

CHAPTER VI

THE PLACE OF THE EPISTLE IN EARLY CHRISTIAN HISTORY AND IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

THE MINORITY GROUP AT ROME

IN Chapter I of the present work, after some preliminary survey of earlier and more recent approaches to an understanding of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the opinion was expressed that neither of the two main critical theories dividing the field at the present time could be considered satisfactory in an historical point of view. Neither theory had brought the situation reflected in the Epistle into exact and adequate focus, and neither, therefore, could be thought to have done full justice to its character and purport. It was contended, accordingly, that a place existed for a new approach to the Epistle based on a reconsideration of its historical setting. Questions of an important kind had come to the surface in the course of the discussion, and at the end of the first chapter an outline sketch was given of positions towards which the present writer felt himself pointed by his personal study of the evidence. The first of these was that the key to Hebrews, alike in its practical and in its theoretical aspects, was to be found only by bringing the Epistle into close integration with historical and doctrinal developments occurring within the sphere of the world-mission of Christianity as inaugurated by Stephen and his successors.

In Chapter II, accordingly, an inquiry into the Stephen records in Acts vi.-vii. was undertaken, and the points of contact between the teaching of the proto-martyr and the theology of Hebrews were found to be so numerous and substantial as to suggest the strong probability of some organic relationship between the two. Stephen's stress on the transcendent and heavenly end of the Christian calling and his doctrine of the supersession of the Jewish cultus by Jesus were noted as primary points of agreement between Stephen and the Epistle, and the possibility of such doctrine creating divisions of sympathy within Jewish-Christian circles in the world-mission Church was taken into consideration.¹ At the end of Chapter II the way seemed open to go forward to the Epistle with the presumption in our minds that the teaching of Stephen might not only prove to have been the matrix in which the main theological ideas elaborated in Hebrews were formed, but might also explain the rise within the Church at Rome of a minority group reacting against the larger freedom of world-mission Christianity. Such a minority would presumably put forward principles and claims of its own counter to those of the world-Church and not very different in their tendency from those of the 'Hebrew' section of the Mother Church at Jerusalem.

The writer to the Hebrews would, on this view, be an ardent adherent to the principles of Stephen and the world-mission, who employed his special Jewish-Hellenist theological and dialectical equipment to bring this disaffected minority to a better mind. The members of the group were personally known to him, and he believed them to be drifting in a direction inimical and indeed disastrous to their continued

¹ See above, pp. 42-44.

Christian existence. In Chapter II all this was put forward simply as an hypothesis which needed to be tested by detailed study of the evidence of the Epistle, and the examination of this evidence has engaged us throughout the greater part of Chapters III-V.

The results of the inquiry in Chapters III-V have been re-assuring. The futurist outlook and the Christological emphases of the Epistle to the Hebrews have been found to be in the direct line of Stephen's teaching. While the 'Hebrew' character of the group addressed nowhere comes to surface statement in the letter—for the writer never once makes any use of the terms Jew, Gentile, Hebrew, or Greek—the evidence of the Epistle from first to last has been found to be compatible with the hypothesis of the Jewish-Christian extraction and background of the group and with its 'Hebrew' tendencies. Not only so, but the form, the matter, and the emphases of the writer's argument have been seen to acquire new force, relevance, and illumination the moment the hypothesis is assumed to represent the truth of the situation, while no such result follows upon the adoption of any rival theory.

Attention has been called, moreover, to the conspicuous absence from the Epistle of all traces of pagan Hellenistic ideas affecting the mind of the community. In the light of all this, the initial presumption with which the inquiry started has developed a probability-value far exceeding that of a mere provisional hypothesis, and we seem justified in concluding that the Jewish-Christian character of the group has been proved, proved, that is, as far as any conclusion of the kind can be established by inductive reasoning.

At the same time evidence has been adduced in the same chapters which amounts to a fair demonstration

of the second, third, and fifth of the theses provisionally stated at the end of Chapter I.

It now becomes possible, therefore, to resume the thread of the argument broken off at the end of Chapter II, where the question concerned the complexion of the 'Hebrew' minority forming a section of the Jewish-Hellenist Church at Rome. We shall investigate later the important evidence furnished by St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans with regard to that Church as a whole and with regard to its divisions. Meantime attention needs to be focussed on a passage which has not yet been examined, but which now confronts us squarely, coming as it does in sequence to the impressive statement of what constitutes the Christian life from the standpoint of the writer to the Hebrews (xii. 1-3).

RESISTANCE UNTO BLOOD.—THE QUESTION OF THE DATE OF HEBREWS

You have not yet resisted to the death in the conflict with sin (xii. 4).

This passage, like vi. 9-10 and x. 32-34, lets the light in upon the history and the situation of the Christians addressed in the letter. But while those earlier passages allude to past achievements of Christian fidelity and fortitude which the writer recalls as an incentive to the community to regain confidence in its calling under the existing conditions, this later statement refers to an experience which has not yet been encountered but which may well be part of the prospect now confronting the group.

It is true that the author nowhere else speaks of martyrdom as a concomitant or inevitable issue of the

Christian calling, nor is it certain that the present statement means anything more than that the Christians addressed have not yet as a matter of fact answered for their faith with their lives, as so many of the faithful who now form the great cloud of witnesses have had to do. Dr. Moffatt therefore deprecates the reading into the writer's words of any necessary or ideal sequence of martyrdom upon a convinced faith. But even if it should be granted that the sequence in question had not the character of an ideal necessity for the mind of the rigorist theologian who wrote the Epistle to the Hebrews, account has to be taken of historical *circumstances* as a possible determinative factor in the case.

The supreme interest of the passage does, indeed, lie in the question of its historical bearings at this point. What was the nature of the situation which the writer contemplates? He has in a previous passage reminded his readers of 'the former days' of suffering through which they passed after their first conversion to the faith, when they were publicly exposed to contumely and insult (x. 32-34). This—if our interpretation of the event has been correct¹—was in A.D. 49, the year of the Claudian edict imposing extradition on the Jews of Rome. Though confiscations of property and imprisonments had occurred in the pogrom at that time, there had been no loss of Christian lives. Now circumstances exist under which, if the writer's words do not merely chronicle a past fact, death for the faith will have to be reckoned with as a real contingency of the Christian calling. When, then, were the words written? On the understanding of the earlier time of troubles just referred to, we should have to suppose a date sufficiently ahead of A.D. 49 to enable that year to be

¹ See above, pp. 40-41, 71 f.

recalled as 'the former days', yet not so late as the time of the Neronian persecution when red martyrdom came to the Church. We should then have to assume that in the interval since A.D. 49 conditions had changed for the worse, so far as the Christians at Rome were concerned. The tide of public disfavour and suspicion was now running against Christians rather than against Jews. Ideas were abroad in certain quarters which, later on, were to lend colour to Nero's infamous charge against the confessors of Christ, and among some of the latter the temptation may have been present to draw themselves more closely under the shelter of the permitted religion of Judaism. If this should be accepted as a credible account of the situation of the minority group to which Hebrews was written, it would enable us to place the date of the Epistle at some point *before* the Neronian persecution, say about the end of the sixth Christian decade or the beginning of the seventh. This would be a year or two after St. Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, roughly, therefore, around A.D. 60.

But there is another interpretation which might conceivably be placed on the words, 'You have not yet resisted unto blood'—the Greek verb used is an aorist—and this has to be considered before any final decision on the question of the date of the Epistle can be taken. On this interpretation, the situation would be *later* than the Neronian persecution, and the meaning of the passage would be that the Christian group addressed, unlike other Christians at Rome, escaped the blood-bath of that killing-time. We might then suppose the explanation of their escape to have been that they had for various reasons assumed the protective colouring of the Jewish religion and its rites. A group of Jewish

Christians still continuing to live within the synagogue had presented to the world only the Jewish side of its confession, and so avoided exposure to the charge of complicity in the crime of Christianity: this not by intention or calculation possibly, but none the less really. With the impulse to seek the protective coloration of the Jewish religion would go naturally that strong sentiment towards the Old Testament provisions for ritual holiness in drawing near to God which, to judge by the evidence of various passages of the Epistle, was characteristic of these Christians and comes to expression particularly in the attraction exercised over them by Jewish food-regulations of one sort or another (ix. 10, xiii. 9).¹ If this could be presumed a possible interpretation of the actual situation, it would be open to us to date the Epistle at some point *after* the storm fell on the Church under Nero.

Grave objections present themselves, however, against the putting of this construction on the writer's words. Had the group addressed been guilty of such dissembling under the colour of the Jewish religion, it is inconceivable that fuller notice would not have been taken of it by the writer. We should have expected the infamy to resound through every page of his letter, nor would it be easy to explain the courteous and unconstrained friendliness of his general tone towards the readers. Apart from this it is not certain that adhesion to synagogue forms and rites would have procured for these Christians complete protection from delation by Jewish or other informers. For these reasons it is difficult to think that the passage can relate to the period after Nero unless we place the time so much later that the generation addressed was not in

¹ Above, pp. 132-133, 149-150.

existence at the time of the Neronian persecution or was not sufficiently adult to experience the full brunt of that event. In that case, what becomes of the former ordeal through which the Christians addressed had actually had to pass in terms of x. 32-34? That ordeal cannot on this hypothesis be connected either with the happenings in A.D. 49 or with the Neronian attack on the Church, but must relate to some later time of trouble about which we know nothing. But while the possibility of such a late date cannot absolutely be excluded, there is nothing in the internal character of the situation implied in the letter or in its theology definitely to demand it. On the contrary, the strength of the sentiment which—if our interpretation of the Epistle as a whole is correct—impelled the Jewish-Christian minority group at Rome towards an interest in the cultic provisions of Judaism is more intelligible if the altar and the sacrificial worship of Judaism were still in existence, in other words, if the situation was prior to A.D. 70. While therefore absolute proof of the date of Hebrews is not forthcoming from the evidence furnished by the letter, the balance of probability inclines on the whole in favour of the pre-Neronian theory, against which, in any case, there lies no insuperable objection. It is not necessary on other grounds to assume a Domitianic date. The choice of a year round A.D. 60 will reasonably satisfy all the requirements of the case, and has the advantage of leaving room for the possibility that in his strong accentuation in chapter iii. of the 'forty years' period of the divine probation of Israel after the Exodus the writer has his mind on the chronology of the contemporary Christian situation. A forty years' period of Christianity, calculated from the advent of salvation in 'the word spoken by the

Lord' (ii. 3), would be running towards its close at the time the Epistle was written, but had not yet expired. The dating of the work about A.D. 60, when Christianity had entered on its fourth decade, would be consonant enough with the general evidence of the Epistle.

THE WRITER OF THE EPISTLE

It would agree with the evidence of Hebrews as a whole if we conceived the writer to be an Alexandrian Jew who had received his institution in Christianity from followers of Stephen. These would be men who had 'heard', not necessarily the Lord Himself, though that is the meaning ordinarily put upon ii. 3, but the word of salvation originally delivered in the teaching of Jesus, and whose witness to that word at Alexandria, Rome, and elsewhere had been attested by the same kind of numinous signs and wonders as had attested Stephen (ii. 4; cf. Acts vi. 8-10). The writer's principles from the start would be the principles of the proto-martyr, who saw that in Jesus the Age of the End had declared itself, and *Finis* had been written to the Law and the ordinances of the past. St. Paul had shown Christ to be the End of the Law. The writer to the Hebrews, travelling along a different but parallel line, concentrates on the Cultus, and provides the necessary supplement to St. Paul. He will show that in the Oblation of Jesus the divine eternal purpose for the sacrificial cleansing of the guilt of man had attained its perfect consummation. It was as plain to this man from the 110th Psalm that Jesus was the High-Priest of our salvation as that He was the Lord enthroned at the right hand of God with all His adversaries under His feet. He, like Stephen, knew that in Jesus some-

thing 'greater than the Temple' had appeared, and that an Atonement for sins had been offered beside which 'the blood of beasts on Jewish altars' was but a shadow or prefigurement. To develop the full pregnancy of Stephen's insistence on the supra-historical goal of the Christian calling he summoned to his aid all the resources of the Jewish-Alexandrian Wisdom theology with its Platonic distinction of the phenomenal and the real and its counterpointing of earthly and heavenly existence; but he did so only in the service of his world-renouncing religion, not for its philosophical or theological interest.

The group of self-isolated Jewish Christians at Rome to whom he wrote the Epistle were, for reasons intelligibly enough connected with the duress of their position, tempted to accentuate one-sidedly the Jewish element in their inheritance, and were living so entirely on the sub-Christian level of their religion, that to him, with his uncompromising insistence on the world-renouncing character of Christianity, they seemed to be turning from Christ and forfeiting their share in the World to Come.

To avert this catastrophe, this atrophy of Christian existence, this loss of hold on God's calling, this forfeiture of eternal life, the writer develops an argument which in its range and magnificence of religious and theological insight soars perhaps far above what the immediate exigencies of the particular situation demanded. Yet not as one developing a gnosis or carrying Christian doctrine to new or speculative conclusions. The structure of doctrine which he builds up is rooted in the actualities of the human need before him, and its principles are the basic principles of the Church's *homologia* or confession. But just because he develops

these articles of belief to the full height of their significance the Epistle is a document of supreme and universal interest.

Whereas Stephen had preached that Jesus had transcended and superseded the cultus and the law of Judaism, this writer will show that He did so by His complete, vicarious, sacrificial identification of Himself with humanity. And it is the measure of the hierophantic insight and power which he brought to the execution of his task that, while moving among ancient symbols and concepts, Hebrew and Greek, he yet by the intense realism of his presentation of the Incarnation appeals more intimately to certain of the profoundest sensibilities of our modern age than any other writer in the New Testament.

Who was the writer? We shall not expect to be wiser in this matter than the ancient Church and Origen. From the reference in xiii. 24 to 'our brother Timothy' it is naturally to be inferred that the writer stood in some relationship to the Pauline world-mission circle, and the tradition of the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, which came to Alexandria with the Epistle, may have had no other basis than that passage. But the Pauline authorship, though it was so strongly entrenched in Alexandrian belief as to command the deference of Origen, was felt to conflict so greatly with the language and style of St. Paul that Origen, as we saw, gave out that only the matter was of Paul; the book itself was a *scholion* on St. Paul's ideas drawn up by a writer whose identity, Origen said, was known only to God.¹ Origen mentions, however, other traditions which had reached Alexandria, one assigning the writing of Hebrews to Clement, 'the bishop of the Romans', and

¹ See above, pp. 3 f., 10 f.

thing 'greater than the Temple' had appeared, and that an Atonement for sins had been offered beside which 'the blood of beasts on Jewish altars' was but a shadow or prefigurement. To develop the full pregnancy of Stephen's insistence on the supra-historical goal of the Christian calling he summoned to his aid all the resources of the Jewish-Alexandrian Wisdom theology with its Platonic distinction of the phenomenal and the real and its counterpointing of earthly and heavenly existence; but he did so only in the service of his world-renouncing religion, not for its philosophical or theological interest.

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one assigning it to Luke, the evangelist and historian.¹ But Hebrews is not a translation, whatever it is; the assumption of an Aramaic or Hebrew original has no support in the language or style. And if the Epistle is not a translation of St. Paul's words, just as little can it be thought, with Origen, to be a commentary on his ideas, for the theology, as we have seen, has not the Pauline stamp. Nor can Hebrews be regarded as an original composition of any of the personalities who figure in these Alexandrian discussions. It cannot, for example, be assigned to Luke, because Luke belonged to Gentile, not to Jewish Christianity. It cannot be assigned to Clement, because Clement, though using the language of Hebrews at points as if it were his own, has ordinarily too pedestrian a style to have been capable of creating that masterpiece.

The only other great name put forward in antiquity as covering with its authority the Epistle to the Hebrews was that of Barnabas, to whom, as we have seen, the work was accredited by Tertullian, probably, as Zahn thinks, on the strength of a tradition received, like Tertullian's Montanism, from Asia Minor.² To this tradition no real exception can be taken on intrinsic grounds. Barnabas was a Jew. He can be presumed to have been a very cultured Jew. He belonged to the world-mission, and had been a member of the Pauline circle. He was a Levite from Cyprus, and he was known in the Church as a 'son of exhortation'.³ On all counts he was what Tertullian calls him, *satis auctoratus vir*. But though the ascription of the Epistle to Barnabas is extraordinarily attractive on many

¹ Eusebius, *History*, VI. 25.

² Zahn, *Introduction to the New Testament*, II. pp. 302 ff.

³ Acts iv. 36, xi. 22-25. Cf. Hebrews xiii. 22, 'Bear with this word of exhortation'.

grounds of internal probability, it is a striking illustration of the tantalising difficulty of the whole problem that, even if the external attestation for Barnabas were stronger than it is, this ascription does not meet all the seeming requirements of the case. It does not, for example, support the on other grounds natural assumption that the writer was a Jew of Alexandria, versed in the Jewish-Alexandrian theology, who had received his institution in Christianity from followers of Stephen. Barnabas was a Cypriote, and he had achieved eminence in the Church at Jerusalem before Stephen. We might get over these difficulties by the easy supposition that, as an educated Jew of the Diaspora, Barnabas had imbibed the quality and substance of the Alexandrian theology without being an Alexandrian, and had, if not from the time of Stephen, at least from the time of his memorable visit to Antioch, completely gone over to the principles of Stephen and the world-mission. Even so, there would remain the difficulty that no evidence exists for connecting Barnabas with Rome and with the Church there. Certainly Clement in the next generation (*c.* A.D. 95) cannot have known Barnabas, any more than Paul or Apollos, to be the author of a document so familiar to him as Hebrews, or he would surely not have been silent regarding him in writing to the Corinthian Church.

The silence of Clement on this subject, despite the fact that he knew and used the Epistle, is only to be explained if we assume that either the authorship was quite unknown to him, or was linked with some name not familiar to the contemporary Church. This excludes the ascription of the work to Apollos, an ascription supported in later times by Martin Luther, but not attested in antiquity. Apollos would admirably

suit the part in point of his Jewish-Alexandrian origin and training, but if Apollos had been the author, it is difficult to think that the Alexandrian Church would not have preserved some knowledge of the fact in view of the distinguished role of this son of Alexandria in the world-mission, and that Clement would not have mentioned him in writing to the Corinthians in whose history Apollos had played a notable part. Nor do we know of any connection of Apollos with Rome. Other modern attempts to discover the writer's identity have no greater interest than a parlour-game. It may be some compensation for our ignorance, however, to have it brought home to us that Early Christianity was even richer in creative minds and personalities than the exiguous surviving evidence of tradition gives us to understand.

CHARACTER OF THE CHURCH AT ROME.

ST. PAUL'S EPISTLE TO THE ROMANS

At various points in our discussion of the Epistle to the Hebrews, the opinion has been expressed that the early Christian community at Rome, to a section of which Hebrews was written, was predominantly Jewish-Christian in composition and character. This judgment, to which the present writer has come principally on the ground of St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, runs contrary to the conclusion ordinarily favoured by modern commentators on Romans. The latter believe that St. Paul had in mind a predominantly Gentile Church. The counter-position which is here affirmed does not deny that the Church at Rome contained a Gentile-Christian admixture, possibly a very large

Gentile-Christian admixture, but maintains that St. Paul's manner of approach to it suggests on every page that he thought of that Church primarily in terms of its Jewish heredity and ethos. The principal ground on which I base this opinion has been repeatedly urged in the foregoing chapters. It is the absence from both Hebrews and Romans of all reference to gnosticising or pagan Hellenistic errors such as are charged by St. Paul upon other Churches. It is now necessary to establish this position more broadly by subjecting the Epistle to closer critical inspection.

When St. Paul states at the opening of the great Epistle (i. 5-6) that he has received the grace of apostleship in order 'to promote obedience to the faith among all the Gentiles (*ethne*)', it is not necessarily implied that the persons addressed were themselves *ethne*, nor does that conclusion need to be drawn from the immediately following words, 'among whom you also are'. All that needs to be inferred is that the persons in question were geographically located in the region of the world to which the Jews gave the overhead name of the *ethne*. St. Paul was conscious of a commission to preach to the ethnic world. It is this that gives him his title to address himself to all Christians in that area, irrespective of whether they are Jews or Gentiles. When, a few lines later, he writes (i. 14-15), 'I am under obligation both to Greeks and barbarians . . . hence the readiness on my part to preach the gospel to you too at Rome', it might appear that the 'you too' involves the inclusion of the Roman Christians under one or other of these ethnic categories, but this is by no means certain. St. Paul in his delicate approach to this Church, which was not founded by himself, is obviously casting about for grounds to justify his

action in addressing himself to it, and the words 'you too' may, as a matter of fact, reveal a sense that the persons addressed do not strictly belong in the narrower sense to either of these ethnic divisions of humanity, but are only domiciled among them. It is to be noticed that in the next verse (i. 16) the Apostle thinks it not irrelevant to say that his gospel 'is for the Jew first and also for the Greek'. The door is at least left open, therefore, for the possibility that the community in question presented to the Apostle a Jewish-Christian façade.

In the second half of chapter i. (verses 18-22), where St. Paul surveys the religious and moral condition of the contemporary Gentile world, it is to be observed that all the references to the *ethne* are in the *third* person: the *ethne* are the 'They'. But when at the beginning of the next chapter the Apostle turns by a gradual transition from the Gentiles to the Jews, the *second* personal pronoun enters: the Jew is 'Thou', and so throughout the chapter (ii. 1-16). In the succeeding passage (ii. 17-29) the Jew is definitely named as the possessor of the glorious privileges there summarised (ii. 17-20), and the Apostle brings home to him the solemn responsibilities of his favoured position. This emphasis on the Jew as 'Thou' admits at least of the special explanation that the Apostle is thinking either of the Jew who is in every Christian among the persons addressed, or of the unconverted Jews who form the background or fringe of the Church. In the next section (iii. 1-20), where St. Paul takes up the question of 'the advantage of the Jew', it is difficult to think of the question as having relevance to any body of hearers except a Jewish-Christian one. Gentile Christians would not be particularly interested

in the question, and St. Paul can hardly be thought to be discussing the matter merely because of its theoretical interest or its importance to himself.

Next we have the passage (iii. 21-26) on the 'Righteousness of God' as something revealed 'apart from the Law', though witnessed to 'by the Law and the prophets'. St. Paul's interpretation of the Atonement here is more closely related—witness the term *hilasterion*—to the central ritual idea of the Jewish sacrificial cultus than anywhere else in his Epistles, and this fact has surely some suggestiveness. Also the discussion which is appended and which brings in the question, 'Or is God the God of the Jews only?' (iii. 29), and the concern of the Apostle to show that through faith we 'establish the Law' (iii. 31), while they aim at proving the universality of the gospel, would seem to indicate that the Jew is all the time uppermost in the Apostle's mind as he writes to this particular community at Rome.

At the beginning of the next chapter (iv. 1) we have the remarkable expression 'Abraham, our progenitor after the flesh'. Gentile Christians are children of Abraham according to the Spirit, but the persons here addressed have that status apparently by natural descent. It will not do to say that the Apostle is here claiming that descent only for himself or only for such other Jewish-born Christians as may happen to be at Rome. The words 'Abraham, our progenitor according to natural descent' must have some solid and substantial relevance to the extraction of the community as a whole. It is true that presently in the same chapter (iv. 9-15) the blessing bestowed on Abraham is deliberately given an interpretation which turns it in the direction of Gentile believers, but this bearing of the

promise declares something which all Christians need to learn and remember—for Jewish and Gentile Christians stand on the same footing before the justifying grace of God. It does not prove that the Christians addressed are themselves Gentile Christians. But there were Gentile Christians among them, and Jewish Christians needed to be reminded of the universal range of grace even more than Gentile. The concluding words of the chapter which remind the readers that saving faith like Abraham's is faith in the God of the Resurrection (iv. 23-25) have as much importance for Jewish as for Gentile believers.

Nothing in chapter v. calls for special attention as bearing on our problem until we come to the verse near the close (v. 26) where St. Paul writes: 'And the Law came in by the way, that the lapse (or fall of man) might attain to its full dimensions.' While St. Paul would everywhere insist on this truth about the Law—for it belonged to the very essence of his understanding of the divine economy of revelation—the statement would be specially pertinent in a dialectical approach to Jewish Christians who, as he says elsewhere in the letter (vii. 1), 'know what Law is'.

In chapter vi. we come for the first time in Romans upon an exposition of what is ordinarily called the 'Christ-mysticism' of the Apostle, his doctrine of the faith-union of the believer with Christ (vi. 1-14). But it is to be noted that the argument turns wholly upon the nature and meaning of baptism, and baptism was a rite which the Jew as well as the Gentile received as the sacrament of his incorporation into the Church. Even in Judaism baptism had been developed in a mystical direction, if, that is, inferences are to be drawn from the Jewish practice of proselyte-baptism as the admission-rite or initiation of converts into a share in

the redemption effected for Israel at the Exodus.¹ It is to be observed that St. Paul confines his mysticism at this point strictly within the meaning of the sacrament in question, and in view of the existence of the Jewish analogy of proselyte baptism there is no justification for the view that the Apostle must have been here writing to Gentile Christians to whom mystical notions were familiar. Nor, later on in the chapter (vi. 15-23), can it be argued that the sins against which the Apostle inveighs as contrary to 'sanctification', specifically indicate a Gentile-Christian community. While the sins of impurity and lawlessness appear in the list of ethnic vices (i. 24 f.), they also figure among the things for which Jews are reproached (ii. 21-24), so that nothing, one way or another, is proved by these allusions.

In chapter vii. the opening words, 'I speak to those who know what Law is', suggest surely persons with an experience rooted in Judaism. While Gentiles have an inward law given to them (ii. 14-15) by which they are exercised, it is doubtful if the workings of this principle on the Gentile conscience could produce a spiritual history of the kind which St. Paul delineates in this chapter as life under the Law. Even if that doubt should be resisted, the candour and the intimacy of the Apostle's revelation of the character of that life are better explained if we suppose him to be writing to Christians who shared in some real degree his own inheritance and spiritual history. St. Paul is not here, or anywhere else, talking into the air. It is because we so often think of him as talking theology in the

¹ Cf. 1 Corinthians x. 1-2, and see W. L. Knox, *St. Paul and the Church of the Gentiles* (1939), pp. 28 f., 97 f., etc., and W. D. Davies, *Paul and Rabbinic Judaism* (1948), pp. 121 f.

abstract, and not as *ad homines* and *ad rem*, that we fail to evaluate the historical bearing of much of his teaching. When he speaks of experience under the Law, we are willing enough to recognise the Jew who is still in Paul himself, but we forget to ask whether Paul would have chosen to speak in this strain to *others* unless he was thinking of the Jew who was also in each one of them.

It is true that in the Galatian Epistle he speaks intimately of the same experience in addressing Christians of Gentile extraction, but in the Galatian Churches Judaizing teachers had intruded themselves, and St. Paul had to expose the fallacy of their legal pretensions. In Romans there is no reference to such intrusion from outside, and we are left to the conclusion that the Apostle, in analysing the nature of moral life under the Law, is taking his stand on knowledge which he assumes his readers to possess in virtue of their pre-Christian experience.

In chapter viii. we pass from the pre-Christian or sub-Christian stage of life to the new stage of life in the Spirit, and St. Paul uses a language applicable to all Christians, so that nothing in this chapter bears on the distinction of Jewish and Gentile elements in the Church. All distinctions are swallowed up in the unity of the confession 'Abba, Father', to which we are brought by the Spirit of God (viii. 14-17). Yet even here St. Paul can speak of the 'law' of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus (viii. 2). The passage is extraordinarily significant:

'The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me (*v.l.* thee) free from the law of sin and death.'

Is this merely *the Jew in Paul* trying to interpret Chris-

tianity to others, and applying the word law to the vital principle of the Christian life because it is instinctive in *him* to express the nature of all religion in terms of law? Or is it Paul attempting to interpret Christianity to *the Jew in others*, and therefore employing a language which *they* can understand? Probably it is both. The Apostle in any case believes that the language which, as an ex-Jew, he uses to explain his own experience will also be intelligible to those to whom he writes.

In chapters ix.-xi. we have what perhaps is the innermost core of the Epistle to the Romans, St. Paul's exposition of what may be called the Righteousness of God in history. The section is concerned to explicate the tragedy of the 'casting away' of God's people Israel, and nowhere in the Apostle's writings have we so passionate a revelation of his yearning for the salvation of the Jews (ix. 1-3, x. 1), of his sense of the glory of Israel's religious calling and endowment (ix. 4-5), and of his own feeling of solidarity with his race and nation (ix. 3, xi. 1). It is not necessary to enter here into the substance and the details of his great argument. No one doubts the intense reality of St. Paul's sense of solidarity with Israel. The question which concerns us at this point is why St. Paul chooses to deal with this particular question in the Epistle to the Romans. It is not a problem which he has tackled in any other of his letters. If it be answered that he treats the problem here because it is germane to the main general theme of the Epistle, which is the Righteousness of God, we may push the question a stage further back and ask why he makes the Righteousness of God the special theme of the Epistle to the Romans. Can we think of him doing this merely to give the

Romans a fully rounded, systematic summary of his teaching as a whole? And does he introduce this section on Israel purely to relieve his own mind on a sorely felt, and sorely baffling personal problem? However great such urges may have been, it is at least a tenable proposition that the Apostle is led to deal with these matters on this occasion through his sense of a particular opportunity or challenge confronting him at his approach to the Roman Church. Such an opportunity or challenge would certainly be present if he had reason to regard that Church as predominantly Jewish-Christian in its heredity or outlook or mentality. On the other hand, neither the choice of the general theme of the Epistle, nor the engagement of his mind with the particular problem of the casting away of Israel would equally explain themselves if the Roman Church mainly consisted of elements drawn from Gentile society. Gentile Christians would not feel the same concern over what had happened to the Jewish people. When St. Paul writes to definitely ethnic Churches, he starts from other themes, e.g. from the Wisdom of God in 1 Corinthians, or from the freedom of the gospel in Galatians, and he does not handle in such Epistles the very grievous question of Israel's fate.

On the other hand, that question and the problem of its relation to the Righteousness of God in history would press very greatly indeed on the minds of Jewish Christians in so powerful a centre of Jewish influence as Rome.

The Church at Rome, however, is not wholly Jewish-Christian. There is a Gentile-Christian section, and possibly a very considerable one. St. Paul, who is not only an 'Israelite' (xi. 1) but an 'apostle of the Gentiles'

who magnifies his office (xi. 13), rejoices that the—for him temporary and provisional—rejection of unbelieving Judaism has, in the divine plan, made room for ‘the reconciliation of the world’ through the bringing of the *ethne* into the people of God. He stresses this inclusiveness of the gospel (x. 12-15). Towards the close of the great argument (xi. 13-24) he turns directly to the Gentile section in the Church, and reminding them of their privileged position as ‘grafted’ into the olive tree of Israel (xi. 17-18), he asks them not to vaunt over the broken-off branches. The words in which he does so are remarkable:

‘It is not you who carry the root, but the root carries you.’

Ordinarily we suppose St. Paul to mean that it is not the Gentile Christianity of the world that represents the original stock of the Church, but Jewish Christianity. But is it not more pertinent and relevant in the context to interpret the words rather in this way: it is not you Roman-Gentile Christians who constitute the stock of the Church at Rome, but your Jewish-Christian brethren? This makes excellent sense, and its admission as St. Paul’s meaning here puts the finishing touch to the argument which we have been constructing.

In chapter xii. we are again at a level where the distinctions of Jew and Gentile disappear, but in the succeeding chapter it may very reasonably be contended that the injunctions to respect the authority of the civil government (xiii. 1-5) and to pay taxes (xiii. 6-7) point to Jewish-born anti-imperial tendencies on the part of those addressed. The references to the sins of drinking and sensuality to which we come later

in the chapter (xiii. 13) are no absolute evidence to the contrary. These undoubtedly represent weaknesses to which Gentiles were prone, but there were Gentiles in the community in any case, and therefore these allusions need not upset our general thesis with regard to the main stock of the Roman Church.

There remains the evidence of chapters xiv. and xv. which present some hitherto unmentioned features in the Roman situation. A *minority* here appears within the Church, characterised by scruples or particularist views on the subjects of foods and holy days; it considers certain foods as forbidden and certain days as specially holy (xiv. 1-6). It is not necessary to go into the whole nature of the problem which is here presented, nor into St. Paul's mode of dealing with it. The Apostle is definitely critical of the principles of the minority (xiv. 17-18), but he urges charity and brotherliness on the part of the 'strong', who undoubtedly represent the core of the Church and the true line of the development of 'faith'. But he strongly deprecates party-feeling and division and exhorts to unity for the glory and honour of God (xv. 5-7), emphasising the universal embrace of a salvation which brings the Gentiles into the Church along with the Jews (xv. 8-13).

The primary question we have here to consider is, Was this scrupulous minority, which in any case appears to be Jewish-Christian by its emphasis on food-laws and holy days, the whole Jewish-Christian constituency in a larger mixed Church, or was it a sub-division of that Jewish-Christian constituency? In view of the fact that, as we have seen, the general evidence of the Epistle suggests that St. Paul was consciously writing to a Church that was Jewish-Christian in the main, we seem justified in preferring the latter alternative. The

scrupulous minority was *a sub-section of the Jewish-Christian core* of the Church. In favour of this view may also be adduced the evidence of the very striking passage:

'I say that Christ became a minister to the circumcised for the sake of God's truth, i.e. to confirm the promises to the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for His mercy' (xv. 8-9).

The argument is interesting: Just as Christ came to the Jews, that through His ministry the Jews might have the ancient promises fulfilled to them, and the Gentiles at the same time have reason to glorify God for the share now accorded to them in so great a blessing, so St. Paul exhorts the Jewish Christians at Rome so to exemplify the charity of Christ in their relations with the dissident minority as to hold and keep them in the unity of the Church, and at the same time give the Gentile Christians among them cause once again to give glory to God for their own inclusion in the Church. If I am right in offering this interpretation, the various elements in the Church at Rome fall at last into proper perspective and proportion.

1. The Roman-Christian community is Jewish (i.e. Jewish-Hellenist) in the main.
2. This Jewish-Hellenist community includes a 'Hebrew' minority (regarding which we have fuller light in the Epistle to the Hebrews).
3. There is also an observing Gentile-Christian section.

And St. Paul (xv. 14-21) takes this predominantly Jewish-Christian Church into his confidence in the hope of bespeaking its understanding sympathy and

co-operation in the world-wide task which he executes as 'priest' (*leitourgos*) of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND THE OLD TESTAMENT

Our examination of the hortatory and didactic sections of the Epistle in Chapters III-V will have shown the close and continuous dependence of the writer's mind on the sacred records of the Jewish religion, and in this particular his exposition of Christianity stands in more positive relation to that religion than the teaching of either St. Paul or the Johannine evangelist. In the figures, types, institutions and personalities of the old economy of grace he sees the manifestation of God in Christ foreshadowed at every point; the Old Testament religion was provisional, prophetic, symbolic, premonitory, pointing beyond itself. The form of the later revelation was present, if not yet the substance. Yet at one important point the metaphor of the shadow employed by the writer is in need of explication. Shadow may suggest something which in itself is unreal or even deceptive as in the Platonic philosophy. But the writer to the Hebrews is not primarily a Platonic idealist but an eschatologist, and when he says (x. 1) that the Law had in it the shadow of the Christian order, though not the reality, he means that the new order was at hand, at the door, projecting itself on the plane of the Old Testament history, announcing its advent. The history, the Law, and the cultus of Israel were to this extent witnesses in advance to the Christian salvation.

Thus when Moses forsook the court of Egypt to cast in his lot with his Hebrew brethren, the writer declares

that he thereby chose the reproach of 'the Christ' (xi. 25-26), and this, as we have seen, not in a merely analogical but in a real sense.¹ The Christ, the pre-incarnate Son of God, was actually, though invisibly, an agent and participant in the redemption effected for Israel at the Exodus, and Moses by his decision of faith was sharing in the Saviour's passion. He was already identified with the Christian people of God. So also when, dealing with the writer's conception of the cloud of 'witnesses' (xii. 1), we repelled the suggestion that the types of faith depicted in chapter xi. were sub-Christian, we did so on the sufficient grounds (a) that for the writer to the Hebrews the eschatological calling of God in the Old Testament was the same in form and principle as in the New, and (b) that for the same writer the Christ of God was veritably present and active in the history of Israel, so that the response of the heroes of faith to the promises given to Israel was in a real sense a response to Christ, towards whom their eyes were really directed when, as the writer says, they endured 'as seeing Him who is invisible'.²

The writer's thought of the pre-incarnate Saviour as present in the revelation of God granted under the old order is reinforced and illustrated by his interpretation of Psalms and other texts from the Old Testament records. His use of Psalm xcvi. 7 (LXX) is a case in point. The singer's words: 'Let all the angels of God worship Him' are given a direct meaning with reference to the Firstborn of God, and the introductory formula: 'When He brings the Firstborn into the world, etc.', conveys the interpretation that God's summons to the angels to worship the Son revealed the Incarnation as already present in the mind of God and as already

¹ See above, pp. 79 f.

² Above, pp. 81 f., 96, 144.

announced to the world.¹ Similarly the use made of the trio of Old Testament passages, Psalm xxii. 22, Isaiah viii. 17, 18, the words of which are made to refer to the brethren of Christ, shows that where psalmists and prophets spoke, the overtones were those of the pre-existent Son of God.² In the same way, when the 'man' or 'son of man' of the Eighth Psalm is recognised as Jesus, there is involved the assumption that it was of Jesus that the psalmist actually spoke.³ On the same principle of interpretation again it is the voice of the Messiah-Son of God that is to be heard in such passages as Proverbs viii. 22-31, Ecclesiasticus xxiv., and Wisdom vii. 21, etc., in which the activities of the Divine Wisdom in creation and providence are declared and attested to the world.⁴

The most remarkable instance, however, of the writer's Christological interpretation of the Old Testament is his use of the passage, Psalm xl. 6-8, where the LXX reading 'A body hast Thou prepared for me', taken with the response, 'Lo, I come to do Thy will', is construed as an announcement of the Saviour's acceptance of His Incarnation, which acceptance, therefore, dates from His pre-existent life, and is affirmed, so to speak, overhead of the psalmist.⁵ This right to recognise the overtones of Christ in the Old Testament revelation has a place in the faith of the writer to the Hebrews which, had he known the tests applied to that literature by the historical and exegetical science of a later day, would not have seemed to him to be invalidated in any real sense. He would have allowed that such Biblical criticism had a function to fulfil on the plane of what he called the 'shadow', but

¹ See above, pp. 92 f.

² Above, p. 102.

³ Above, pp. 98 f.

⁴ Above, pp. 96 f.

⁵ Above, pp. 144 f.

he would not have considered it to exclude the right of Christian faith to receive and affirm those deeper involutions of truth which come to light in the Old Testament when looked at in respect of its 'substance'.

It is in accordance with this finding of Christ in the Old Testament by an act of faith which is not conditioned by the conclusions of strict historical interpretation that we may now discover the full range of the truth covered by the writer's statement (xiii. 8):

'Jesus Christ is the same, yesterday, today, and for ever.'

In the context, where the writer is speaking of the memorable record and noble end of the earlier leaders of the Roman-Christian community, the word 'yesterday' admits certainly of direct application to the first age of the Church, to which these leaders belonged and of which they were the products. But his pre-occupation with the larger aspects of the Christology of Scripture gives the declaration that 'Jesus Christ is the same' a vaster range of meaning. Look back on the entire history of the people of God, he seems to say to us, and you will find no past, no yesterday, in which the Christ of God has not been present and active; look forward to the future, and again there will be no period when He will not be there—an entirely Christological and eschatological interpretation of history! In Jesus Christ eternity is manifested in time.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND THE EVANGELICAL TRADITION

It is, however, the 'today' of the Christian revelation as centred in the Incarnation which forms the core and

all-essential substance of the writer's presentation. Apart from the Epistle to the Hebrews we should not have known the greatness of the place which the Incarnation of the Son of God held in the gospel of the world-mission of the first age of the Church. At the time when the Epistle was written the Synoptic Gospels were not in being. The material, indeed, out of which they later took shape was present in solution in the minds of the teachers and leaders of the Church, and was used in their preaching. The tradition was borne everywhere at the heart of the world-mission, and it was in the course of that mission and as essential instruments of its propaganda that the Gospels were written, Mark probably at Rome, Matthew almost certainly at Antioch, Luke at some other centre, possibly in Macedonia or Achaëa. And the Pauline, Petrine, and Johannine books of the New Testament, as well as Hebrews, attest the wide diffusion and influence of the same tradition. But whereas St. Paul can draw a distinction between a first stadium of revelation in which the Son of God was manifested 'after the flesh', and a second stadium dating from the Resurrection, in which He is revealed 'after the Spirit' (Romans i. 3-4), and can even say *à propos* of the two stages that 'if we knew Christ after the flesh' (i.e. in His earthly historical manifestation) 'we no longer know Him in that manner' (2 Corinthians v. 16), the writer to the Hebrews knows no such distinction. For him *the Eternal Spirit is not something which in its operation casts all that happened before the death and resurrection of Jesus into the shadow, and so transcends it, but is rather the revelatory power and principle which holds the Incarnate Life for ever before us in its inexhaustible wealth of transcendent meaning, so that we see Jesus*

crowned with glory for the suffering of death (ii. 9). In justice to St. Paul we should not press too strongly the distinction to which we have referred, for it may be thought to rest ultimately on the development of his subjective apprehension of Christ in the pre-conversion and post-conversion periods of his experience rather than on any objective differences between the pre-Resurrection and post-Resurrection modes of the Saviour's manifestation. But the fact that St. Paul at times can set flesh and spirit in antithesis with reference to the modes of the Christ-manifestation indicates that a certain subjective limitation cleaves to Paulinism, which has had some ill results in Christian history. From this limitation the writer to the Hebrews is happily free.—But has he done the same justice as St. Paul to the glory and power of the Resurrection of Christ and to its transforming results in Christian life? That is another question.

For the moment we must leave aside this last question. Our immediate concern is with the fact that in Hebrews the very heart of the Christian revelation is in the spectacle of the Incarnate Life by which the Son of God was qualified in the school of suffering to be our High-Priest, and to make His supreme Oblation. Nor could the reality of the experience and the intensity of the conflict be more vividly presented than in the passage, chapter v. 7-8. Here is no Docetic manifestation, nor union of God with man which excludes a human will, human passions, human temptations, a full human personality. In this and in other ways the teaching of Hebrews comes at concrete points into close parallelism with the matter of the Synoptic tradition with which we are concerned at the moment.

First, there is in Hebrews a consistently eschato-

logical presentation of the norm of the Christian life and calling. The mind of the writer is oriented to an ultimate goal towards which the Christian is to strive with unrelaxed and increasing tension, the life of the Age to Come. So the Jesus of the Synoptic tradition called men to follow Him in preparation for the Kingdom of God which He announced to be at the door. He brought His followers face to face, in every moment of life's decisions, with the absolute nature of the will of God to reign. He thereby compelled a tension in their souls which only the coming of the supreme and final event of the Kingdom could resolve. They were placed in a situation—the Sermon on the Mount in St. Matthew's Gospel illustrates its nature—in which to go backwards was to renounce the salvation of God, to go forwards was eternal life. Though the writer to the Hebrews does not speak of the Christian crisis in terms of the Lord's *teaching*, his presentation of the Christian calling turns on precisely identical issues. To be 'partakers with Christ' requires that men maintain their initial decision of faith firmly and to the end, no matter what consequences are involved (iii. 14).

Secondly, the writer to the Hebrews knows no *final* formula under which to bring the Christian life except that of martyrdom for Christ's sake or of preparedness for that eventuality. Christians are summoned to go forth to Jesus 'without the camp', bearing His reproach (xiii. 13). The words 'You have not yet resisted to blood in your conflict against sin' (xiii. 4) suggests that for him the last sacrifice comes definitely into the prospect which lies before the faithful. So the Jesus of the Synoptic Gospels at the Messianic crisis in His ministry demanded of His Galilean followers, whom

He had called to seek the Kingdom of God, that they should hazard even life itself in fidelity to Him (Mark viii. 34). The words were spoken primarily to the Twelve, who only on the terms of leaving every earthly interest and security behind could accompany Jesus on the last journey to Jerusalem, but Mark says that Jesus addressed the call to the multitude as well, and Luke says that He spoke to all (Luke ix. 23). Hebrews in its interpretation of the eschatological calling stands in the closest agreement at this point with the norm of Christian life outlined in the Synoptic teaching.

Thirdly, the supreme illustration of the close congruence of Hebrews with the Synoptic tradition is, of course, the centrality of place given to the human experience of Jesus in 'the days of His flesh'. On this subject nothing need be added here except that, whereas the Synoptic evangelists present the features of that drama objectively, without other comment on its nature than is given in the word of Jesus about the 'necessity' of the Son of Man's suffering, the writer to the Hebrews reflects on the intrinsic character of the experience, the tremendous psychological reality of the self-identification of the Christ with sinners, the supreme moral *fitness* of the revelation of the divine-human relation so given. 'It befitted God', so he writes, 'in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Hero of their salvation perfect through sufferings' (ii. 10). 'Obligation lay on Jesus', he continues, 'to be assimilated to His brethren in all things that He might become a compassionate and faithful High-Priest in the service of God for the expiation of the sins of His people' (ii. 17). In this emphasis on the moral nature of the factors predetermining the character of the divine-human encounter in the Christian revelation

we have the fullest approximation in the New Testament to a *rationale* of the Atonement, and it constitutes a divination unique even in that literature, one which takes shape, moreover, at the highest level of spiritual realisation, and which gives the Epistle to the Hebrews a singular power of appeal to an age which, like our own, has experienced the full brunt of the critical attack on all that is abstract and impersonal in the tenets of the received theology.

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS AND ST. PAUL

At a whole series of points in our argument there has been occasion to institute comparisons between the teaching of Hebrews and that of St. Paul. We have been driven on constant cross-reference to the Apostle's letters by the very necessity of bringing to articulate expression the special character of the theology of Hebrews, and the results have been sufficient to demonstrate that the two modes of presenting the gospel indicate parallel channels in the course of the world-mission of Christianity as it poured itself out on the life of the world in the apostolic age. There is a remarkable symmetry or similarity in the patterns or general categories within which the gospel is presented by the two writers, but there is a difference with regard to the matter which is stamped with, or enclosed within these forms. The streams are parallel in their courses, but the *terrain* or bed over which they run is not identical. While it is not necessary to recapitulate the points of interesting concurrence which have been noted in the two presentations, something should be said with regard to a number of outstanding points of divergence.

1. While St. Paul presents the gospel primarily in terms of its antithesis to the law of Judaism as a code of righteousness, Hebrews is engaged with its relation to the cultus, as apparatus of grace.¹ To some extent the difference of front may be explained by variations in the religious situation presented in diverse sectors of the world-mission Church, but in part it goes back to differences in the initial approach to the Christian realities of two dissimilar minds. The advantage of setting the two presentations side by side is that there is thus afforded us a more stereoscopic view of the teaching and fortunes of the world-mission than would have been possible if we were dependent on only one of the two. We are able, by means of the comparison, to supplement and check the one system of thought by the other, and this is of great consequence alike for the theologian and for the historian.

2. There is disparity again with regard to the relation in which the Christian order stands to the old order of religion as a whole. St. Paul, as we have seen,² in preaching Christ insists instinctively on the essential paradox of the Christian salvation, its incommensurability with all Jewish and, in general, with all human expectation. A crucified Messiah is to the Jews a scandal, an insuperable obstacle and affront to faith. For the writer to the Hebrews, on the other hand, the Passion of Christ is no bewildering paradox but comes as the climax and fulfilment of the truth that was adumbrated and the grace that was operative in the now superseded economy. There is no intellectual offence of the Cross in Hebrews but only the moral one,

¹ See above, pp. 19 f., etc.

² Above, pp. 114-116, etc.

that by the self-oblation of Jesus we are pointed inexorably 'beyond the camp' to a new heavenly life. So also for the same writer the distinction between the old and the new Israel, the old and the new covenants, is not of a kind to be expressed by the Pauline antithesis, absolute in its nature, of flesh and spirit, death and life.¹ Perhaps St. Paul had encountered the actuality of the Jewish intolerance of the gospel more poignantly than our author who lived more in the serene air of Old Testament prophecy and typology. But each has seized an aspect of the truth, and it can be said that wisdom is justified at this point by both of her children.

It goes with the above distinction, however, that in the Epistle to the Hebrews there is less sense than in St. Paul of the essential newness, relatively to the older order, of the life begun in Christ. Commenting at an earlier stage of the argument on the Pauline tendency to set flesh and spirit in antithesis with reference even to the modes of the Saviour's manifestation,² we noted the presence of a subjective element in St. Paul from which the writer to the Hebrews was free. But we raised the question at the same moment whether the latter had done the same justice as St. Paul to the glory and transforming power of the Resurrection of Christ as an element in the Christian revelation of grace. If, now, this question has to be answered in the negative, the reason for the comparative recession of the Resurrection in the writer's thought has also come to light. The Resurrection of the Saviour—see the great passage, xiii. 20-21—is recognised as a moment in the fulfilment of God's eschatological purpose for His redeemed, but does not mark an absolute crisis with respect to the

¹ See above, pp. 114-116, 129.

² Above, pp. 153-154.

nature of our calling. The writer does not think of Christians as risen with Christ, but as followers of a risen and heavenly Redeemer, who will participate with Him at the last, and this connects with a general determination of the whole of the writer's religious thinking to which we must now recur.

3. Within the sphere of the Christian religion there is a marked contrast between the mind of St. Paul, instinctively stressing at every point of his Atonement-doctrine the love of God, the love of Christ, the union of the soul with Christ, the destruction of the sinful flesh, the power of the Spirit, the peace of believing, and, on the other hand, the mind of the writer to the Hebrews, conscious of the dread aspects of the Christian manifestation of God, for whom God is a consuming fire. For St. Paul it is imperative to grasp and present the redeemed relation of the soul to God in terms of present achieved status, inward possession and rest, the deliverance of the soul from the burden of condemnation, the triumphant victory of prevailing grace. For the writer to the Hebrews the Christian life is a tense and unending conflict which finds resolution and rest only at the End. While the difference is not absolute, since at points the attitudes interpenetrate each other, yet in the main it holds, and it may be summarised by saying that while the writer to the Hebrews is essentially an eschatologist, St. Paul at the centre of his being is a mystic. To some extent, as we have seen, the two attitudes can be taken to an explanation in differences in the historical approach of the two men to the Christian realities. To some extent, however, the duality is rooted in the complex nature of all religious reality in respect of the object of belief as it confronts the soul.

Whatever judgment may be passed on particular features in Dr. Rudolf Otto's analysis of the primordial nature of the numinous experience, an indisputable truth underlies his differentiation of the two aspects of the experience, which he designates respectively as the *tremendum* and the *fascinans*, taken with the corresponding reactions of the worshipping spirit. On the one hand he notices our dread sense of confrontation by something which repels us, holds us off, challenges our security and our very existence, but by which also at the higher levels of religious experience our affections are 'raised and solemnised'. On the other hand is an attraction which draws the soul to impel itself towards the numinous object, to appropriate it, to merge its existence in it, to identify it with itself. The first attitude attains its highest sublimation and purest expression in the religion of the Bible as a whole, the second is illustrated in the character of Hellenistic pagan mysticism. Without further elaboration of the details of Otto's analysis, we may recognise the distinction of the two reactions in the attitudes to the Christ-manifestation of the two minds we have been comparing. For St. Paul it is an absolute necessity, as we have noted, to think of the mighty acts of God in Christ, the Incarnation, Death, Resurrection, and Ascension to glory of the Son of God, as events to be immediately appropriated, realised, and re-enacted in the soul of the Christian: it is through this appropriation that the Christian comes to be 'in Christ'. Such mysticism is not natural to the mind of the writer to the Hebrews, being replaced in him by the conception of the soul's eternal objective confrontation by Christ. Christian existence is existence 'with Christ', a total direction of the soul's energies 'towards Christ'. Both

determinations have their place, however, within the orbit of the Christian life.

EPILOGUE

If the interpretation which has been put upon Hebrews in the foregoing chapters is correct, the effect cannot but be to enrich and expand our conception both of early Christian evangelism and of early Christian history. We should not have known, apart from Hebrews, over how wide and varied a front the battle of Christianity was fought and won in the first age of the Church's life. It has sometimes been pled in favour of the modern interpretation of Hebrews which detaches the Epistle from its traditional Jewish-Christian setting and holds it to have been addressed to Gentile-Christians that the Christian theology of the period is thereby delivered from entanglement with issues which, since St. Paul, are taken to have been dead. But if the short-circuiting of historical theory which comes to light in the latter assumption has to go, it may be felt, as a real gain accruing from the counter-position which we have taken, that we see the Christian Church and theology more squarely and broadly built on the foundations of the Old Testament, and rising phoenix-like from the embers not only of Jewish legalism but of the Jewish means of grace.