

## PREFACE

When first I undertook the preparation of this exposition in Dutch for the Christian people among whom I labour, it was under a deep conviction that the Epistle just contained the instruction they needed. In reproducing it in English, this impression has been confirmed, and it is as if nothing could be written more exactly suited to the state of the whole Church of Christ in the present day. The great complaint of all who have the care of souls is the lack of whole-heartedness, of stedfastness, of perseverance and progress in the Christian life. Many, of whom one cannot but hope that they are true Christians, come to a stand-still, and do not advance beyond the rudiments of Christian life and practice. And many more do not even remain stationary, but turn back to a life of worldliness, of formality, of indifference. And the question is continually being asked, What is the want in our religion that, in so many cases, it gives no power to stand, to advance, to press on unto perfection? And what is the teaching that is needed to give that health and vigour to the Christian life that, through all adverse circumstances, it may be able to hold fast the beginning firm to the end.

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The teaching of the Epistle is the divine answer to these questions. In every possible way it sets before us the truth that it is only the full and perfect knowledge of what Christ is and does for us that can bring us to a full and perfect Christian life. The knowledge of Christ Jesus that we need for conversion does not suffice for growth, for progress, for sanctification, for maturity. Just as there are two dispensations, the Old Testament and the New, and the saints of the Old, with all their faith and fear of God, could not obtain the more perfect life of the New, so with the two stages in the Christian life of which the Epistle speaks. Those who, through sloth, remain babes in Christ, and do not press on to maturity, are ever in danger of hardening their heart, of coming short and falling away. Only those who hold fast the beginning firm to the end, who give diligence to enter the rest, who press on unto perfection, do in very deed inherit and enjoy the wonderful new covenant blessings secured to us in Christ. And the great object of the Epistle is to show us that if we will but follow the Lord, and yield ourselves wholly to what God in Christ is to do, we shall find in the gospel and in Christ everything that we need for a life of joy and strength and final victory.

The cure the Epistle has for all our failures and feebleness, the one preservative from all danger and disease, is the knowledge of the higher truth concerning Jesus, the knowledge of Him in His heavenly priesthood. In connection with this truth, the writer has three great mysteries he seeks to unfold. The one is that the heavenly sanctuary has been opened to us, so that we may now come and take our place there, with Jesus in

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the very presence of God. The second, that the new and living way by which Jesus has entered, the way of self-sacrifice and perfect obedience to God, is the way in which we now may and must draw nigh. The third, that Jesus, as our heavenly High Priest, is the minister of the heavenly sanctuary, and dispenses to us its blessings, the spirit and the power of the heavenly life, in such a way that we can live in the world as those who are come to the heavenly Jerusalem, and in whom the spirit of heaven is the spirit of all their life and conduct; the heavenly priesthood of Jesus, heaven opened to us day by day, our entering it by the new and living way, and heaven entering us by the Holy Spirit. Such is the gospel to the Hebrews the Epistle brings, such is the life to which it reveals the way and the strength. The knowledge of the heavenly character of Christ's person and work is what alone can make heavenly Christians, who, amid all the difficulties and temptations of life on earth, can live as those whom the superior power of the upper world has possessed, and in whom it can always give the victory.

In offering these meditations now to a wider circle of readers, I do so with the prayer that it may please God to use them to inspire some of His children with new confidence in their blessed Lord, as they learn to know Him better and give themselves up to expect and experience all that He is able to do for them. I have not been afraid of continually repeating the one thought: Our one need is to know Jesus better, the one cure for all our feebleness, to look to Him on the throne of heaven, and really claim the heavenly life He waits to impart.

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Just as I was about to write the Preface to the Dutch issue, in the first week of last year, I received from my beloved colleague as a New Year's text, with the wish that it might be my experience, the words: "Jesus taketh with Him Peter and James and John, and bringeth them into a high mountain, apart by themselves, and He was transfigured before them." I at once passed the word on to my readers, and I do so again. May the blessed Master take us with Himself into the high mountain, even the Mount Sion, where He sits as Priest-King upon the throne in power, each of us apart by himself, and prepare us for the blessed vision of seeing Him transfigured before us, seeing Him in His heavenly glory. He will then still be to us the same Jesus we know now. And yet not the same; but His whole Being, bright with the glory and the power of the heavenly life which He holds for us, and waits to impart day by day to them who forsake all to follow Him.

In humble trust and prayer that it may be so, I commend all my readers to His blessed teaching and guidance.

Andrew Murray

*13th September 1894*