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RITUALISM
AND
CHRISTIANITY.

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RITUALISM AND CHRISTIANITY.

THE Epistle to the Hebrews throws great light on the question of Ritualism so rife in our day. In the first Epistle to the Corinthians is found the christian man's directory for public worship, and the second chapter of the first Epistle to Timothy contains apostolic instructions for those who meet together for prayer.

No thought have we in the word that assemblies, or churches, have power to decree rites and ceremonies in connection with public worship, nor are individuals at liberty to choose for themselves how they will approach their God. What might be wrong at one time may be right at another. What is suited for a former dispensation may not, in God's mind, be in harmony with the character of a later one. It was wrong for Cain to draw near with the fruits of the ground, and not with a lamb like his brother Abel. Yet in after ages the children of Israel were enjoined to present their basket of first-fruits. (Deut. xxvi.) An offering of the fruits of the ground was not wrong in itself, else Israel never would have been commanded to present it; but of the time and the occasion for its presentation, God, not man, was to be the only judge. Again, before the giving of the law there was no distinction, that we read of, between a burnt-offering and a sin-offering; but after God

had communicated to Moses that elaborate ritual, which is often called by the lawgiver's name, no one in Israel would have ventured to follow the example of Job by offering a burnt-offering on behalf of those who had sinned. The sole authority however for this change from patriarchal practices was the Lord's revelation to Moses. (Lev. iv. 1.) It was right of Job to offer burnt-offerings for his sons, when he thought they had sinned. It would have been utterly wrong in an Israelite thus to have acted. Job too was free to offer for his children; but each one in Israel had to bring his offering for his own sin, when the law enjoined it, if divine forgiveness was to be assured to him. So, what Cain ought not to have brought certainly without a lamb, the children of Israel were commanded to put in a basket, that it might be set by the priest, unaccompanied by any sacrifice, before the altar of the Lord their God. On the other hand, what Job was free to do, would have been disobedience, if attempted by any of the children of Israel; and no plea, based on the antiquity of the custom, nor urged on the ground of patriarchal usage, would have availed before God, when once the different laws as regards sin-offerings and burnt-offerings had been communicated to His people. For God was the sole judge of what was fitting for His creatures to do in connection with worshipping Him.

Now this always holds good. And ever since He has been pleased to give His people a written revelation, He has set forth in that word, both how He would be worshipped, and the characteristic features of such a service.

Before the giving of the law heads of families acted as priests, officiating, as need might require, or desire might stimulate, at the altars reared up by them, wherever in the land they might sojourn. Thus at Shechem, at Hebron, at Beersheba, at Bethel, the patriarchs reared up altars, and sacrificed on them. No one place in the land was regarded as their sanctuary; wherever they were, if so minded (Gen. xii. 8), they could erect an altar, and sacrifice thereon. Nor was this confined to the eldest male line of Abraham's descendants. Job acted in a similar way in his family, and Jethro filled that office, it would seem, among his people. (Exod. ii. 16.) By the law however all this was changed for Israel, and for those who might cast in their lot with them. A regular order of priesthood was established, restricted to the family of Aaron, and one altar only was recognised, whereon the sacrifices and the offerings of the people could normally be laid. (Lev. xvii., Deut. xii. 5, 6.) Altars and sacrifices had been resorted to from the beginning, now an order of priesthood and a sanctuary were duly appointed by God, with a ritual of divine institution which continued in force till after the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. By His death the house at Jerusalem was left desolate (Matt. xxiii. 38), for never after His resurrection did the Lord enter the temple. He was seen upon earth, He was met with, handled, conversed with, after He had risen, but only by His own disciples, whether in Jerusalem or in Galilee.

The Mosaic ritual was but a shadow, the substance had now appeared. Types had found their antitype.

Things figurative were to give way before that which they prefigured. The pattern or type, shewn to Moses in the mount, was to be a substantial reality for the true children of Abraham. The holiest of all in the most complete sense had been entered by the High Priest, who was greater than Aaron, and the people whom God now owned were to go forth unto Christ without the camp. But how were they to go? As exiles carrying with them all that they had once valued, their worship, ritual, priesthood, and sanctuary? or as a people going forth to meet the Lord, to learn what He had to say to them? The Epistle to the Hebrews gives us the answer to this question, as it traces out characteristic features common to Judaism and Christianity, and at the same time draws attention in the most pointed way to the marked differences between them.

Now there were four things in connection with the Levitical ritual of which the Jews could boast, namely, a high priest, a sanctuary, a sacrifice, and an altar. Four things are there of which Christians can make mention, a High Priest, a sanctuary, a sacrifice, and an altar. At first sight then it might be thought that Christianity was but a development of Judaism, and that the ritual, given to Israel through Moses, might fitly be regarded as in some measure a pattern for the order and character of christian worship. Now this is what has really taken place, and sanction has been sought for ritualistic ways and sacerdotal dresses from God's commands in the Old Testament scriptures, men little thinking that such ideas, when carried out, result in the

denial of verities of the faith. But some may ask, Are we wrong, when we venture to copy what we find in the word as expressly authorised by God? The answer is simple. Scripture truth may be misused so as to undermine Christian doctrine. Of this the Galatians are a notable example, and the epistle addressed to them exposes the fallacy of such a position. They were right in the thought that they must be connected with Abraham, but they were wrong in the way they attempted to secure it. Their teachers insisted on their submitting to the rite of circumcision, enjoined by God on Abraham and his descendants, and on their observance of the law given by God to Moses, if they wished to be saved. Such grounds, doubtless, to the uninstructed, must have appeared unassailable and scriptural. The apostle shewed them, and teaches us, that such doctrines really subverted the christian faith. Christ could on such terms profit them nothing. They had fallen from grace.

The appeal then to scriptural practices of a former age may be a most dangerous thing. The way of worship before the introduction of Christianity is not of necessity any guide to the true way of worship now, nor can the scriptural expressions of a liturgy make that liturgy scriptural in itself. For our worship to be scriptural we must worship God in spirit and in truth, that is, in accordance with His nature, and in conformity with the revelation which He has vouchsafed us. This, be it remembered, was the Lord's deliverance about worship, when questioned by the woman at the well. The claims, put forth by the Samaritans for Gerizim over

Jerusalem, He set aside in the most absolute way. But, whilst vindicating the claim of the temple at Jerusalem, He announced the change which was to take place. Jewish worship was inseparably connected with the house and the altar. The divine sanction for what then went on at Jerusalem, namely, the observance of the Mosaic ritual, was here (John iv.) expressly given, though the Shechinah had never illuminated the oracle of Herod's temple, nor had fire from heaven ever burnt on the altar of stone, which occupied the place of the old altar of brass. The Lord however intimated the change that was at hand, and unmistakeably declared, that the closest association would be maintained between God's revelation and the new character of worship. Not that this in itself was anything new. It has always held good, that men could only worship God acceptably, as they worshipped Him in strict conformity with the revelation vouchsafed to them. It was this principle which Cain ignored, but to which Abel conformed. And we all know with what result.

Now a characteristic feature of Judaism was this—there was a remembrance again made of sins every year. (Heb. x. 3.) A characteristic of Christianity is this, that by one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (Heb. x. 14.) Perfection is a marked feature of the latter, imperfection stamps itself indelibly on the former. (Heb. vii. 11, 19, ix. 9, x. 1.) To mingle the two is to spoil both. To graft spiritual worship on Jewish rites is to surrender the foundation truths of the faith. The distinctive features of Christianity are thereby lost sight of by the soul, and the preparative-

character of the Mosaic ritual, leading men to look forward to a sacrifice to be offered up, is obliterated from the mind. What was meant to give way before the full light of truth is in principle stereotyped, as suited for our day; and the testimony to the finished work of Christ and its results is denied, or at all events beclouded, when the renewal of the offering of the Lord's sacrifice in some shape or other is deliberately taught, and distance from, instead of nearness to, God in the holiest is insisted on as the right position of true Christian worshippers. That the law had a shadow of good things to come is true, but the scripture, which tells us this, adds, "it was not the very image of the things." (Heb. x. 1.) Jewish rites and ceremonies were shadows of things to come, "but the body is of Christ," wrote the apostle Paul to the Colossians. (Chap. ii. 17.) None certainly had been more zealous for Judaism than he; but when taught of the Holy Spirit, he made known, that the ritual given to Israel could not even foreshadow all that would be found in Christ. "The body is of Christ." He does not say, it is Christ, for there is more in Christ than the rites and ceremonies of the law could set forth. Yet the law had a shadow of these things. It did teach the offerer, as he stood by the altar of burnt-offering, that he wanted an altar and a sacrifice to deal with the question of his sins; and year by year, as the high priest entered within the veil, the people learnt the need of propitiation by blood, of a sanctuary too, and of a High Priest. Thus it proclaimed loudly and clearly what man required, though it never could provide him with the real and abiding remedy. It was a shadow, as

it had a sanctuary, an altar, a sacrifice, and a priesthood. It was not the very image of the things, since, though it had features resembling those of Christianity, the contrasts between the two are found to be great, distinct, and unmistakeable.

And first as to the high priest. The Jews could point to God's revelation as the warrant for Aaron and his successors, when duly consecrated, to discharge the duties of their office. (Exod. xxviii. 1, xxix. 29, 30; Num. xviii. 7.) They did not seek the office; God chose Aaron, and restricted the priesthood to him and to his house. So they entered on it, not only with divine sanction, but by divine appointment. Christians in their turn could speak of the High Priest of their confession (Heb. iii. 1), who, like Aaron was appointed by God to His office, but differing from Aaron was marked out for it beforehand in the word, and was made God's High Priest with an oath. Each then could speak of a high priest selected by God, and inducted into the office by express divine authority. Yet how marked was the difference! The Aaronic priesthood was successional, for the individuals among them could not continue by reason of death. The Lord, because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood. Men which had infirmity were by the law constituted priests. By Jehovah's oath since the law a Son, perfected for ever, is the High Priest whom God now owns. Aaron as a sinner had to offer up sacrifices for himself as well as for the people, needing atonement himself as much as they did. The Lord did this once for all, when He offered up Himself, His act and His offering both proclaiming

His spotless sinless nature. "He offered up himself!" a unique, a perfect sacrifice. Differing then from Aaron, as having an unchangeable priesthood, and as having offered a sacrifice—Himself, such as neither Aaron nor his sons could have offered, He is proved to be superior to him in His person and by His position. Aaron was brother to Moses, who was a servant in God's house, over which house is Christ as Son. Greater He is than Moses, and far greater than Aaron, who was punished for speaking against his brother. But more than this. Where Aaron never was, and none of his seed ever will be, the Lord Jesus is at this present moment,—namely, seated on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Aaron and his sons had their place at God's altar, and in God's sanctuary. The Lord, who as High Priest has entered the true tabernacle, has His place at the right hand of God. Again, Aaron was of the tribe of Levi, the Lord was of the tribe of Judah, "of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood." Now this difference between them is one of immense importance, and we are called upon in the Epistle to the Hebrews so to view it, not indeed because it settles the question of tribal precedence, though, when Judah rose into pre-eminence through David's exaltation to the throne, the priesthood, which had held the first place in the days of Eli, settled into a position, politically considered, second to that of the throne from which it never emerged. But the conclusion drawn from the priesthood of the Lord is this, "the priesthood being changed, *there is made of necessity a change also of the law.*" (Heb. vii. 12.) A

change radical in its nature has been thereby introduced.

With this scripture before us are we to turn to the Levitical ritual as the pattern, by which as a matter of course we should order the externals of Christian worship? Should not such a decided statement of the sacred writer arrest the attention of the reader, and lead him to search in the word for light on God's mind about worship in our day? "The priesthood being changed." Then is it so certain that God now sanctions, what He established in Israel, a special class amongst His people to be looked at as a holy priesthood? If a change in the law has been made, does that change affect the form and character of worship now? These are serious questions. But they inevitably arise out of this distinct enunciation of the Holy Ghost. And surely that man is not wise, who would regard such questions as of secondary importance, or refuse to examine them in the light of God's revelation. For, if one knows what the Lord as High Priest has done for His people, having found an eternal redemption (Heb. ix. 12, *Greek*), the inability of the law to make anything perfect comes out in redoubled clearness. The recurrence of its ceremonies told of this; but the entrance of the Lord Jesus into the holy place once for all, not by the blood of bulls and of goats but by His own blood, having found eternal redemption, by its contrast confirms it. Distance from God, both of the rest of the tribes of Israel, and of the Levites who ministered to Aaron and his sons, was their position under the Aaronic priesthood. (Num. xviii. 3, 4, 22.) We on the contrary come unto God

by our High Priest. (Heb. vii. 25.) Would a ritual then, instituted by God for those who were to be kept at a distance from Him, befit those who are allowed on the contrary to draw nigh to Him? Surely men have taken that for granted, which needs, if it can, to be substantiated. "Christ suffered once the just for the unjust to bring us to God." (1 Pet. iii. 18.) By the law all were reckoned strangers in the sanctuary but Aaron and his sons. (Num. xvi. 40.) Are Christians reckoned strangers in the sanctuary? Hebrews x. 19 emphatically answers—No. Then let them see to it, that they act not as such by putting a class of people between themselves and God, to whom they have been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. A holy priesthood is the designation of all Christians. (1 Pet. ii. 5.) To draw nigh unto God, having access through Christ by one Spirit unto the Father, is our privilege now. (Heb. iv. 16, vii. 25; Ephes. ii. 18.) To enter into the holiest is a favour granted to us now. (Heb. x. 19.) What Israel as a nation never were, nor will be; what they never could do individually; and where they never will be, even in millennial times, as Ezekiel (xliv. 15, xlv. 1–9) distinctly states—all that is ours now, who believe, through the perfect work of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Our privilege, our position, our character differing thus widely from that of Israel, are we without divine warrant to assume, we may well ask, that christian worship should be moulded on a Jewish form? The teaching of scripture about the sanctuary will help us in determining this question. To that let us next turn.

Till the national redemption of Israel had been effected we never read of a sanctuary in connection with the worship of God. The patriarchs had their altars, the worshippers of idols had already their temples; but a sanctuary erected on earth for God was, till after the exodus, a thing unknown and unthought of. Redemption accomplished, a sanctuary was to be provided. "I will prepare him an habitation," sang Moses and Israel, when the bursting of the Egyptian fetters from off their hands was fresh in their minds. (Exod. xv. 2.) "Let them make me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them," was God's gracious intimation some months later that He acquiesced in their desire. (Exod. xxv. 8.) Thus Israel were allowed to share in the work of erecting it, but the designs, measures, and pattern of it were all revealed by God. Moses was to make all things after the pattern, or type, shewn to him in the mount (Exod. xxv. 40, xxvi. 30), as David had revealed to him all directions about the house, which Solomon subsequently erected. (1 Chron. xxviii. 11-19.) The Jews then could speak of a tabernacle ordered in all things according to the mind of God, which He had once graciously inhabited, and of a house very magnifical, of which in the most public manner the Lord Jehovah had taken possession. We can understand therefore, how appeals might have been made to Christians in early days not to forsake that sanctuary which they had owned, and that rightly, as God's house. One can fancy an earnest conscientious Jew, like Saul of Tarsus, reminding the perverts (as he in his blindness would think them) of God's communication to Moses respecting the setting up

of the tabernacle, and how such an one might plead with them, not to turn their backs on that house, in which Jehovah at the time of its first dedication had vouchsafed to dwell. Where else in the world, he might say, can you find a tabernacle, or a temple erected by God's authority, and to which His people should turn? How clear too the matter might seem to him, that God had owned but one house, and had enjoined the erection of but one tabernacle. Were they wiser than Moses? Were they better instructed than David or Solomon? With what confidence in the strength of his position would he await their reply! How could they answer such an appeal? Had God no longer a sanctuary? Were His people now without one? By no means. And the Christian could turn the scriptures against his interrogator, by reminding him that God had another sanctuary of which Moses had a view in the mount. The earthly sanctuary was the antitype (Heb. ix. 24), the heavenly one was the type, *τύπος* (Heb. viii. 5), the true tabernacle, not made with hands, which the Lord pitched, and not man. Whatever then the Jew might think of the earthly sanctuary, and however much the Gentile might admire the magnificence of the temple at Jerusalem, it was through a greater and more perfect tabernacle than Aaron ever traversed that the Lord Jesus Christ, as High Priest, has passed right up to the throne of God. (Heb. iv. 14.) Would any remind the Christian of the antiquity of the house? It was but the shadow and antitype, he could reply, of what Moses had seen before the tabernacle was in existence. Neither the plea of its antiquity therefore, nor its erection by God's

express commands, could unsettle in the slightest degree the Christian, who had learnt from scripture, or apostolic teaching, the ground on which he had through grace taken his stand. For attention to the Old Testament scriptures would remind him of the true tabernacle above, and the teaching of the New Testament would enable him to withstand all persuasion to conform to the rites and ceremonies of the one on earth.

They had, indeed, to break off all connection with the temple ritual and holy places on earth, but only to find the type of all that with which they had been familiar from their childhood far better than the antitype, inasmuch as it had become to them, though not visible to mortal eyes, a substantial reality. They could surrender all share in the worship carried on in the earthly house, and joyfully submit to excommunication by their countrymen, and perhaps an enforced separation from their home, their kindred, and their acquaintance. They needed no longer to wait for the high priest to come out of the holy of holies on the day of atonement to know of their acceptance by God, for they could enter themselves with boldness into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. None but the high priest could penetrate behind the veil in the sanctuary on earth. Through the rent veil, into the holiest, it was given to them to pass, and there to worship. The earthly order of things maintained a veil unrent, and the way into the holiest not made manifest. They knew that by the death of the Lord Jesus Christ all that had been changed, the veil had been rent, and through it they now passed into the

presence-chamber of their God. What a change in their position was this ! What advantages had they over the adherents of Judaism !

Could the character, then, of service appointed for those connected with the earthly tabernacle suit those who now worshipped in the heavenly ? Would the language of one who knew not the veil was rent, nor that permission to enter the holiest had been accorded, be the same as that of the man who knew, and consciously enjoyed, the privilege of entrance through the rent veil ? Impossible. The latter would be giving thanks for that for which the former would be waiting. Expectancy might characterize the one ; acceptance would be known by the other. In Exodus and Leviticus we learn what befitted those who were never to enter the holiest. From the Lord's action at the institution of His supper, we are taught what is the language suited for Christians, and what should be the feelings of their heart ; for He instituted a service wholly eucharistic, and unlike anything which had been known by His people on earth. For the character of christian worship we first learn about from His conversation with the woman at the well, and the form of it He Himself has taught us, when, with the bread and wine before Him, He gave thanks. No prayer was wanted to consecrate the elements, no sound of trumpet or cymbal was heard to make that eucharistic service thus instituted more impressive ; for the outflow of a thankful heart was what God would accept, and the melody of the human voice was the only music that was requisite.

What a change was this ! From the days of Abel,

till the Lord Jesus died, an altar of stone, of metal, or of earth, was an indispensable requisite for the acceptable worship of God's saints. Not only had the patriarchs their altars, but the returned remnant, before they were in a position to rebuild the house, felt that they could not get on without the altar. That was their first thought, and to the setting up of that attention was immediately directed. (Ezra iii. 2, 3.) By-and-by, when God again takes up Israel as His earthly people, an altar, on which to sacrifice, will once more come into prominence. (Ezek. xliii. 13-18.) But if we search throughout the Acts and the Epistles (Heb. xiii. 10 excepted, of which more below), we have no mention of the term altar in connection with Christianity. And this is the more remarkable, because in the Revelation, when God begins to deal with Jews and Gentiles as such, after the removal of the church, to encourage His saints then on earth, He speaks in language they will understand, and makes frequent reference to essential features of the Mosaic ritual. (Rev. vi. 9; viii. 3-5; ix. 13; xi. 1, 2; xvi. 7.) It is not, then, that the word altar has become obsolete. The Lord freely used it. John, in the Apocalypse, several times writes it, and at a future day both Jews and Gentiles will be well acquainted with it. Why, then, this silence about the altar when Christians are addressed in God's word? Because they worship in the holiest, entering therein through the rent veil.

To the mind of a Jew, and to one instructed in scripture, the language of Hebrews x. 19 conveys a

great deal. The holiest was where God dwelt in the bright cloud of glory between the cherubim over the mercy-seat. No altar was there—no candlestick was there—no table of shewbread—nothing but the ark with the mercy-seat, the place of God's earthly throne. No sacrifice took place within the veil, nor any ritual service but that engaged in by the high priest alone, when he sprinkled the blood once upon the mercy-seat, and seven times before it. His entrance there followed on a sacrifice already offered up, the blood of which he carried in wherewith to make propitiation for the sins of the people; and while engaged in that work, no other sacrifice was being offered up on the altar in the court: all sacrifices were suspended until he had reappeared to the people without. So, in truth, it is now with Israel, and will be till the Lord re-establishes direct relations with them.

Another thing, too, should be noted in connection with this. All sacrifice to make propitiation ceased from the day of atonement, as long as the atonement then made continued in force. Now these are cardinal truths in connection with the Mosaic ritual. *All service at the altar ceased whilst the high priest was in the holiest, and all sacrifice to make propitiation ceased as long as the atonement then made remained in force.* Now the Lord, as High Priest, still remains in the holiest—heaven itself—having found eternal redemption. The principles of the Jewish ritual, then, forbid the thought of sacrificial service at the altar, whilst the high priest continues concealed from view. And surely in the days of Aaron and Moses no idea of offering to

God a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people could have been entertained for a moment, whilst that which had been already accomplished remained unimpaired in its efficacy. What would have been thought if any priest had sacrificed at the altar whilst Aaron was engaged within the veil? What would have been said, if Eleazar or Ithamar had announced a renewal of the sacrifices, prescribed for the day of atonement, between the tenth day of Tisri in one year and the tenth day of that same month in the next? A priest officiating at the brazen altar, whilst Aaron was inside the veil, would surely have been deemed guilty, and justly so, of despising the work of God's high priest. A priest, who should announce that he would engage in a propitiatory sacrifice for the sins of the people, in the interval between two days of atonement, would have shewn, both that he doubted the validity of the pontifical work, and also that he knew not the marked difference in status and duty between God's high priest and the rest of the males of the house of Aaron. Now, of the abiding and everlasting validity of the propitiatory sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ, the word unhesitatingly informs us (Heb. vii. 27; ix. 12; x. 10, 14); so no sacrifice to effect it can ever again take place; nor does it befit any man to take on himself duties connected with the office of high priest, unless expressly called to it by God. (Heb. v. 4.)

But Ritualism, as it is called, appeals for support to the ecclesiastical arrangements made by God for His people Israel. The altar, the special priesthood of a class of Christians, and the separate place in

God's house, to use the current language of Christendom, from which the laity are excluded, shew plainly what is in the minds of those who uphold that system, which is really an attempt to join in affinity Judaism and Christianity, those two which can never be united. If it be true—and it is not doubted—that our high priest remains in heaven, the very principles of the Mosaic ritual condemn most clearly the cardinal feature of Ritualism, namely, the pre-eminence now given to the altar. And since by His one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified, the attempt to amalgamate the two only betrays ignorance of the special characteristics of them both.

For into heaven itself has the Lord entered, now to appear in the presence of God for us (Heb. ix. 24), and the only sanctuary now recognised by God is that in which He is. What then should be the character of worship in the heavenly sanctuary is surely the question, which men need to have settled, before ritualism, as practised amongst us, can make good its claim to be the true form of Christian worship. Actual sacrifice of animals does not, it will be granted, take place in heaven. We are not however left to our own conclusions on such a point, for in Revelation v. we have described, both what calls worship forth, and how it is carried on. The presence and the action of the Lamb, which had been slain, awaken every voice among the company of the elders, and moves each one of them to bow down, who before that had been sitting each on his throne. Worship flowed forth, at once, when the Lamb moved towards Him that sat on the

throne ; but it consisted of praise and thanksgiving. Such is the character of heavenly worship wherever set forth in that book. Whatever class of beings in heaven it may be, who are represented as worshipping God or the Lamb, praise in the case of angels (v., vii.) praise, at times with thanksgiving, on the part of the redeemed (iv., v., xi. 17, xix. 4), is the channel by which it is expressed. Praise with the sound of melody may form part of the worship of God's earthly people. This was the case in the tabernacle and temple service as arranged by David, but then it was in connection with a service constantly carried on at the altar. (1 Chron. xvi. 39—42, xxiii. 30, 31; 2 Chron. v. 12, 13, vii. 6, xxix. 27, 28.) Praise and thanksgiving on the other hand, without any concurrent service at the altar, is the true feature of heavenly worship. And are not the spiritual instincts of believers in accord with this? For what language is more suited even now for them, than that in which the elders address the Lamb? (Rev. v.) Who, that has learnt what the finished work of the Lord Jesus Christ has done for him before God, but must exclaim, "I wait not to sing the new song, till I shall be in person on high, the language of saints in heaven suits me whilst still upon earth?" The thoughts, the feelings, which animate the elders, and move them as one man to bow down before the Lamb, are just those which His people, who know what He has done for them, can enter into and understand. Praise in connection with the sacrificial service at the altar characterised Jewish worship as finally arranged by David; praise without concur-

rent sacrificial service at the altar is characteristic of the worship suited for the company of the redeemed, who have entrance into the heavenly sanctuary, in which the Lord now ministers.

Do we thereby then slight the sacrificial service at the altar? To answer this let us next consider the question of sacrifice. Here again Judaism and Christianity are found to have something in common. Both confess the need of a sacrifice, and a sacrifice of God's providing. The constant remembrance however of its requirements, as a want unfulfilled, was an essential element of Judaism; the acknowledgment that it has been offered up once for all, and has been accepted, is the fundamental basis of Christianity. A service at the altar of burnt-offering the sons of Aaron constantly carried on; a sacrificial service, as it were at the altar, has the Lord Jesus Christ once for all engaged in. Bulls and goats Aaron and his sons from time to time offered up. The Lord on the other hand offered up Himself, an offering differing both in character and measure from any before known, or any that can be ever again provided. For He lives, to die no more. No man brought Him to the altar, no one offered Him up. He brought Himself as the offering, προσήνεκε. He offered up Himself, ἀνήνεκε (Heb. ix. 14, 28) on the cross. Thus, as the sacrifice, which the Lord brought, differed widely from those with which Aaron and his sons had to deal, so likewise do the consequences which result from it. By their sacrifices a remembrance was made of sins every year. (x. 3.) By His one offering He has perfected for ever them that are sanctified. (x. 14.) He

has indeed entered by blood into the holiest, and remains there, but not to offer Himself afresh, προσφέρη, as the high priest entered in every year with the blood of others; for then must He often have suffered since the foundation of the world. (Heb. ix. 26.) We should mark the language. No fresh offering of Christ in any character is allowed by the sacred writer to be taught for a moment; for, though we may distinguish (for they are distinguishable) between the bringing an offering προσφέρειν, and the offering it up on the altar ἀναφέρειν, it follows, as we are taught, that, if He often offered Himself, He must likewise often have suffered. There would be no sense in the offering a lamb, unless the action was completed by offering it up on the altar. Death must take place if an animal as a sin-offering is brought. Now Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, ἅπαξ προσεγενεχθεὶς εἰς τὸ πολλῶν ἀνενεγκεῖν ἁμαρτίας (Heb. ix. 28), and by virtue of that one offering God forgives sins and iniquities. "But where remission of these is, *there is no more offering* [προσφορὰ] for sin." (Heb. x. 18.) No words can be plainer. Any doctrine, therefore, which maintains the continued offering of Christ as a sacrifice to God for sin, whether by Himself or by others, clearly denies the abiding efficacy of His work, and manifests from whence it springs.

How precise is the language of scripture! No more offering for sin have we to look for, no more offering do we want, for by that one offering we, who are sanctified, are perfected for a continuance. An unbloody sacrifice of Christ for propitiation, to be

offered day by day in the mass, is both senseless and unscriptural. "No more offering" shuts the door against all such thoughts. And, though men may draw the line in their teaching between the Lord offering His sacrifice continually, and His repeating the sacrifice by dying afresh, the term "offering" προσφορά excludes the thought of the one, as much as it shuts the door against the other. No more offering for sin does the Lord contemplate, for we learn, that He has sat down for a continuance, as having finished with that work. (Heb. x. 12.) Not that He has ceased to do with men upon earth, for He will appear to them that look for Him the second time without sin unto salvation, and now sits on high expecting till His enemies be made His footstool. The full results of His work have not yet been manifested, but its finished character, and our concern with it, are set before us in the word. Thus His present attitude and expectation announce to us His estimate of His own work. God's estimate of it, and what the consequences are which flow from it, are abundantly declared in the Word. And we, who believe it, are to prove our acceptance of the divine testimony about it, by entering with boldness within the veil by the blood of Jesus, and presenting to God the sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving. Sacrifices we should bring to God, though no service at the altar of burnt-offering can now be carried on. The holiest is our place of worship, in which there never was, and there never will be, an altar on which to sacrifice. Any form of worship, therefore, which makes the altar its centre piece is clearly not Christian

in its character, however much the name and the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ may be on the lips of those who uphold it.

Have we then no altar? some may exclaim. "We have an altar" (Heb. xiii. 10) is the language of inspiration, so we need not be afraid, as some seem to be, of the bare mention of the word. We have an altar, this we should take care to maintain. It is a scriptural term, but must be used in the scriptural sense. "We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle." The Jews might taunt Christians as a people without a country, without a nationality, without an altar. Yet they had all these, and much more. Their country was the heavenly one, God's people they surely were, and an altar too was theirs, but of which no son of Aaron, as such, could reap the benefit. They indeed were partakers of the altar (1 Cor. x. 18), and we Christians eat of that which has been sacrificed thereon. But that on which we can feed, the sin-offering whose blood has been carried within the sanctuary, was just that which God withheld from them who served the tabernacle. An altar then is ours, to eat of that which was once brought to it, but not to sacrifice thereon. So that, if the word altar would suggest to any mind the propriety of a sacrificial service to be carried on, the advantage we derive from it, as defined in the word, marks at once the immense difference between Christianity and Judaism. We are privileged to share in that of which no priest could ever partake.

How suggestive too is the language here! To eat,

not to sacrifice. Surely those to whom the epistle was addressed must have well understood the significance of the term, "to eat." For, before the priests could partake of the altar, the sacrifice must have been offered up thereon. The altar was first attended to, after that the priests, as directed, could eat of that which remained. But none could partake of the bodies of the animals offered in sacrifice for sin, till the ritual, given through Moses, had been duly complied with. Death must take place, the blood be duly dealt with, and the altar have its share, to be consumed by the sacred fire, the emblem of divine judgment, ere the priests could partake of that which God had reserved for them. So, when we learn on what it is we feed, even Him who suffered without the gate, we are reminded that He, the sacrifice, has been already offered up. Should any then think of offering the Lord Jesus Christ to God as a sacrifice for sin in any shape or form, their thought, their act, excludes them from this distinctive christian privilege. For them the time to eat of the sacrifice has not arrived, and it never in that case can arrive. They have forsaken doctrinally christian ground, and with it the privilege which, if believers on the Lord, is indeed theirs.

We have an altar, that on which, as the term implies, the sacrifice for sin was offered up. Is then the Lord's table correctly termed the altar, as so commonly is done in our day? A reference to the principles of the Mosaic ritual may here also be of use to us. The priests under the law partook of the altar, but they did not feast at the altar. They ate the bread of their

God in a holy place, in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation, but they did not eat it on the altar. On that they sacrificed, elsewhere they ate. And, if in Numbers xviii. 10 the words "in the most holy place" are to be understood in their literal import, whilst they ate in person the portion reserved for them in a holy place in the court, they were regarded by God as in spirit partaking of it in the innermost sanctuary, into which through grace we have now liberty to enter by the blood of Jesus Christ. And in that of course there was no altar. At the Lord's table we sit to eat, but the place where the priests were to eat their portion is defined in Leviticus x. 12, 13 as being near the altar, and so quite distinct from it. To have turned the altar into their table would surely in their eyes, and in the eyes of all Israel, have been a monstrous thing.

But is not the altar, it may be replied, called in the Old Testament the table of the Lord? Malachi (i. 7, 12) thus writes of the altar of burnt-offering, and Ezekiel (xli. 22, xliv. 16) of the altar of incense. And it is not difficult to understand this, since on both these altars the Lord's own portion was consumed by the fire, which came down from heaven; so what was burnt on the altar of burnt-offering was called "the food of the offering made by fire unto the Lord." (Lev. iii. 11.) But, though the altar in the Old Testament could be called the table of the Lord, we never read in the New Testament of the table under the term altar. The altar was the Lord's table, because He there fed, as it were, on the sacrifice which was

burnt on it. It was His table, at which He alone fed. The Lord's table in the New Testament is that which the Lord set up, at which too He presided, but off which He did not eat. (Luke xxii. 19, 20.) He ate the passover with His disciples; but did not, could not, partake with them of the supper. We however have a place at the Lord's table, because we have an altar. We eat at the one, we glory in the other. Although then in the Old Testament the table of the Lord and the altar are the same, what is termed the Lord's table in the New is something very different from it. The altar of the Old Testament is strictly speaking the table of Jehovah, but the table of 1 Corinthians x. 21 belongs to Him who by position, dignity, and title is the Lord.

On the altar the appointed parts of the sin-offering were consumed by fire, and the rest, when the blood had been taken within the sanctuary, was burnt without the camp. So, to feed on Him whose blood has been sprinkled on the mercy-seat, we must go outside the camp, for He suffered without the gate. How little could those have thought, when they caused the Lord to be led to Calvary, to what practical use the Spirit of God would turn that historical fact, supplying an argument and an illustration for real separation between Jews and Christians in their position on earth, their ways, and their worship. Without the camp the blasphemer was to be stoned. (Num. xv. 35, 36.) Beyond the walls of Jezreel Naboth was murdered. (1 Kings xxi. 13.) Outside Jerusalem Stephen was martyred. (Acts vii. 58.) Outside the gate the Lord

Jesus suffered. So those who confess Him were exhorted to go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach. But in doing that they turned their backs on Judaism with all its hopes, its earthly position, and its ritual. To feed on Him who is the sin-offering we too must follow whither He went, yet not to eat at the altar, a thing unknown even to the Jews, nor to join in any fresh sacrificial service carried on thereon; for that would imply that He often has suffered, which is false. (Heb. vii. 27, ix. 25, 26.) And even the ritual, ordained of God by Moses, should teach men the incongruity of such ideas, for the body of that which was offered in sacrifice for sin did not remain at the altar, but was taken elsewhere, either without the camp, or was fed on by the priests in a holy place in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation.

To conclude, the change in the law necessitated by the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the emphatic declaration too of that inspired word, "there remaineth no more offering for sin;" as well as the ritual of Moses, if rightly studied, should surely guide souls in the present day, so as to steer clear of ritualism, as it is called, whether contended for and practised by some in our land, who repudiate all connection with Rome, or as set before the eye and the senses with all the attractiveness by which that church has ensnared and entranced so many souls.

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