

The Second Established

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Some of the great contrasts in the Epistle to the Hebrews are as follows:-

IN JUDAISM.

Moses the apostle.

Aaron the high priest.

The law with its hopes.

The first covenant.

The tabernacle — "the example or shadow of heavenly things."

The many sacrifices, "the blood of bulls and of goats."

"The way into the Holiest not yet made manifest."

IN CHRISTIANITY.

Christ the Apostle (Heb. 1 and Heb. 3).

Christ the High Priest (Heb. 2, Heb. 3, Heb. 5 and Heb. 7).

A better hope and better promise (Heb. 7 and Heb. 8).

The new covenant (Heb. 7).

The true tabernacle — "the heavenly things themselves" (Heb. 8 and Heb. 9).

"His own blood," "the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once" (Heb. 9 and Heb. 10).

"Boldness to enter into the Holiest" (Heb. 9 and Heb. 10).

The epistle to the Hebrews is essentially the epistle of contrasts. In it we have the pure light of a heavenly and spiritual Christianity shining against the comparatively dark background of Judaism with its earthly hopes and carnal ordinances. In its own day Judaism had been the bearer of light for God. Like the moon, it caught and reflected the rays of good things to come, while as yet "the true light" had not arisen; but with the advent of Christ all was changed, and just as the edge of the moon is turned to blackness the moment it touches the sun's disk at the beginning of an eclipse, so the light of Judaism became but darkness, or to use the exact Scripture phrase, "Even that which was made glorious had no glory in this respect, by reason of the glory that excelleth" (2 Cor. 3: 10).

In the case before us the natural process is of course reversed, for it is the sun of Christianity which eclipses the moon of Judaism, and the process of this is set before us in detail in Hebrews. Item after item is mentioned only to discover that in Judaism there was but a shadow, or a reflection of the true and abiding thing which comes to light in and through our Lord Jesus Christ.

It is when the Spirit of God comes to deal with the great sufficient and final sacrifice of Christ — and here we touch indeed the very foundation of everything — that we get the remarkable statement: "He taketh away the first, that He may establish the second" (Heb. 10: 9).

Here we have clearly revealed a great principle which characterizes all God's ways, and once it is revealed we can see how it has done so from the beginning. From the very outset of man's history as a sinner, God framed his dealings with men after this pattern, showing that His action in raising up Christ, sending Him as a sacrifice for sin, and consequently introducing spiritual and heavenly blessings, was no afterthought, but a determinate purpose before man's sad history began.

The illustrations of this great truth which the early books of the Bible afford are numerous. We mention some which lie upon the surface.

Cain, the first man born into the world, was set aside in favour of the second, *Abel*, and subsequently when he had revealed himself as a murderer in favour of *Seth*, who took Abel's place, typifying Christ as the risen "seed" — Abel having typified the "seed of the woman" slain.

Ishmael, the seed after the flesh, set aside in favour of *Isaac*, the seed according to promise.

Esau, the profane despiser of the birthright, set aside in favour of Jacob, who esteemed it, though filled with crooked scheming in order to obtain it.

Leah, the "tender eyed," set aside by Rachel, "beautiful and well-favoured,"

Aaron the elder, but of weak character, set under the strong authority of Moses the younger.

Manasseh, elder son of Joseph, whose name means "Forgetting" displaced in favour of Ephraim, whose name means "Fruitful."

Saul, head and shoulders above the people, and their choice, judged and set aside for David the stripling, but the "man after God's own heart."

It will be noticed that the above-quoted foreshadowings of this great truth are all in connection, not with things, but with mankind. This is appropriate enough, for though in Hebrews the Spirit of God sets before us the application of the truth to details in thus contrasting Judaism and Christianity, yet we must turn elsewhere, and notably to 1 Cor. 15 to find the full truth stated in more general terms. Not only must Judaism go, as a system suited to man in the flesh, but the ruined earthly order of man, which Judaism recognized and appealed to, must be set aside, in order that a new heavenly order of man should be established to enter into the spiritual and heavenly blessings of Christianity.

The passage we refer to in 1 Cor. 15 runs from verse 45 to the end.

Verse 45 contrasts the first Adam and last Adam. The one a living soul as Genesis states, the other a life-giving Spirit. In this verse clearly the body is not in view. It states respectively what Adam was and what Christ is, viewing both essentially. Not first and second in the verse, but first and last, because "Adam" sets forth the "racial head," and Christ is not only the new and second racial Head, but the LAST, thank God! In that capacity He is perfect — as in all other capacities — and no further Head will ever be needed to all eternity!

Verse 46 gives the character stamped upon the respective heads, natural and spiritual, and emphasizes the fact that the natural is first as to God's ways, and the spiritual second, though the last was always first in God's purposes, and is the only one to abide and be established.

Verse 47 names the two as the first and second man, and gives their further character as "out of the earth made of dust" and the "Lord out of heaven," (or perhaps "out of heaven" only). Here the thought of the body so prominent in all the earlier part of the chapter, evidently again reappears in connection with Adam.

Verse 48 states the truth, wonderful as far as we are concerned, that those ranged under the

respective heads partake of the nature and character of their heads.

Verse 49 tells that "we," i.e., Christians, are the subjects of this glorious transference from Adam to Christ, and fully returning to the thought of the body, it declares that as we have in body borne the image of Adam, the man made of dust, so we shall bear the actual physical image of the heavenly Christ.

Verse 50 emphasizes other considerations which connive to show that some mighty miracle of power is needful to transform believers into Christ's image for the day of glory.

Verses 51 to 58 supply us with the special revelation Paul had received on this subject — the change effected in both dead and living saints in. the twinkling of an eye, the instant before all are rapt into the air to meet the Lord. Every saint will then have a body immortal, incorruptible and glorious; all together will stand forth as monuments of God's victory.

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The above sets forth a side of truth which is all too little recognized. Go to "the Christian in the street" — if we may be allowed thus to adopt a common phrase — and ask him if his sins are pardoned and he has hopes of heaven, and he may probably enough answer affirmatively with certainty and some degree of cheerfulness. Ask him, however, if he daily pursues his pilgrim way in the happy knowledge and consciousness of belonging to that new and heavenly order of humanity of which Christ is the supreme expression and Head, and in the triumphant expectation of sharing His physical likeness and glory as a consequence, and he will probably answer like a man floundering out of his depth, or else gaze upon you as one who has left sober realities behind and gone soaring off into dreamland.

Why should it be thus? Truth of such elevating and transporting power as this must inevitably be eagerly listened to and embraced, we might have supposed, and yet it is not so. Many Christians simply ignore it, others almost, if not altogether, deny it. Again we ask, Why?

In the first place, we are far too prone to judge everything by the standard of our necessities. Pardon of offences and deliverance from judgment we *need*, hence we lay hold upon these favours with comparative ease. To be taken up in Christ, indwelt by the Spirit of Christ, and therefore of Christ's order, this goes far beyond our needs. It is rather a necessity of God's love and of those far-reaching purposes which He has formed for Christ's glory. Pardon and deliverance are negative. This is positive in the highest degree, and we are slow to embrace it. Shall we not humble ourselves and ask help of God concerning this thing.

Further, it is clear that this truth involves the total eclipse and setting aside of the first Adam and his race. "He TAKETH AWAY the first that He may establish the second." No part of God's truth cuts more directly across the grain of human pride and self-sufficiency than this.

The law addressed its prohibitions and instructions to men who were responsible to hearken and obey. No one did perfectly obey; still, while the reign of law lasted there was, in the very nature of the case, a recognition of the human race as being at least worthy of such a time of probation, and of still possessing a status and sustaining relations with God. Christ's death on the cross — hanging there, substantially under the curse of the outraged law, for His people — was the end of law's reign and of man's probation, the disowning of the race, and the destruction of any status it had before God. The Adamic race stands judicially convicted and morally judged at the cross, though the last trace will not disappear until the destruction of the heavens and earth that now are, and the creation of all things new.

The grace of the Gospel comes forth to men on precisely this ground. Instead of appealing to men

to "do and live" — in which case they would, in spite of endless failures, still flatter themselves with chances of future success — it sets forth what God has done for those who are *ruined*. The grace of God does indeed bring "salvation to all men," it is the fact of that salvation being brought to them *on the assumption that they are RUINED* that cuts their pride to the quick.

Hence that pronounced tendency on the part of mankind to reject the Gospel. Hence, too, the tendency on the part of those who *are* Christians to tone down the truth to suit their natural tastes and avoid the keen edge of this doctrine of the Bible.

And, lastly, there is the fact that the truth we have before us involves responsibilities of a very high order. If the first hindrance is of a moral order, as springing from the natural selfishness of our hearts, and the second of a doctrinal order, this is of a severely practical nature. It is plain enough, surely, that if we are of Christ's order, and therefore heavenly, a heavenly line of conduct becomes us while still in this world.

A further illustration of this is found in Romans 5, 6 and 7. In the latter part of Romans 5 the two heads with their respective races are contrasted. Adam, entailing sin, death and condemnation on his race; Christ, entailing justification, life and glory on His. At the beginning of Romans 6 the question is raised as to how we who are of Christ's race shall respond to the wealth of grace bestowed upon us, and we discover that a twofold obligation lies upon us:-

1. "We . . . should walk in newness of life" (Rom. 6: 4).
2. "We should serve in newness of spirit" (Rom. 7: 6).

Much is involved in these two solemn obligations, but we content ourselves here with noticing that the fact of our standing "in Christ," and not in Adam, places us under responsibility to walk in the newness of spirit which is ours as possessing the Spirit of God, and being thus "not in flesh but in spirit" (Rom. 8: 9).