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The Message of the Epistles. Hebrews.

BY PROFESSOR J. F. MCFADYEN, D.D., HISLOP COLLEGE, NAGPUR.

1. A FEW passages in this Epistle are among the treasured possessions of the Church. Such are the roll-call of heroes in ch. 11, and the appeal at the end of ch. 4 beginning: 'For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities.' Every one knows certain phrases which the author applies to Jesus: 'the captain of their salvation,' 'a great high priest,' 'the same yesterday, and to-day, and for ever.' Yet it will hardly be claimed that the Epistle as a whole is well known or greatly loved. Perhaps no New Testament document makes a greater demand on the ability and the willingness of the reader patiently to follow a complicated argument through its mazy courses amid unfamiliar surroundings from its beginning to its end. This writing is emphatically not one to be read in the desultory way in which so much of our Bible reading is done to-day.

2. We commonly speak of the *Epistle* to the Hebrews; and it is an epistle in the sense that it is a dissertation on the Christian faith and life addressed in writing by a Christian teacher to a group of Christians at a distance. Yet the familiar technical marks of an epistle are wanting: the writer's name, the designation of the recipients, and the greeting. (In a time of persecution such as this was, it may be that both author and recipients had good reason for avoiding marks of identification.) Moreover, there are sections of the Epistle that suggest the orator rather than the scribe, and we seem to have more than one collection of sermon notes: ch. 11, for example, and the sermonette on the Sabbath Rest of God based on some verses of Ps 95 (3⁷-4¹³). (Perhaps, however, the occurrence of sermon material is not any more conspicuous in this Epistle than in Paul's. Presumably all epistles from Christian teachers to Christian Churches in those days were, and were meant to be, read aloud, and the distinction between written and oral teaching would tend to wear thin.)

3. Of the writer we know nothing save what we can learn from the Epistle itself. It was natural that it should be ascribed to Paul; partly because he was *the* epistle-writer of the first century, just as

Solomon was *the* wise man and David *the* psalmist of the Jews; partly in order to strengthen the claim for admission to the Canon of a work which all Christians of penetration would feel ought to be in the Canon. But one does not require to be an expert in Biblical Criticism to know that Paul did not write this letter. Paul signed his letters; this document is anonymous. The finished Greek style and the careful, leisurely arrangement of the material do not suggest the impulsive Paul, whose vehement thought sometimes outran his capacity, or the capacity of his scribe, to keep pace with it. His discussion of the Law is supplementary to, rather than parallel with, that of Paul. He does not introduce his Scripture quotations by the formulæ that Paul uses. For Paul, faith means personal devotion to Jesus; for this writer, faith is the faculty which makes the unseen as real as the seen, the future as certain as the present. The Christology of this writer is as high as that of Paul in his later Epistles, but he has a more vivid conception of the concrete reality of the human Jesus. For Paul, Jesus is 'Lord' and 'Christ Jesus' or 'Jesus Christ.' This writer calls Jesus 'Lord' only once or twice, 'Jesus Christ' seldom, 'Christ Jesus' not at all.

On the quite unwarranted assumption that the author was one otherwise known to us from the pages of the New Testament, Luther's suggestion of Apollos is as good a guess as any other. At all events the Epistle was written by a scholar and a thinker; a writer with an orderly mind who saw the end of his argument from the beginning, who marshalled his facts, who would permit nothing to turn him aside from the path he saw stretching before him, and who, like a skilful orator, prepared the way for a subject before he actually reached it. (See, for example, the double reference to the high-priesthood of Jesus in 2¹⁷ and 3¹ before the actual discussion of Jesus as high priest is begun in 4¹⁴.)

4. If we have to rely entirely on internal evidence for our knowledge of the writer, we are in hardly better case for our knowledge of the readers. The tradition is that they were 'Hebrews' or Jewish Christians. The sole evidence for this seems to be that the thought moves so largely in the realm

of Old Testament conceptions, especially of the ancient Jewish ritual. But there is no suggestion that the readers were practising, or were being tempted to practise, the ancient Jewish or any other ritual of sacrifice; still less that they were adopting, or were being tempted to adopt, any of the Judaizing practices that troubled Paul so much, with reference, for example, to the ceremonial cleanness or uncleanness of either food or people. As has been pointed out, the author is not trying to win his readers away from any wrong conception of Christian thought or practice. Throughout he assumes that he and they stand on common ground. His complaint is not that they are on a wrong road, but that they are standing still at the beginning of the right road. He is trying to promote them from the kindergarten stage of Christian education to its higher branches.

If the readers cannot fairly be described as Jewish Christians, still less can they be classed as Gentile Christians. Idol worship, idolatrous beliefs, idolatrous practices, are nowhere even mentioned in the Epistle. The recipients of the letter have been a Christian community long enough to forget their spiritual antecedents, whatever they were; and to find a text from the Old Testament a convincing proof of a theological theory, in the style with which we are familiar throughout the New Testament. The greeting sent by the Italians (13²⁴) presumably, though not certainly, suggests that the author, being away from Italy and accompanied by some Italian Christian friends, was writing to a congregation of Italian Christians, perhaps in Rome.

5. It is unfortunate that much of the argument takes a form somewhat repellent to the modern reader. The writer seems to spend so much of his time in proving, by methods that do not appeal to us, points that seem to us hardly worth proving; as when, by contorting certain Scripture texts, he proves that Jesus was greater than the angels. Yet, when we have conquered the initial difficulties, we realize that this Epistle is abundantly worthy of its place in the New Testament. The writer is deeply imbued with the spirit of Jesus; he insists that the coming of Jesus was not *an* event, but *the* event towards which all previous history had been pointing. Outside of the Gospels, no New Testament writer gives Jesus a loftier place in the economy of God; and on the other hand, no New Testament writer so strongly insists that Jesus, the heavenly high priest, had once been Jesus of Nazareth. No New Testament writer (with the possible exception of the author of 1 Peter) makes upon us a more

continuous impression of living on the Mount of Transfiguration or of being able to lead others to the Mount of Transfiguration.

There is deep and inspiring theology in this Epistle; but to the author theology is only the handmaid of religion. This document is the least ecclesiastical of writings, as the author seems to be the least ecclesiastical of writers. He claims no office for himself; we know not whether he held any. The only apostle he mentions is Jesus (3¹). He seems to know of no Church officials but teachers and leaders. There is no certain reference to any sacrament. Even the meetings which some of the readers were tending to avoid are not definitely stated to be meetings for worship and mutual encouragement, though presumably they were so.

Whatever the technical position of the author, he was a pastor, a pastor with the true shepherd spirit. It was natural that in the benediction he should (in words reminiscent of Is 63¹¹) call Jesus 'the great shepherd of the sheep'; for he also was the shepherd of his sheep. Like every wise preacher, when there is any talk of weakness, he does not talk down from a pedestal, but includes himself among the tempted. 'Let *us* fear' lest any seem to have come short of the promise. 'Let *us* hold fast our confession.' 'Let *us* draw near unto the throne of grace.' This pastor, far away from his flock, possibly having been driven abroad by persecution, is deeply concerned about the spiritual condition and the future of the people he loved. They had been loyal to the faith, even under great temptation to play the coward. They had endured 'a great conflict of sufferings,' had been made a 'gazing-stock,' had been spoiled of their goods, and had seen their friends sharing their fate. But as time went on, and the expected return of Jesus (the hope of which had buoyed them up) did not take place, as in fact nothing seemed to happen except their own social ostracism, they began to ask themselves whether their profession of Christianity was worth while. Their tendency to absent themselves from the meetings of the Christians may have meant increasing unwillingness to emphasize their connexion with the Christian Church. They were becoming weak-kneed and limp and needed bracing up (12¹⁸). In our day we emphasize the appeal to the young; this document is a manifesto to the middle-aged.

The Epistle in which the writer seeks to deal with this situation may seem to us to be in the main a theological treatise; but the author himself calls it a 'word of exhortation' (13²²); and this phrase gives us the correct conception of his aim.

His very first argument is an attempt to prove, by methods of Biblical exegesis of which the modern conscience does not approve, that Jesus was greater than the angels: a thankless task, as it seems to us, until we realize the point he is trying to drive home. In the Greek version of the Old Testament, the Law was represented as having been given through angels, and this became the Jewish tradition. If, then, the Old Testament Law, though only angels were its mediators, was yet God's Law which men disobeyed at their peril, how much greater the responsibility of those who have the great salvation, proclaimed by the Son and confirmed by God Himself in miracles and the gift of the Holy Spirit.

6. Remote from our standpoint as this Epistle may on a casual reading seem to be, yet the author touches on and illumines some of the very problems that trouble us to-day. One question which the Church can hardly claim to have fairly faced is the place of the Old Testament in the Christian religion. We bind up Old and New Testaments in the same Bible, and we speak of the inspired Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments. However much individuals or Churches may have their own private canons, in theory at least all the contents of both Testaments are canonical Scriptures. Yet we are all familiar with the difficulties of this attitude. Our Lord's discriminating use of the Law and His critical attitude to the traditions based on it were among the chief sources of the opposition He aroused. In Paul's time the question of the place to be given in Christianity to Jewish ceremonial legislation split the Church in twain. Paul had considerable difficulty in defining his own attitude to the Law, but in the main for him bondage to Jesus meant delivery from bondage to the Law. In our day the exaltation to a place of honour in our Christian standards of Old Testament passages containing primitive views of God and rejected ethical conceptions causes not a little perplexity and misunderstanding, even in some cases antipathy to the Christian religion.

To this writer, the Jewish Scriptures are the Word of God; a text from Psalm or prophet clinches an argument. But the Scripture which has this efficacy is not necessarily Scripture understood in the sense which its author had in mind. Under the guidance of the Spirit, he claims the right to find in Scripture meanings which its authors never intended or suspected. Moreover, in the light of the Christian gospel, the fact became at once apparent to all, as it had long been apparent to the spiritually-minded in Israel, that the revela-

tion in the Old Dispensation was of a very unsatisfying and ineffective kind. When Paul spoke of the Law, speaking generally it was the moral requirements of the Law he had in mind. Supplementing Paul's account, this writer deals largely with the ritual Law, especially the ritual of the Day of Atonement. Paul condemns the Law, the moral Law, as weak, because it imposes on human nature a strain greater than human nature, unaided, can bear. In the judgment of the writer 'To the Hebrews' the Law, the ritual Law, is weak, because it professes to do something it cannot accomplish to secure forgiveness of human sin and bridge the gulf between man and God.

Further, the Old Testament criticises itself, is conscious of its own imperfections. If the promise to the desert generation of the Sabbath Rest of God had been fulfilled, the author of Ps 95 would not have required to repeat the promise for 'to-day.' The very fact that Jeremiah proclaims a New Covenant shows that the Old Covenant had been tried and found wanting. Finally, the author is well aware that there are far more precious things in the Old Testament than feeble ritual legislation and prophecy of doubtful interpretation. Even in the twilight of the days before Christ, every age had its heroes of faith, of men and women who endured because their spiritual eyes were fixed on Him whom no human eye can see. If all this is not a complete answer to the question of the place of the Old Testament in the Christian Church, at least it provides us with valuable hints for an answer.

7. One respect in which the missionary evangelism of our day prides itself in having a saner and more Christian outlook than its predecessors is in the method of approach to the non-Christian mind. Formerly, we are told, perhaps with some exaggeration of the fact in retrospect, the missionary attitude to the world religions was one of unrelieved antagonism. Whatever be the significance of the fact, it was not only Christian missionaries but sometimes those who knew these religions through painful experience, that entertained that attitude, in so far as it was entertained at all. For good or evil, we now adopt a different method of approach. Christian missionaries are now among the chief exponents of the glories of the non-Christian religions, and sometimes seem to have considerable difficulty in knowing what it is they are trying to do. The question is not so finally settled as we sometimes think it is; but, if this Epistle had been more carefully studied, the Christian world need not have waited till our day before discovering

that Christianity is the 'Crown of Hinduism' and of the other world religions. It is true that Judaism is not a typical non-Christian religion; and that Christianity might well be the crown of Judaism, as this writer says it is, without being the crown of Buddhism, for example. Yet, considering the attitude of the Jews to Jesus and His first followers, it would have been very intelligible if the relation of the Christian to the Jew in the first century had been one of antagonism. To this writer, however, the Old Testament revelation is a reflection afar-off of the Christian revelation.

8. In the realm of Christian thought to-day, hardly any question is more keenly debated than the finality of the Christian religion. On this point the Epistle is uncompromising. God had never left Himself without a witness. In days gone by, God had given glimpses of Himself, in different media, at different times. Only in the last days had He given the fullness of the revelation in the Son. When Jesus came, there was in the world something greater than Solomon, greater than Jonah. Jesus was above the angels; the Dispensation He introduced made obsolete the old Dispensation mediated by angels. Even Moses was only a servant in God's house; Jesus was a Son over the house. Abraham was the Father of the Faithful; but Abraham, and all his successors in the faith, sought in vain the city with the rock foundations, to which Jesus at last had led His people. The ancient Covenant had worn thin; the New Covenant, the New Testament, would stand the test of time. The death of Jesus had effected what the long stream of the blood of sacrificial animals had failed to effect; the tearing aside of the veil that hid God from men. What the Christ had done, He had done once for all; it would never require to be done again (9²⁶ 10¹⁴).

Whatever we may make of the forms of expression, the writer is recording the actual experience of himself and of others he had known, the same experience as makes hundreds of millions count the passage of time from the birth of Christ. A gap in his life had been absolutely filled; all that was best in him had found complete satisfaction in Christ. Doubtless there is in the writer's statement of the case an element of exaggeration. Unless we are to discount or ignore some of the loftiest expressions of religious experience in the Old Testament itself, it would be absurd to say that, till Jesus came, no pious soul had ever known the joy of sins forgiven. But it was through penitential prayer, not through the blood of innocent animals, that the forgiveness came. Moreover, the main

fact remains. It is not primarily to the Old Testament that the world turns to-day for its knowledge of God. Since Jesus lived and died, men have known God, and increasingly known God, as they never knew Him before. As this writer says and repeats (1⁹ 12²) Jesus sat down at the right hand of God; sat down, as one whose work was, in a sense, done and done for ever; at the right hand of God in this sense, that we turn to Jesus for all our knowledge of God. And it is especially in His death that Jesus mediates to us the knowledge of God. If we doubt it, let us try to picture what the influence of Jesus would have been, had He chosen to take the easy path, to live a few years longer and die a natural death. With hardly a suggestion of a metaphor, it is the literal truth that Jesus has torn aside the veil that hid from us the face of God, has opened up for us a new and living way into the presence of God.

But, as this acute thinker reminds us, to call the revelation of God in Jesus God's final revelation does not mean that our religious education is complete. There may be nothing more *beyond* Jesus, but there is infinitely more *in* Jesus than we have yet discovered. In 6^{1, 2} the author gives a most interesting glimpse of the subjects on which instruction was given to inquirers and converts: repentance from dead works and faith in God ('Repent and have faith in the gospel'; we should have expected 'faith in Christ' rather than 'faith in God'); ablutions and laying on of hands (the distinctive meaning of Christian baptism, or perhaps the vanity of ceremonial cleanness, and the gift of the Holy Spirit); the resurrection of the dead and eternal judgment (the resurrection of Jesus and the truth that all must appear before the judgment-seat of Christ—see Ac 10^{40a}). But this writer knew, as Paul knew, the truth we have only recently rediscovered, that knowledge of God, like all other kinds of knowledge, grows from more to more, that God trains His people by a gradual process of education. He urges his readers not to remain in the kindergarten stage, but to get a new vision of Christ. So he introduces them to the doctrine of Jesus as high priest; not as a matter of theological speculation, but that their drooping courage may revive, that they may face the perils of their situation with fresh hope and confidence. The faith once delivered to the saints is not a dead faith but a living faith; like other living things it holds its life on condition of growth. If our religion is mentally stagnant, it is likely to be spiritually sluggish. We retain our Christian standards of faith and conduct in so far as we are

ever finding fresh treasures in Christ, and being called to new responsibilities.

9. In one other point, this tractate might be written for our own day. The readers, as we have said, are experiencing the temptations that beset advancing age. The enthusiasm of youth has gone; the splendour of the dawn has faded, and the swinging step of the young man has changed to the prosaic tramp of the ageing. The magic wand has lost its power, and life has become a thing of dull and drab routine. 'What does it matter?' they are beginning to ask. 'We have struggled and suffered, and we are no whit better off than those who have refused to struggle and suffer.'

This writer is convinced that it does matter; this pastor is very much afraid for his flock. Like every wise teacher, he gives them full credit for the loyal courage they have shown in the past (10^{32, 33}); he does not forget it, and God does not forget it (6¹⁰). He encourages himself and them to believe that they will make good (6⁸). Yet this writer is as convinced as the father of the prodigal that to be in the far country is to be 'lost' or 'dead'; and he adds his own special point: that they who have been followers of Jesus and then have turned their backs on Him are more hopelessly 'lost' than any others. Three times he utters a solemn warning on the fate that awaits the 'back-slider' (2¹⁻⁴ 6³⁻⁸ 10²⁶⁻³¹). No man, he urges, can be, or can continue to be, a Christian by accident; a steady endeavour is needed; we have to 'keep a grip' of our confession (10²³). God has revealed Himself as never before; God has bound Himself by an oath; He has provided a sure anchorage for storm-tossed sailors. But such privileges bring corresponding responsibilities; if those who have been brought into the haven allow themselves to drift out of it (and the author mournfully confesses that they have this terrible liberty), they leave the anchorage for ever and must take the consequences.

When men tell us that they can see little difference between the 'saved' and the 'lost,' what then? When men only smile, perhaps are not sufficiently interested even to smile, at the idea that it is a fate unspeakably awful to be found outside the home, that to reach the home, even though it be in rags, will make God's angels sing for joy: when such scepticism prevails, what is to be done about it? Nothing, perhaps, save to pray that God will open their eyes to the beauty of holiness; nothing, perhaps, except to wait for a revival of religion, or to wait till the judgments of God teach men what His loving-kindness has failed to teach them.

As for this writer's firm conviction that there can be no second repentance, read as a theological pronouncement this hard saying may be and often has been a subject of discussion. Read as it ought to be read as the painful experience of a physician of souls, it will find wide corroboration. It is safe to say that many ministers and missionaries would agree that no man is harder to win than the man who has been a disciple of Jesus and then has turned back and walked no more with Him.

10. In presenting to his readers the Christ as he would have them see Him, this writer has one great handicap: he feels constrained to prove his points by quoting texts of Scripture. For example, in 2¹⁰⁻¹⁴ when the author proceeds to prove that Jesus is 'brother' of the human race, we would naturally expect him to quote such a word of Jesus as 'Whoever does God's will, he is my brother and sister and mother.' Instead of that, he quotes certain verses of the Old Testament and puts on them a far-fetched construction. But the very freedom with which he deals with his quotations in large measure delivers him from the yoke he has imposed upon himself, in accordance with the Christian thought of the time. An excellent example of his exegesis is found in his treatment (10⁵⁻⁷) of Ps 40⁶⁻⁸ ('Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,' etc.). The line 'a body didst thou prepare for me' occurs in the Greek but not in the Hebrew, and may originally have been a clerical error. This sentence obviously could be used as a prophecy of the Incarnation, and it is on this mistranslation that the author bases his use of the Psalm. In the Psalm as originally written, the psalmist, holding in his hand a roll-book of the Law (probably Deuteronomy) expresses his resolve to do God's will as written in the Law. The writer 'To the Hebrews' naturally accepts the Greek addition about 'the body,' omits the words 'I am resolved' in the last line of the quotation, and puts the whole into the mouth of the Messiah. In its new form, the quotation becomes an assertion by the Messiah that He comes to do God's will by offering His own body in sacrifice instead of bringing an animal sacrifice. Thus the point is made that the abolition of animal sacrifice by the self-sacrifice of Jesus has been foretold in Scripture. But what interests the modern reader is the fact, not the pseudo-prophecy by which the author thinks he is strengthening our faith in the fact.

11. But it is with reference to the Melchizedec priesthood of Jesus that this writer achieved his crowning triumph in the way of Alexandrian exegesis of Scripture. The earthly tabernacle was the pattern and prophecy of the heavenly; the

earthly sacrifice was the pattern and prophecy of the self-sacrifice of Jesus. One naturally expects the author to go on to say that the Levitical priest was the forerunner and counterpart of the great High Priest. This he steadily, almost ostentatiously, refuses to do. The Jewish priesthood was confined to one tribe, and that a tribe to which Jesus did not belong. The office was the type of all that was feeble and ineffectual in religion. 'The priests were appointed by a law that dealt only with externals (7¹⁶); their qualifications were purely physical (7¹⁴, Neh 7^{63a}); they sinned like the rest of us (7²⁷), and died like the rest of us (7²³), and at best their profession had an unpleasant resemblance to that of a butcher (9¹²).' God swore no oath at their appointment (7²⁰), as if, so to speak, God did not take their appointment very seriously; their tabernacle was only of human make (9¹¹), and their sacrifices could not quiet the troubled conscience (9⁹). Doubtless also the writer knew, though he does not mention, that a priest and a Levite had played a very unlovely part in one of Jesus' best-known parables, and that the priests had done more than their share in hounding Jesus to His death and in persecuting His followers after His death.

Yet Jesus was a Priest, a High Priest, *the* High Priest. He was a priest in the sense that He had infinite sympathy and compassion for His people, in the sense that He knew by experience their temptations though not their sins; in the sense that He brought an offering, Himself, His life, His blood as this writer calls it; a priest inasmuch as this offering had opened up the way to God; not a way that gave a fleeting glimpse once a year, but a new and living way that brought the follower of Jesus into the abiding presence of God. And every item in this creed represented a vital experience in the life of him who wrote it.

According to the author's theology, such a priest must have been foreshadowed in the Scriptures; if not in the Levitical priesthood, then in a priesthood of some other order. Jewish imagination had loved to play round the figure of Melchizedec, the mystic king who came, none knew whence, and went, none knew whither; the King whose name suggested to Hebrew ears that it meant 'King of righteousness,' the name of whose Kingdom sounded like the word for peace. On Alexandrian principles of interpretation, since nothing was said in Scripture of his ancestry or his descendants, of his birth or his death, the conclusion might be drawn that he had no ancestry or descendants, was not born and did not die; that he was a miraculous gift of God,

a priest for ever. Moreover, this heaven-sent king-priest had blessed the Father of the Jewish people and taken tithes from the ancestor of Levi. In Ps 90 some one (possibly originally Simon the Maccabean prince) was represented as being 'a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec.' When the original application was forgotten, it was easy to transfer this Psalm to the Messiah; and so our author finds in this Psalm a prophecy of the Melchizedec priesthood of Jesus.

Once more, as so often in this Epistle, we must note that the argument is an after-thought; and the curious nature of the reasoning by which the writer's discovery is supported must not blind us to the greatness of the discovery. The argument, in fact, is not the foundation on which the conclusion rests. The writer uses the proof-text method to destroy the proof-text method. Once we see that not only the priesthood of Jesus but also His kingship are after the order of Melchizedec, we realize the futility of the 'proofs' by which from the beginning well-meaning men have attempted to buttress our faith. The appeal which Jesus makes to us owes nothing to His ancestry nor to any supposed correspondence between incidents in His life and 'prophecies' in Scripture, or to anything adventitious. He held no office of human appointment; He was a priest as well as a King in His own right. When we come into vital contact with this Jesus, if we do not fall down and worship Him, if we do not spontaneously accept Him as our God-given Priest and King, then there is no argument that will convince us. When even an Abraham meets Melchizedec, he asks no questions. He can do no other than pay his tribute and humbly receive the benediction.

12. Incidentally the writer sheds light on another of the questions that vex our minds. How can the historical be the foundation of a permanent religion? How can that which was done in time be valid for all time? As the final religion must be a religion which grows, so the permanent religion must make its appearance in time. Its temporal foundation provides for it 'limits without limitations.' The priesthood of Jesus was exercised in time, but had no merely temporal validity; He was a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedec. The redemption He won was 'eternal redemption' (9¹²). What He did, He did 'through eternal spirit' (9¹⁴). As the Gospel writers tell the story of Jesus' ministry and especially of His Death and Resurrection, we can see through the written records that they felt the eternal significance of it all. At the beginning of His service, He saw the

heavens opened; all through His ministry, He saw the heavens opened; He uncloses the eyes of His followers that they too may see the heavens opened.

In discussions of this Epistle, frequent reference is made to Plato's doctrine of ideas, the doctrine that the things on earth are only shadowy counterparts of the heavenly realities. In the Exodus story the appurtenances of worship were to be made after the pattern shown to Moses on the mount (25⁴⁰). All through this Epistle we feel that the author has caught from Jesus on the Mount the pattern not only of His worship but of His life; or rather that we must not distinguish between the two, for to Him the life is the worship. Is it not everywhere the hall-mark of Wisdom that her

disciples can pierce through the shadows to the substance; that they refuse to be blinded by the glamour of the things they see, or fettered by absorption in the things that pass? One can imagine the thrill with which the worshippers in some house Church would listen to the noble tribute paid in ch. 11 to the heroes of the faith who were in the world but not of the world. They were all Jewish heroes. Had he lived in our day his charity would have taken a broader sweep. He would have recognized all humble and sincere seekers after God everywhere as a great brotherhood which finds its completion only when they can join with this author in the text round which his Epistle is written: 'Let us draw near to God through Jesus Christ.'

Physical Indeterminacy and Human Free Will.

BY THE REVEREND J. H. MORRISON, M.A., ABERDEEN.

THE new conceptions now current in the realm of physical science in regard to the constitution of matter have unexpectedly given rise to a most interesting discussion of the age-long problem of human free will. In particular, certain phenomena connected with radio-activity together with a curious indefiniteness in the position and speed of the electron have led to the conclusion that there is a fundamental loose-jointedness in Nature, and that the atom has a kind of free will such as 'destroys the case for absolutely strict causation.' These ideas have been made common property through the popular writings and persuasive advocacy of Sir James Jeans and Sir Arthur Eddington, and have been acclaimed in theological circles as a charter of liberty. Einstein, however, speaks of them as 'not merely nonsense, but objectionable nonsense.' Planck, also, the doyen of German scientists, than whom there is no higher authority on atomic physics, has argued and protested earnestly against them, both on scientific and on moral grounds, and he agrees that 'Heisenberg himself would be the first to protest against the idea of interpreting his Principle of Indeterminacy as tantamount to a denial of the principle of causation.'¹

Doubtless the welcome given to the ideas of Jeans and Eddington has been due to the impression

in religious minds that it meant the shattering of the iron frame of materialistic determinism and the liberation of the human will. Planck, however, gives it a more sinister interpretation. In the ready acceptance of these new views about indeterminacy he sees an evidence of that spirit of the age which is out to devalue authority and shake itself free from all the restraints of law. To men of this spirit it is great news to be told that the universe is loose-jointed, that there is a fundamental uncertainty in the constitution of matter and that the reign of law is broken. To them it seems as if the hand of physical science were throwing the gates wide open to unrestricted licence. Religious people, therefore, who are acclaiming with enthusiasm this new doctrine of freedom, would do well to consider in what company they find themselves and whether the road they are travelling may not lead in strict logic to conclusions far different from what they expect. Certain it is that if the universe should prove to be in any wise indeterminate or irrational, if law and order do not control it to its inmost core, nobody stands to lose more than the theist.

Here, then, is a matter of vital religious interest upon which one may venture, with a deep sense of the immense difficulty of the subject, to offer some suggestions. And, first, it may be necessary to make some preliminary remarks about the

¹ Max Planck, *Where is Science Going?* 33.