

**THE SUPREME GOSPEL;
A STUDY OF THE EPISTLE
TO THE HEBREWS**

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The supreme Gospel; a study of the Epistle to the Hebrews by Hugh Thomson Kerr

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HUGH THOMSON KERR

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THE SUPREME GOSPEL

A Study of The Epistle to the Hebrews

BY

HUGH THOMSON KERR, D.D.



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THE SUPREME GOSPEL

STUDY I

PROLEGOMENA

THE Epistle to the Hebrews has been called "The First Apology of the Christian Church." An apology is a defense or vindication of that for which one contends. The writer is the first Christian Apologist, presenting the claims of the Christian religion to be the complete and final revelation of God. This Epistle preserves for us the first reasoned argument for the truth of the Gospel. It calls itself "the word of exhortation" (13:22). It was written to strengthen wavering Jewish Christians who were in danger of returning to their former faith.

I. The Theme of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 12:1-2

"Therefore let us also, seeing we are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset

us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God."

The theme of the Epistle is the finality of the Christian religion. Christianity is the supreme religion. In the setting of a musical symphony through all the complexity of the music there runs the familiar strain of a constantly recurring theme. The theme dominates the music and binds all the parts into an harmonious unity. It is so with the Epistle to the Hebrews. The language is majestically and grandly eloquent, and the argument flows on with cumulative intensity, but always through the complex and intricate thought there runs the simplicity of the theme. The notes of the theme are struck again and again. The theme is *the supremacy of Jesus Christ*. After the introduction has gathered itself up into a triumphant appeal the author proclaims his message: "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus" (3:1). When the argument draws to its inevitable conclusion there is his fine finish: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today, yea and for ever" (13:8). This note dominates the thought of the book. Jesus is supreme. This is the recurring theme in the music. He is appointed

heir of all things, the very effulgence of God's glory (1:3).

Jesus is supreme. All else is secondary. The words "better than," "more excellent," are the key notes in the theme. Jesus is "better than" the angels (1:4) and his is a "more excellent" name (1:4). Jesus brings men to a "better hope" (7:19), even as He is "the surety of a better covenant" (7:22). His is "a ministry the more excellent" (8:6), and He is also the "mediator of a better covenant" (8:6), the offerer of a "better sacrifice" (9:23). In Jesus a "better country" (11:16) is promised, and a "better resurrection" assured (11:35). The Epistle is one of the most eloquent arguments in literature, and the theme of the entire argument is Jesus.

SUGGESTION: Select references from the Epistle that bear upon the theme. Relate the theme to the words of the wonderful hymn attributed to Bernard of Clairvaux (11th century), "Jesus the very thought of Thee."

The theme of the hymn and of the Epistle are the same.

II. The Purpose of the Epistle

MEMORY VERSES: 4:14-16

"Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God,