and I, as an offended husband, treated them with disregard and neglect.” Besides, it has been observed by learned men, that the Hebrew word *bagnal*, is the same with the Arabic *bahal*, and signifies not only to govern, or be a husband, but also to refuse, despise, or nauseate. (See Whitby on this place.) So that the Hebrew clause will bear to be rendered as the LXX. and the apostle have done.

In consequence of their breaking his covenant, the Lord says, “*I regarded them not.*” True indeed, “he being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity and destroyed them not ; yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up all his wrath,” Psalm lxxviii. 38. That is, he did not punish them, as they deserved, by consuming them at once, as he proposed, Exod. xxxii. 10. Yet he manifested his displeasure by many awful and

signal judgments, whereby numbers of them were cut off from time to time, till the whole of that generation who first broke his covenant fell in the wilderness and came short of his rest. The succeeding generations, though they obtained the possession of Canaan, as was promised to Abraham, yet by their frequent and abominable idolatries and rebellions, they rendered themselves loathsome and nauseous in the sight of God, so that he greatly abhorred Israel his own inheritance, Psalm lxxviii. 59, cvi. 40. "He gave them into the hand of the heathen, and they that hated them ruled over them. Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand," verses 41, 42, and at length he suffered them to be carried captive into a foreign land. Matters were nearly in this state when the Lord, by the prophet Jeremiah, intimated his gracious design of making a new covenant of a very different nature from the former, and which is described in the following verses by the better promises on which it is established :

Ver. 10. *For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts :—*] Here the Lord describes the new covenant with an evident reference to the old, and also by way of contrast to it. He was to make it with the *house of Israel* ; that is, as has already been explained, the spiritual seed of Abraham by faith, the true Israel of God, of which old Israel were a type, even all those whom the Lord shall call, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, Gal. iii. 26—29, Rom. ix. 8, 24. He was to make it *after those days*, upwards of 630 years after the date of this prophecy, for then the Mediator of this better covenant was to come and ratify it with his blood, verse 6, chap ix. 15.

The first promise on which this covenant stands is, "*I will put (or didous, give) my laws into their mind, and write them in (or epi, upon) their hearts.*" This shew

that the new covenant has laws as well as the old had, and these are to be found in the book of the new covenant, or the writings of the apostles and evangelists. But the laws of the old covenant, though twice written with the finger of God, were only engraven on tables of stone, Exod. xxxi. 18, chap. xxxiv. 1, and not on the hearts of the people; and, therefore, when that people promised to obey them, the Lord, who knew their hearts better than they did themselves, said, "O that there were such a heart in them, that they would fear me and keep all my commandments always!" Deut. v. 27—30. But in the new covenant he promises to supply what was wanting in the first, and to give his laws in a more effectual manner, so as to secure the obedience of his people. They were to be "written, not with ink," as in the book of the law, "but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart," 2 Cor. iii. 3. And this method of giving his laws into their minds, and writing them upon their hearts, is termed "the ministration of the Spirit," as opposed to "the ministration of death, written and engraven on stones," verses 7, 8. This is the same thing that was promised by Moses to the true Israel, "The Lord thy God will circumcise thine heart, and the heart of thy seed, to love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul," Deut. xxx. 6, compared with Rom. ii. 28, 29, Philip. iii. 3; and is farther insisted on in Jeremiah: "And I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear me for ever. And I will make an everlasting covenant with them, that I will not turn away from them to do them good; but I will put my fear into their hearts, that they shall not depart from me," chap. xxxii. 38, 39, 40. This is that new heart and new spirit which is promised in Ezek. xxxvi. 26, 27, and which in the New Testament is termed regeneration, or being born again of the Spirit, and of the incorruptible seed of the word, and without which no man can enter into the king-

dom of God, John iii. 5 ; 1 Peter i. 23, 24 ; Titus iii. 5. The law is summed up in two commandments, viz. " Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. There is no other commandment greater than these," Matt. xxii. 37—41, Mark xii. 30, 31, for love is the fulfilling of the law, Rom xii. 8—10 ; and its different precepts are just so many directions to the proper and practical exercise of love, which is the common principle of the whole. Now to give his laws into their hearts and write them upon their minds, imports, that by means of the gospel revelation and the influences of his Holy Spirit, he would so enlighten their minds in the knowledge of his character and of the way of salvation, as should effectually incline their hearts, and draw forth their supreme and habitual affections towards him and his revealed will, so that their obedience to his laws will be hearty and unconstrained. In connection with this he promises,

—"*and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people :*"] Some translate *eis Theon*, for a God, and *eis laon*, for a people ; but the sense is the same. As God is the creator, upholder, supreme governor, and proprietor of all things, he may in that sense be said to be naturally the God of all his rational creatures. But this promise respects his being a God to his people in a covenant relation. When he made a covenant with ancient Israel, he declared himself to be their God in a distinguished and peculiar sense, and that they should be his peculiar treasure above all people, though all the earth was his, Exod. xix. 5. But in the new covenant he promises to be a God to the true Israel in a still higher, more beneficial, and peculiar sense than he was to that earthly nation ; and this appears from the better promises upon which the new

covenant is established, which are of a spiritual and eternal nature. In this covenant he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is the Mediator of it, and in whom all its promises are yea and amen; and so is the God and Father of all who believe on the name of his Son, blessing them not merely with temporal blessings, but with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ, according as he had chosen them in him before the foundation of the world; see John xx. 17; Gal. iii. 26; Eph. i. 3, 4; Rev. xxi. 3, 7. In short, to be their God, imports, that all his perfections will be engaged on their behalf to make them completely and eternally happy.

As he promises to be a God to them, so he also promises that they shall be to him a people. This imports not only that he will own and treat them as his people, but that they, on their part, will acknowledge, fear, love, obey, and worship him as their God, placing their trust in his power, wisdom, faithfulness, and grace, and their happiness in the enjoyment of his favour; so that the honourable and distinguished titles given to old Israel, as a typical people, while they obeyed God's voice and kept his covenant, Exod. xix. 5, 6, are applied in their spirit and truth to the people of the new covenant: "But ye are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that ye should shew forth the praises of him who hath called you out of darkness into his marvellous light," 1 Pet. ii. 9. Another promise on which the new covenant is established, is in these words,

Ver. 11. "*And they shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me from the least to the greatest.*" This promise is not to be understood as if under the new covenant, there was to be no farther need of the outward means of instruction in the knowledge of the Lord; for that would be to set aside Christ's institution of preaching the gospel, and of teaching his disciples to observe all things whatsoever he hath commanded, and which was to

continue to the end of the world, Matt. xxviii. 19, 20. It would make his gifts of pastors and teachers to be of no farther use for the work of the ministry, or the edification of his body, the church, Eph. iv. 11—13; and it would contradict the repeated injunctions in this very epistle, to Christian brethren to exhort one another, chap. iii. 12, 13, x. 24, 25.

But I apprehend that this promise is to be understood not in an absolute, but comparative sense, and by way of opposition to that ignorance of God, which so generally prevailed among the people of the old covenant. Though the Lord had manifested himself in a most wonderful and sensible manner to old Israel by a train of miraculous interpositions, in redeeming them from Egyptian bondage, entering into covenant with them, and giving them his laws and institutions as the rule of their obedience, attended with the most striking and awful appearances of his presence, all which laid a sufficient foundation for that faith, love, and obedience which he required of them; yet the generality of them knew him not. The Lord often complains of them as a stiff-necked and froward generation, children in whom is no faith; a nation void of counsel, and of no understanding; who always erred in heart, and did not know his ways, Deut. xxxii. 20, 28; Psalm xcv. 10, 11. They were also prone to the grossest idolatry, Exod. xxxii. 4, Num. xxv. 1—4, Judges ii. 10—14, and so needed constantly to be taught to know the Lord, as distinguished from heathen idols.

This promise also imports, That the light of revelation under the new covenant would far excel, in point of clearness, spirituality, and efficacy, all the discoveries which God made of himself under the former covenant. The law had indeed a shadow of good things to come, but not the very image of the things. It was such a representation of future good things by types and figures, as at the same time veiled them; and this was emblematically represented by the vail which Moses put upon his face to



hide the dazzling, though vanishing glory of it, when he delivered the law, so that the children of Israel could not stedfastly look to the end of that which is abolished, *Exod. xxxiv. 29—35*; *2 Cor. iii. 13*. But, when the new covenant was ratified by the blood of Christ, and published in the gospel with great plainness of speech, then the veil was done away, so far as it affected the outward revelation, *2 Cor. iii. 14*.

Yet it must be observed, that however clear and plain the gospel revelation is, there is an internal veil upon the hearts of men, consisting of their own prejudices, unbelief, and depravity, which, till it be removed by the enlightening and regenerating influences of the Spirit accompanying the word, so blinds their minds, that the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ does not shine into them, *verse 14, 15, chap. iv. 4*. This was remarkably the case with the greater part of the Jewish nation, who, though the gospel was clearly preached to them by Christ and his apostles, and fully confirmed to them by miracles and the predictions of their own prophets; yet the veil still remained upon their hearts, as it does unto this day: "And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of *Esaias*, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive; for this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them," *Matt. xiii. 14, 15*; *Acts xxviii. 26, 27*. Nor is this opposition to the light peculiar to the Jews, but is common to all mankind in their natural state. See *1 Cor. ii. 14*.

But herein lies the excellency of the new covenant above the first, that all the people who really belong to it know the Lord; and this knowledge is not obtained without divine teaching; for it is promised, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord," *Isa. liv. 13*. This teaching

our Lord represents as having a particular respect to himself as its object, and as absolutely necessary to faith in him, "No man can come unto me, except the Father who hath sent me draw him;" and he at the same time represents it as effectual to that end. "Every man, therefore, that hath heard and learned of the Father, cometh unto me," John vi. 44, 45. It is the knowledge and belief of the gospel of salvation, and of the character of God as therein manifested: or, as the apostle emphatically expresses it, it is "the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ," 2 Cor. iv. 6, and which our Lord in his prayer connects with eternal life, "This is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom thou hast sent," John xvii. 3. Now, no man can effectually teach his neighbour or his brother this knowledge, any more than he can regenerate him, or write God's law on his heart. Faith, indeed, cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God preached, Rom. x. 14, 17; yet, when Paul did plant, and Apollos water, it was God who gave the increase, 1 Cor. iii. 6. And herein the divine sovereignty is manifested, that while these things are hid from the wise and prudent, who enjoy all the outward means of instruction to the best advantage, it pleases the Lord of heaven and earth to reveal them unto babes, Matt. xi. 25, 26. As all the people of this covenant have the true knowledge of the Lord, that being essential to their being actually within the bond of it; so that they have no need that their neighbour brother should teach them to know him, as if they were yet wholly ignorant of him. There are indeed different degrees of this knowledge among them, and they have constant need to be growing in grace, and in the knowledge of Christ; but they all know the saving truth. The apostle John writes to them thus, "I have not written unto you, because ye know not the truth; but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth:" And, distinguishing them by their different degrees of

knowledge, he distributes them into three classes, viz. little children, young men, and fathers; he says to the least of these, "I write unto you, little children, because your sins are forgiven you for his name's sake:" And again, "I write unto you, little children, because ye have known the Father," 1 John ii. 12, 13, 21. So that though there are among them different degrees of knowledge and strength of faith, they are all taught of God to know him from the least of them to the greatest of them. Another promise on which the new covenant is established is this:

Ver. 12. "*For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.*" ] The sacrifices of the first covenant could not take away sin, though they were of divine appointment. The apostle informs us that it was not possible for them to do so, chap. x. 4. They indeed, by virtue of divine appointment, served to purify the body from ceremonial defilements, chap. ix. 13, and the annual atonement served to free the nation, as a body, from those civil penalties which they had incurred during the preceding year, Lev. xvi. 30, but they could not purify the conscience from guilt, nor procure an everlasting remission of sins. There was no proportion between the sacrifices of brute animals and the demerit of sin, or the high demands of God's law and justice, upon the sinner. They could not in the nature of things display God's infinite opposition to sin in the punishment of it, nor declare his righteousness in the remission of it. Their main design was to prefigure a better sacrifice, whilst the repetition of them, year by year continually, demonstrated their own insufficiency, and that God was still calling sin to remembrance by such an appointment, chap. x. 3.

But in this respect the new covenant infinitely excels the old, for therein God promises to remember the sins and iniquities of his people no more. This promise is grounded on the sacrifice of Christ; for as to the sacri-

fices which were offered according to the law, the apostle shews, from Psalm xl. 6—9, that God was not well pleased with them as a sufficient atonement for sin, and that the sacrifice of Christ hath come in their place, and set them all aside, chap. x. 5—10. That his sacrifice hath made a full and complete atonement, and that at once, so as to perfect for ever them that are sanctified, verses 10, 15; for proof of this he adduces the witness of the Holy Spirit in this promise of the new covenant. "And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more," ver. 15—17. On which he observes, that where there is such a remission of sins as that they shall be remembered no more, there can be no need of any more offering for sins, verse 18. Christ, by his one offering, which is of perpetual efficacy, having fully and for ever satisfied justice, removed the curse, and obtained eternal redemption for all the people of the new covenant, *i. e.* for all believers; their sins are no more charged to their account for punishment, nor remembered, so as to require any more offering for their expiation, "for there is no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus," Rom. viii. 1. "It is God that justifieth: who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us," verses 33, 34.

All the people of the new covenant have sinned and come short of the glory of God, otherwise they would have no need of the remission of sins; therefore, the blessings of this covenant must originate in the sovereign free grace of God, but they come to us through the redemption that is in Jesus Christ. It is through the redemption that is in his blood that we have the *forgiveness of sins* according to the riches of God's grace, Eph. i. 7. The true *knowledge of the Lord* is the knowledge of his glory in the face of Christ, 2 Cor. iv. 6, whom he hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of

sins, Rom. iii. 25, and herein he appears to be a just God and a Saviour, Isaiah xlv. 21. It is this discovery of God that begets in the soul that reverence and godly fear of him, and supreme love to him, which is *his law written in the heart*, and the principle of all true obedience to it, 1 John iv. 9, 10, 19; 1 Tim. i. 5; John xiv. 23.

Though the remission of sins was procured for the people of the new covenant, when Christ offered the sacrifice of himself, yet they do not receive or enjoy that blessing till they believe the gospel; for it is by faith in Christ's blood that they receive the remission of sins, and are justified from all things, Acts x. 43, xiii. 38, 39, and being justified by faith they have peace with God, through the Lord Jesus Christ, Rom. v. 1. And as this faith is not of themselves, but is the gift of God, it being given them in the behalf of Christ to believe on him, Eph. ii. 8, Philip. i. 29; so their justification must be entirely of grace, Rom. iii. 24.

It may farther be observed, that though the people of this covenant have all their past sins forgiven them when they believe the gospel, and have the forgiveness of their future sins secured and provided for in the covenant, so that sin shall not have dominion over them to condemn or enslave them, they being not under the law, but under grace, Rom. vi. 14; yet as they are liable to sin while in this world, and cannot say they have no sin without deceiving themselves, 1 John i. 8, therefore they have need of the continued pardon of sin, and are directed to pray to their heavenly Father for it as for their daily bread, Matt. vi. 12. And for this they have the highest encouragement, being assured that, if they confess their sins, he is faithful and just to forgive them their sins, and to cleanse them from all unrighteousness; and that they have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for their sins, and whose blood cleanseth them from all sin, 1 John i. 7, 9, ii. 1, 2. And this is the practical use which the apostle makes of

Christ's priesthood, "Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need," Heb. iv. 16.

The apostle having clearly proved from Jer. xxxi. 31—35, that the Lord was to make a new covenant, which in all respects was greatly to excel the covenant made at Sinai, he proceeds in the following verse to draw an inference from an expression in the foregoing quotation, in order to prove one of the main things he had in view, viz. that the Sinaitic covenant was entirely abrogated.

Ver. 13. *In that he saith, "A new covenant," he hath made the first old.*—] As the apostle's argument rests on the word (*kainen*) *new*, he leaves the word *covenant* to be understood, which our translators have supplied from ver. 8. Now the Lord, by the prophet, having called the covenant he was to make after those days *NEW*, and that by way of contrast to the covenant which he made with the Israelites when he brought them out of Egypt, it is the same as if he had expressly declared the first covenant to be *OLD*; for whatever thing is said to be *new* in comparison with another, that other must be *old* in comparison with it. But it is not merely its priority in point of time that is here intended by its being old. It denotes also its being insufficient and temporary. It was originally designed only as a temporary prefiguration of the new covenant, in which it was to terminate, as being of no more use. The Lord, therefore, by promising to make a new covenant, hath made old the first, that is, hath declared it to be ineffectual for perfecting the church, or for answering the great purposes he had in view, it being weak, like one in the declining state of old age. But as it might still remain a doubt with the Hebrews, whether, on account of it being old, it was to be entirely set aside, therefore the apostle adds,  
—*Now, that which decayeth and waxeth old, is ready to vanish away.*] This is a maxim which holds universally true, that whatever decays or grows old must certainly

come to an end. Now that the Sinaitic covenant was not intended to be permanent, but was to vanish when the new covenant should take place, appears both from the nature of its constitution, and from its end or design. As to its *constitution*, it was worldly and temporal: It was made with the nation of Israel, who were in general a carnal people, and it constituted a peculiar temporal relation between God and them, he being their political sovereign, and they his people, as distinguished from all other worldly nations: It had sinful mortal priests, a worldly sanctuary, carnal ordinances of worship, an earthly inheritance, and temporal rewards and punishments: Many of its institutions were local, and could not be observed, nor indeed were binding without the limits of the land of Canaan. In short, its whole frame and constitution was of a temporal nature, as the event has fully demonstrated, for in fact, it has long ago vanished away. As to its *end* or *design*, it was chiefly intended to adumbrate or prefigure the new covenant, and the spiritual things pertaining to it, as the apostle in this epistle particularly shews; and therefore must of course have vanished away when the new covenant came to be established. Besides, the former covenant was confined to the nation of Israel, and excluded all other nations from its peculiar privileges, Exod. xix. 5, 6, whereas the latter extends its blessings to all nations, according to the promise made to Abraham, Gen. xxii. 18, and as, in this respect, they were incompatible, and could not both be in force at the same time, the latter must necessarily have set aside the former, that the blessing of Abraham might come on the nations through Jesus Christ, who hath redeemed his people, both of Jews and Gentiles, from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them, Gal. iii. 13, 14. From all which, it is clear, that God, in promising to make a new covenant, intimated his design to abrogate the whole of the Mosaic economy, which actually took place at the death, resurrection, and ascension of Christ; for then the new covenant

was made and published in the gospel, with the Holy Spirit sent down from heaven. Yet the believing Hebrews still retained a strong attachment to the Mosaic law, and were indulged in it for a time; but it proved hurtful to many of them, both by hindering their progress in Christian knowledge, chap. v. 15, and their hearty union with gentile believers, Acts xxi. 20, 21; Gal. ii. 11—17. The apostle wrote this epistle to loose them from Judaism entirely, and to carry them on to perfection; but while the temple worship continued, many of them were much wedded to it. When, therefore, the apostle says, that the old covenant was (*eggus aphanismou*) ready to disappear, or be put out of sight, he may also have a view to the destruction of the temple at Jerusalem, foretold by our Lord, Matt. xxiv. 1, 2, which concurred with the doctrine of the apostles to abolish it, by putting an end to the principal part of the Jewish worship and ordinances; which event was near at hand when he wrote this epistle.

On this subject, Dr Owen reasons with the Jews to the following effect, though somewhat different in expression: You Jews must admit, that the tenor and charter of all your peculiar privileges as a nation, is the covenant which was made at Sinai; consequently, that these privileges must continue or cease with that covenant. If you believe the Scriptures, you must also admit, that in Jer. xxxi. 31, &c., there is the promise of another covenant, which was to be made long after the former, and of a different nature from it; and that this could not take place unless that first covenant were imperfect, faulty, and removeable, ver. 7. Now we ask, do you believe that God will make a new covenant, not according to the covenant which he made with your fathers at Sinai? If you do not, you renounce the prophets and the promise of God to you. But if you do believe it, we ask, With what sacrifices shall it be established? and by what priest, and with what worship shall it be administered? If you say, By the sacrifices, priests, and worship of the law, you retract what you have



granted, viz. that it is a *new* and *another* covenant; for such sacrifices, priests, and worship, cannot confirm and administer any other covenant but the first, for which only they were appointed. But if you admit that this new and other covenant must have a new mediator, priest, and sacrifice, without which it cannot be a new covenant; then must the old cease, and be removed, that the new may come in its place.

From the Scripture account of the old and new covenants, it is evident that they were not merely a twofold administration of the same covenant, as many affirm, but two very different and distinct covenants, the former being a type or shadow of the latter. We shall recapitulate some of the particulars wherein they differ.

Though the Sinaitic covenant was not the same with what is called the covenant of works made with Adam, yet it represented it in the law delivered from the mount, Exod. xx., in the promise of life upon perfect obedience, Lev. xviii. 5, and in the sentence of death upon every transgression of it, Deut. xxvii. 26. But in the new covenant that law is fulfilled, and its curse removed by the obedience unto death of the Son of God, whereby pardon and eternal life is procured for all who believe on him, Gal. iii. 13; Rom. v. 18, 19; John iii. 14, 16.

The old covenant could neither disannul nor fulfil the gospel promise which was made to Abraham four hundred and thirty years before it, Gal. iii. 16, 17, 18. But the new covenant is the performance of that promise, Luke i. 72, 73; Gal. iii. 8, 9, 13, 14.

The old covenant was peculiar to the nation of Israel, and calculated to keep them distinct from all other nations, Exod. xix. 4, 5. But the new covenant extends its administration to all nations under heaven, and its saving benefits to all who believe, without regard to distinction between Jew and Gentile, Mark xvi. 15; Rom. x. 12; Gal. iii. 8, 9, 28.

Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, Deut. v.

25—28; Gal. iii. 19. Its priests were Aaron and his sons, Exod. xl. 12—16. Its sacrifices were calves and goats, Heb. x. 6. But Christ himself is the mediator, priest, and sacrifice of the new covenant, 1 Tim. ii. 5; Heb. xii. 24, iv. 14, x. 10. It was by the blood of slain animals that the former covenant was dedicated and ratified, Exod. xxiv. 3—9. But the latter was dedicated and ratified by the blood of Christ, Matt. xxvi. 28, Heb. xiii. 20.

The first covenant was promulgated under every attendant circumstance of dread and terror, Exod. xx., and by the ministry of angels, Acts vii. 13; Gal. iii. 19; Heb. ii. 2. But the new covenant was promulgated with mildness, condescension, and grace, John i. 14—17, Eph. ii. 17, and by the Son of God in his own person, Heb. ii. 3.

The old covenant could not of itself either save or condemn any man eternally, as its promises and threatenings were of a temporal nature, Deut. xxviii. But the promises and threatenings of the new covenant chiefly regard a future state, and so are eternal, Mark xvi. 16; John iii. 36.

The former covenant made nothing perfect; it was shadowy, and could not effect what it represented, and so has vanished away, Heb. viii. 13. But the latter is effectual, substantial, and permanent, and is termed the everlasting covenant, Heb. x. 14, xiii. 20.

## APPENDIX.



# APPENDIX.

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## No. I.

### ON THE DOUBLE SENSE OF PROPHECY,

REFERRED TO IN CHAP. I. 5. NOTE (b.)

THAT there are several prophecies and promises in the Old Testament which had a literal respect to, and an actual accomplishment in, the affairs of the Jewish church and kingdom, must be obvious to every reader. And it is equally obvious, that the inspired apostles of Christ gave another sense to the same prophecies or promises, and apply them to Christ and the affairs of his kingdom, It must, therefore, be very important to understand the principle upon which such prophecies are constructed, so as to bear a twofold sense and application to things so different in their nature. The following observations may perhaps throw some light on this subject. Let it therefore be observed :—

1st, That the Jewish economy, both in church and state, was a prefiguration of Christ's church and kingdom, is what must be admitted by all who own the divine inspiration of the writers of the New Testament ; for

these writers frequently refer to it, not merely by way of accommodation or illustration of their subject, but as what was originally intended of God to adumbrate or typify the spiritual dispensation of the Messiah. They inform us, in general, that four hundred and thirty years after the gospel promise was confirmed of God respecting Christ to Abraham, the Mosaic law was given to his descendants, not as a detached, perfect, and independent system by itself, but as an introductory and intermediate dispensation until that promise should be accomplished, and with a view to the faith that should afterwards be revealed, Gal. iii. 16—24; that it was intended as a schoolmaster to bring them to Christ, ver. 24; and that Christ is the end of that law, Rom. x. 4. That the design of that constitution, which was framed and established by means of the faithful ministry of Moses, was “for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after,” namely, under the gospel, Heb. iii. 5—that the law had a shadow of good things to come, chap. x. 1—and that the body or substance of that shadow is Christ, Col. ii. 17.

They also condescend on particulars, such as that under the promise of the earthly inheritance, the patriarchs understood and expected a better country, that is, an heavenly one, Heb. xi. 8, 9, 10, 16. That the sacrifices of the law, particularly, were a shadow of good things to come, and so were set aside by the sacrifice of Christ, Heb. x. 1, 9—that the tabernacle, and all that pertained to it, was an example and shadow of heavenly things—a figure referring to the present time, patterns of things in the heavens—figures of the true tabernacles of which Christ is a minister, and which the Lord pitched, and not man, Heb. viii. 2, 5, chap. ix. 9, 23, 24; that the entry of the high priest alone, within the second vail, and that but once every year, was intended by the Holy Spirit to signify that the way into the holiest of all was not made manifest while the first tabernacle was yet standing, Heb. ix. 7, 8. This also proves that the Aaronical priesthood

prefigured the priesthood of Christ ; for if the place in which the legal high priest officiated was a pattern or figure of the true tabernacle whereof Christ is minister, and if the sacrifices which they offered were a shadow of good things to come, as has been shown, it is plain that they themselves must have been types of Christ in his priestly office. The kingdom of David was also a type of the kingdom of the Messiah ; and so David and Solomon (who sat on the throne of Jehovah over Israel, 1 Chron. xviii. 5, chap. xxix. 23), were set up as types of him in his royal character. Why else is the Messiah himself so often called *David* in prophecy, Jer. xxx. 9, Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, Hos. iii. 5, but because he was to be the antitype of David ? And how is the promise fulfilled that he should sit on the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, Isa. ix. 7, or that the Lord God would give unto him the throne of his father David, Luke i. 32, if David's throne and kingdom had not typified his ? for it is certain he never sat upon David's earthly throne.

2d, As the main design of the Jewish economy was to prefigure the future dispensation of the Messiah, and stood related to it as an introductory and subordinate part of one great connected scheme, so there are several promises and prophecies which are constructed upon that principle, and involve in them things relating both to the type and antitype. These are what are called prophecies of a *double sense*. In their *letter* or *literal sense*, they respected the affairs of the Jewish church and state, which were typical ; but in their *spirit*, or *spiritual sense*, they were predictions of what the types themselves prefigured, viz. Christ, and the affairs of his kingdom. Some of the prophecies, indeed, though expressed in figures borrowed from Jewish affairs, had no respect to them, but referred entirely to gospel times ; but those of them which are formed upon the principle we are now speaking of, had a respect to both. Thus the promise made to Abraham of a numerous seed, Gen. xv. 5, includes both his natural

and his spiritual seed, Rom. iv. 18, Gal. iii. 7, 22; and the promise of the earthly possession to the former, Gen. xv. 7, 18, contained the pledge of the heavenly inheritance to the latter, Rom. iv. 13—18; Heb. ix. 15, chap. xi. 9, 10, 16. Thus also the promises of the restoration of the Jews from captivity, with their settlement and prosperity in their own land, were in some measure literally accomplished in those events; but it is evident from the promises themselves, that they greatly exceed any temporal deliverance of the Jews, and comprehend the spiritual blessings of the new covenant, see Jer. xxiii. 5, 9, chap. xxxi. and xxxiii.

This double sense of prophecy seems implied in what the angel says to John, viz. "The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy," Rev. xix. 10. On this we observe,

1st, That though prophecy may be delivered in figurative language, and have a literal meaning answerable to the letter of the figure, yet it has also a *spirit*, or spiritual sense, which is the main thing intended.

2d, That this spirit of prophecy is *the testimony of Jesus*, or concerning Jesus, *i. e.* the great design and ultimate object of the prophetic dispensation is to bear witness or give testimony to Jesus. This Peter also declares, "To him gave all the prophets witness," Acts x. 43. Hence the inspired apostles, seldom, if ever, take any notice of the letter of such prophecies as have a double sense, but apply them solely and directly to the Messiah and his kingdom, according to their true spirit and ultimate design.

3d, That the promise made unto David, and to which our apostle refers, must be explained according to the principle above stated, is abundantly evident, both from the promise itself and from the succeeding prophecies which refer to it. The principal part of the promise is in these words, "Furthermore, I tell thee that the Lord will



build thee an house. And it shall come to pass, when the days be expired that thou must go to be with thy fathers, that I will raise up thy seed after thee, which shall be of thy sons; and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build me an house, and I will establish his throne for ever. I will be his Father, and he shall be my son. If he commit," or rather, *whosoever shall commit*,\* "iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: but I will not take my mercy away from him, as I took it from him that was before thee. But I will settle him in mine house, and in my kingdom for ever; and his throne shall be established for evermore," 2 Sam. vii. 11—17; 1 Chron. xvii. 10—15.

It is plain that this promise has a respect to David's natural offspring, who should succeed him in the government of the earthly kingdom; for David applies it to his son Solomon, 1 Chron. xxii. 6—11, chap. xxviii. 5—8; and so does the Lord himself, 2 Chron. vii. 17, 18. It contains a threatening against any of David's children, or royal successors, who should commit iniquity, which was verified in the punishment inflicted upon his transgressing seed, as the succeeding history abundantly shews. And this promise to David was frequently pleaded by the Jewish church, when the judgments inflicted upon David's temporal house and kingdom seemed to make it void, see Psalm lxxxix. and cxxxii.

But it is equally evident that this notable promise chiefly respected the Messiah, who was to spring of the

\* The Hebrew relative pronoun *asher* frequently signifies *whosoever*, or *he who*, as is well observed by Mr Peirce; but here it refers, not to the children of the Messiah, as he supposes, but to whosoever of David's children as should succeed him on the throne; see Psalm lxxxix. 30, 31, 32. Accordingly, many of them did commit iniquity, and were chastised with the rod of men, and at last deprived of the sovereignty; for to them the promise was conditional.—From these transgressing children of David, Christ is distinguished as a righteous Branch.—Jer. xxiii. 5.

royal seed of David according to the flesh, and to rise again from the dead to sit on his heavenly throne : for,

(1.) The Lord promises to the person here spoken of, "He shall be my Son." This cannot apply to Solomon in any distinguished sense but as a type, nor was he usually called the Son of God ; but the Father, by a voice from the excellent glory, owned and proclaimed Jesus to be his beloved Son, Matt. iii. 17, chap. xvii. 5, 2 Peter i. 17, and by this name he is distinguished throughout the whole of the New Testament, it being a name above every name, and which shows him superior not only to mortals, but to the highest angels.

(2.) He says, "I will settle him in mine house, and in my kingdom for ever, and his throne shall be established for evermore." Solomon was but a mortal man, and his throne and kingdom were temporal, and came to an end ; therefore this promise was never strictly or fully accomplished in him. But long after his death it is renewed, and applied to him who is styled the Mighty God, the everlasting Father, and Prince of Peace, in these words, "Of the increase of his government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice, from henceforth even for ever," Isa. ix. 6, 7 ; see also Luke i. 32, 33.

(3.) David himself understood that a greater than Solomon was intended in this promise. This appears from his last words, where, having mentioned the Lord's description of a King after his own heart, he says, "Although my house be not so with God, yet he hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure ; for this is all my salvation and all my desire, although he make it not to grow," 2 Sam. xxiii. 5. These words plainly intimate, that David's hopes were not very sanguine respecting his temporal house ; yet this did not shake his faith in God's promise, which he terms, "an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and sure," and

places all his salvation and all his desire in it, in the near prospect of leaving this world. He must, therefore, have understood it to be a promise of the Messiah who was to come of his seed ; and that he did so understand it, the apostle Peter expressly declares, " Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne ; he, seeing this before, spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption," Acts ii. 30, 31.

(4.) Many succeeding prophecies concerning the Messiah refer back to the original promise made unto David, and so demonstrate that he was the great object of that promise. The posterity of David were deprived of the government at the Babylonish captivity, and none of them ever after sat upon the throne of that earthly kingdom ; yet, about that time, the Lord, by the prophet Jeremiah, renewed the promise which he had made unto David, with redoubled assurances that he would perform that good thing which he had promised, by causing the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David ; and that day and night should sooner cease than he would break his covenant with David his servant, that he should never want a Son to reign upon his throne, Jer. xxxiii. 14—26. This Son could be no other than Christ. Again, the Messiah is often promised under the name *David*, see Jer. xxx. 9 ; Ezek. xxxiv. 23, 24, chap. xxxvii. 24, 25 ; Hosea iii. 5. The erection of his kingdom is described as a raising up the tabernacle of David that had fallen down, and closing up the breaches thereof, Amos ix. 11 ; Acts xv. 16, 17. His throne is termed the throne of his father David, Isa. ix. 7 ; Luke i. 32. And the peace and prosperity of his reign is often represented by images borrowed from the reign of Solomon, when the kingdom of Israel was in its greatest glory, Jer. xxiii. 5, 6 ; Micah iv. 3, 4, with 1 Kings iv. 25. Now, as these and many other prophecies refer to a period when

the reign of the temporal house of David was to be at an end, they can have no respect to any of his natural posterity, but must apply solely to his Son the Messiah; and as they also refer to, and are renewals of, the promise made unto David, they clearly prove that the Messiah was chiefly intended in that promise.

(5.) Lastly, the writings of the New Testament not only explain the promise made unto David of the Messiah, but apply it directly and solely to Jesus. The angel foretelling his birth, and referring to this promise, says to his mother, "He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David. And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end," Luke i. 32, 33. Peter, full of the Holy Spirit, explains it to be God's oath to David, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; and applies it to Jesus who had been crucified, but now raised from the dead, and exalted at the right hand of God, being made both Lord and Christ, Acts ii. 30—37. And Paul, referring to the renewal of the same promise in Isa. lv. 3, says, "Of this man's (David's) seed, hath God, according to his promise, raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus. And as concerning that he raised him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, he saith on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David," Acts' xiii. 23, 24.

From the whole it is clear, that though the promise made unto David had a reference to Solomon and his successors on the throne of Israel as types of Christ, yet that Christ himself was the great and ultimate object of that promise, as well as of the succeeding prophecies connected with it; and consequently, that the inspired author of this epistle to the Hebrews cites it with great propriety, to prove that Christ possesses a more excellent name than angels.

## No. II.

ON THE ADMINISTRATION OF ANGELS PREVIOUS TO  
CHRIST'S RESURRECTION AND EXALTATION.

REFERRED TO IN CHAP. II. 5.

“ For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whercof we speak. ”

WE have already explained the meaning of the phrase, *the world to come*. It is that new state of things which commenced at the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, when he was vested with all power in heaven and on earth, and which he will continue to exercise till he hath judged the world, and delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father, 1 Cor. xv. 24. The apostle says that the world to come is that of which he speaks in this epistle; now, that which the apostle treats of is the gospel state under the reign of Christ, as contrasted with the former state of things under the Jewish economy.

When the apostle says, “ Unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come,” or gospel economy, it plainly supposes that the former world or state of things was put in subjection to them, and in some sort under their government and administration; otherwise there would have been no occasion to guard the Jews against such a supposition with respect to the gospel state. To clear this matter let it be considered,

1st, That the apostle, in this and the former chapter, is evidently stating a comparison betwixt the administra-

tions in the Jewish and gospel dispensations, *i. e.* betwixt the angels as acting in the former, and Christ as acting in the latter. He shews that Christ, in consequence of his exaltation, is made as much superior to the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they, chap. i. 4, 5, and that he is exalted to greater honour, power, and dominion, than ever was conferred upon any of them; for in constituting them thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers, to which of them said he at any time, "Sit thou at my right hand," &c., ver. 13. And his argument for giving more earnest heed to the gospel, is drawn from the dignity and excellency of Christ, by whom it was spoken in person, above the angels who delivered the law, chap. ii. 1, 4. Now, if the angels had no more authority under the former dispensation than they have at present, why does the apostle speak of the *world to come* as not being subject to them any more than the former world was? Again, if Christ in person was the administrator in the former economy (as many suppose); if he delivered the law to Israel, and was the angel of God's presence, who guided them through the wilderness into the earthly rest, then where is the argument for giving more earnest heed to the gospel, which the apostle draws from the superior dignity of the speaker? If the speaker be the same in both dispensations, it will only follow that we should give equal heed to both; but will never infer that we should be more attentive on that account to the gospel. Both the opposition, and the argument formed on it would, upon that supposition, be lost. But,

2d, It is plain from the New Testament, that the delivery of the law to Israel was part of the angelic administration. Stephen says they received it by the disposition of angels, Acts vii. 53. That it was an angel of the Lord that appeared unto Moses in a flame of fire in the bush, ver. 30, and that spake unto him in the mount Sinai, and delivered to him the lively oracles to give unto them, ver. 38. Paul says, the law was ordained by

angels, in the hand of a mediator, Gal. iii. 19; and in this chapter he calls it the word spoken by angels, ver. 2. It may be thought difficult to reconcile this with the Old Testament account of it, where we are told expressly, that "God spake all these words," Exod. xx. 1. But this difficulty is not peculiar to the giving of the law; for

3d, Many things which are directly ascribed to Jehovah in one place, are in another place said to be done by angels. Thus, he who spake unto Hagar is called *the angel of the Lord*; yet it is said, "She called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, 'Thou God seest me,'" Gen. xvi. 11, 13. The destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah is directly ascribed to *Jehovah*, Gen. xix. 24, yet the angels say to Lot, "*Jehovah* hath sent us to destroy it," ver. 13. The plagues inflicted upon Egypt were attributed to Jehovah, see Exod. vii. to xiii., Psalm lxxviii. 43—52; yet *Jehovah* is distinguished from the *destroyer*, Exod. xii. 23; and we are told the Lord did these things, by sending evil angels among them," Psalm. lxxviii. 49. The redemption of Israel out of Egypt is almost everywhere ascribed to Jehovah's immediate hand, Exod. xiii. 16; and this is asserted in the very preface of their law, chap. xx. 2, yet Moses ordered his messengers to say to the king of Edom, "When we cried unto the Lord he heard our voice, and sent an *angel*, and hath brought us forth out of Egypt," Num. xx. 16. Jehovah is said to "go before them by day in a pillar of cloud to lead them in the way, and by night in a pillar of fire to give them light," Exod. xiii. 21; yet this is said to be done by the *angel of God*, chap. xiv. 19; and this angel is afterwards promised to bring them into the place prepared for them, chap. xxiii. 20—24. So in like manner in delivering the law, the Lord is said to *speak* with Moses, Exod. xix. 9, to *speak all these words*, chap. xx. 1, to *talk* with Israel from heaven, ver. 22; yet we have already seen that the word was *spoken by angels*, Heb. ii. 2; that it was an *angel* that spake to Moses in the mount Sinai, and delivered

him the lively oracles, Acts vii. 38, 53. Now, how shall we reconcile these different passages? We cannot say that a created angel was Jehovah, or that Jehovah was his own angel; neither will the apostle's argument (as has been shown) permit us to say, that any of these angels was the Son of God in person. We must therefore admit that the law was delivered by created angels, who spoke, as the mouth, as it were, in the person of Jehovah; or, in other words, Jehovah spake and acted in and by the ministry of angels. To clear this a little farther, together with the government of angels in the former state of things, let it be noticed,

4th, That the Old Testament angels are called *Elohim*, *i. e.* *Gods*, Psalm xcvi. 7, with Heb. i. 6. As this is a name of the true God, it cannot be given to angels in respect of nature, but in respect of the power, dominion, and authority, which was given them as God's representatives; and in this sense the rulers of Israel are also called Gods, Exod. xxii. 28; Psalm lxxxii. 1, 6. The Lord said to Moses, "Thou shalt be to Aaron (Belohim) instead of God," Exod. iv. 16. Again, "See I have made thee (*Elohim*) a *God* unto Pharaoh," chap. vii. 1, *i. e.* by giving him authority to speak to him as God's mouth. But the angels were made Gods in a higher sense than human rulers; and they were set over them, and stood, as it were, betwixt them and God.

5th, Among the angels who delivered the law, there appears to be one more eminent, and invested with higher authority than the rest, who is called *the angel of Jehovah's presence*, or face, Isa. lxiii. 9. This distinguished angel spoke in the very person of Jehovah. When he appeared to Moses in the burning bush, he spoke as the voice of God, saying, "I am the God of thy fathers," &c., Exod. iii. 6. This is the particular angel which Stephen mentions as delivering to Moses the lively oracles of the law, Acts vii. 38; and who on that occasion spoke as the mouth of Jehovah, saying, "I am the Lord thy God,"



&c., Exod. xx. 23. This is he whom he sent to bring them out of Egypt, Num. xx. 16, that went before the camp of Israel, Exod. xiv. 19, of whom the Lord speaks particularly, Exod. xxiii. 20—28, chap. xxxii. 34, chap. xxxiii. 2, 3, and who appeared to Joshua with a sword drawn in his hand, and styles himself the *captain*, or prince, of the host of the Lord, Josh. v. 13, 14. Who he was we shall afterwards consider.

6th, Abstract from this angel there was a visible emblem of the Divine Majestic presence. This emblem had the appearance of a flame of fire, or a clear shining light, and is called *the glory of the Lord*, Exod. xl. 34. Thus the Lord appeared to Abraham, Gen. xv. 17, to Moses in the bush, Exod. iii. 2, to Israel in the cloud, chap. xiii. 21, 22, on the mount, chap. xix. 18, in the tabernacle, chap. xl. 34, 35, and in the temple, 2 Chron. v. 14. But we are not to imagine that this glory was the very uncreated essence of the invisible God; for it is expressly declared, “that no man hath seen God at any time,” John i. 18; 1 John iv. 12. “Ye have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape,” John v. 37. “Not that any man hath seen the Father,” John vi. 46. This light is called the *shechina*, which signifies his *dwelling*; and so he is said to “dwell in the light which no man can approach unto, whom no man hath seen or can see,” 1 Tim. vi. 16. Israel saw no manner of similitude when the Lord spake unto them in Horeb, and so they are forbidden to make any image of God, Deut. iv. 12, 15, 16. They saw the mountain burning with *fire*, attended with *clouds* and thick darkness. Out of the midst of this they heard three kinds of voices—the voice of a *trumpet*, the voice of *thunder*, which is called the voice of God, Psal. xxix. 3, 9, and the articulate *voice of words*, delivering the law. And though Jehovah, who fills immensity, was in a peculiar manner present there, Psal. lxxviii. 17, yet none either saw his shape, nor (except in vision) any personal similitude of him, but the

shechina; nor heard his voice, but by means of the elements, and his angelic ministers.

7th, The distinguished angel whom I mentioned before, who is called the angel of the Lord's presence, of whom the Lord says, "my name is in him," and who calls himself the *captain* or *prince* of the Lord's host, Josh. v. 13, 14, appears to me to be *Michael*. My reason for it is this, that in Dan. x. 3, *Michael* is called *one of the chief princes*; and he is particularly denominated to Daniel, "*Michael your prince*," ver. 21. "The *great prince*, which standeth for the children of thy people," chap. xii. 1. *Michael* thus was the prince of Israel; and that he had the charge of Israel in the wilderness seems pretty evident from Jude 9, where we are told he contended with the devil, and "*disputed about the body of Moses*." In this place he is also called the archangel, *i. e.* the chief angel; being not only the *prince* of the Lord's host, Josh. v. 13, 14, but chief over the other angels that were employed about that people, see Rev. xii. 7. That *Michael* was not Christ, seems evident from what Jude says of him, that "he durst not bring against Satan a railing accusation, but, said, the Lord rebuke thee," see also 2 Peter ii. 11. The angel Gabriel was also engaged about Israel during their captivity, Dan. ix. 21; he and *Michael* assisted each other, and held together in working their deliverance, chap. ix. 13, 21; but *Michael* had the chief charge of them, as appears from chap. xii. 1.

8th, This government of angels was not, it seems, peculiar to Israel. The LXX. give the following translation of Deut. xxxii. 8:—"When the Almighty divided the nations, he set the borders of them *according to the number of the angels of God*;" which seems to intimate that he placed angels over the different nations into which the earth was divided. Accordingly in Daniel, *Michael* is called *one of the chief princes*, chap. x. 13, which implies that there were *other* chief princes of the angelic kind: that as he was the prince of Israel, ver. 21,

so we read of the *prince of Persia*, ver. 13, 20, and the *prince of Grecia*, ver. 20. \*

9th, All those appearances in the likeness of men which we read of in the Old Testament were made by angels, as the Scriptures tell us expressly, in most instances mentioned. Men entertained angels unawares, but we nowhere read that they entertained the Son of God, Heb. xiii. 1. Thus it appears that the former state of things was subjected to angels, who are therefore called thrones, dominions, principalities, and powers; but unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, but unto the Son.

\* This view of the Government of angels previous to the reign of the Messiah, was not only held by the Jews, but by the primitive fathers, such as Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Athenagoras, the two Clements, and Eusebius.

## No III.

ON THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE EXERCISE OF  
CHRIST'S OFFICE AS HIGH PRIEST.

REFERRED TO IN CHAP. VIII. 4.

“For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.”

WITH respect to the time when Christ was actually made an high priest, or at least began to officiate as such, I would observe, (1) That as Aaron, his type, was not actually an high priest, nor could take that office upon himself till he was expressly called to it of God, and consecrated according to his directions (see Exod. xxviii. 1, chap. xxix., Lev. viii.), so the apostle, referring to this, says, “Even so Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest, but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee. As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec,” Heb. v. 4, 5, 6. These passages are cited for the express purpose of shewing Christ's appointment to the priesthood, and they mark the time when he was actually vested in that office; for the first passage, viz. Psalm ii. 7, is applied to his resurrection from the dead, Acts xiii. 33, and connected with his sitting down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, and exaltation above angels, Heb. i. 3, 4, 5. As to the other passage, viz. Psalm cx. 4, it is the word of the oath whereby he was made an high priest (Heb. vii. 20, 21, 28), and

connects with these words, "Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool," ver. 1, and so must signify his being a heavenly and everlasting high priest when divested of mortality by a resurrection. (2.) This is further evident from the apostle's commentary on Psalm cx. 4, in the Seventh chapter of his epistle to the Hebrews, where he shows, that the word of the oath which constituted Christ a priest *for ever*, after the order of Melchisedec, made him a priest, "after the power of an endless life," ver. 16, and so no more subject to death, as in the days of his flesh, or like the mortal dying sons of Aaron, ver. 23, 24; but distinguished from them by his *continuing ever—ever living*, ver. 24, 25, and made higher than the heavens, ver. 26. Then he gives the sum of all he had said on this passage in the beginning of the next chapter. "Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum: we have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices; wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer," viz. in the heavenly sanctuary; for he immediately adds, "For if he were on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing there are priests that offer gifts according to the law," Heb. viii. 1—5. Indeed, throughout the whole of this epistle to the Hebrews, Christ is never represented officiating as high priest but in his resurrection state, see chap. iv. 14, chap. vi. 20, chap. vii. 26, chap. viii. 1, 2, 4, chap. ix. 11, 12, 24, chap. x. 12, 13, 19, 20, 21. (3.) Aaron was vested in the high priest's office, by the blood of the ram of consecration, Lev. viii. 22, 25. This in Hebrew is termed the *ram of fillings*, and in the Greek translation, *the ram of perfection*; hence to *consecrate* a priest is, in Hebrew, to *fill his hand*, and in Greek to *perfect* him, Exod. xxviii. 41, xxix. Thus the priests are consecrated to their office both by applying blood to them,

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to him with acceptance. So Christ was consecrated to the  
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own sacrifice; for God is said “to make the captain of our  
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