THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

By the Same Author

WORLD CHAOS: ITS ROOT AND REMEDY

ANTHONY NORRIS GROVES
A Study of a Man of God

THE REVELATION OF JESUS CHRIST

THE HISTORIES AND PROPHECIES OF DANIEL

EDMUND HAMER BROADBENT
Saint and Pioneer

ISRAEL'S NATIONAL FUTURE

The Epistle to the Hebrews

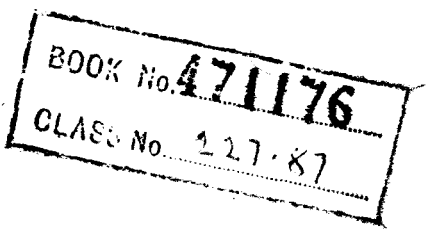
A PRACTICAL TREATISE
for
PLAIN AND SERIOUS READERS

By
G. H. LANG



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FOREWORD

THIS book has been written with the hope that it may help the general reader to grasp the arguments of the Epistle and *to feel their force.*

This last important end is not very well served by the type of treatise that scholars write for scholars. These are indeed valuable for aiding those who teach others. For such the minute examination of verses, phrases, words, parts of speech is helpful. I have myself profited by it. But the plain reader is embarrassed by technical disquisitions and the elaborate weighing of all possible or impossible meanings, and is left barren by quotations from ancient writers in dead languages.

For the readers here in view it has seemed more useful to give usually conclusions reached as to the meaning of the Writer rather than the processes and grounds of the conclusions. But exception has been made where anything fresh or unusual is advanced. Then something at least is offered in support by way of fuller discussion of words or sentences. Readers able to profit by the full discussions of the learned will naturally turn to such works as those by Alford, Delitzsch, Govett, William Kelly, or Westcott.

For the same reason Greek words are printed in ordinary type; a practice I now dislike, only I remember the hindrance and annoyance I found in the Greek characters in the years when I could not read them.

On the same grounds certain much-discussed questions are here left almost untouched, as for example:

1. Who was Melchizedek? In my early years a pamphlet came to me which sought to establish, what I now know to have been a very ancient notion, that Melchizedek was Shem. The writer proceeded to argue the wholly useless idea that Shem was the architect of the Great Pyramid!

Much wiser and far more spiritual are these words of the learned Dr. Adolf Saphir in his *Lectures on the Hebrews*, ch. vii.

> But the Scripture purposely does not mention who he was. Genesis abounds in genealogies, and in full and minute genealogies; but the genealogy of this man is not given. If we knew who he was, should we not counteract thereby the meaning of the Holy Ghost in this instructive omission? If he was Shem, then we know who

his father was, and when he lived, and how old he was; and this is just the very point the Holy Ghost does not wish us to know . . . all we are told is, Melchizedek was one of those still left on earth, who retained the primeval knowledge of God, who worshipped Him, and who ruled in righteousness. With regard to all other circumstances, our *ignorance* is *knowledge.* The negative element is a positive element. Let no man attempt to supply that which the Holy Ghost has purposely left out: for, in the first place, he must be unsuccessful; in the second place, if he were successful, it would only militate against the purpose and the word of God, and only hinder us from learning those lessons which the Scripture intends us to derive. . . .

Instead of indulging in morbid and fanciful speculations about the historical individual, let us look at the important spiritual realities which in the inspired commentary are given us in this parable or type. Let us learn also from this instance and the other New Testament comments on Old Testament types that the typical meaning is always deduced from what *the Scripture itself says concerning them.*

2. A second question, much disputed and laboured, is *Who* was the Writer of *Hebrews*? For me the question is idle, for we have no *data* by which to *determine* it, but only inference and conjecture, which can lead only to mere *opinion.* The above remarks of Saphir apply here also. Hence in this treatise the question is almost unnoticed.

3. But a third matter requires attention, namely, the title of the Epistle. Of course, the titles of the books of the Bible are human additions and of no authority, unless a book contains its own proof as to the writer, or of the person or church to whom it was addressed, as is the case with *Philippians, Colossians,* and some others.

The giving to this Epistle the title "To the Hebrews" is merely a matter of tradition and is without warrant. It has formed one support for the misleading theory that certain parts of the New Testament are "Jewish," for "Jewish Christians," not Gentile believers. No such class of Christians is known to the New Testament. The theory is contrary to Eph. 2: 11–18, and to the fundamental position of the Word of God that, in this age, in Christ Jesus, "there *cannot* be Greek and Jew, circumcision and uncircumcision . . . but Christ is all, and in all" (Col. 3: 11).

The title as it stands is plainly misleading, for it does not even suggest that the readers were Christian at all. It implies simply that they were Hebrews, not Hebrew Christians, which is plainly wrong.

The fact that the Writer had a deep and extensive acquaintance with the Old Testament and that he presumed on a similar knowledge in his readers, is no proof that he and they were Jews. Perhaps the present treatise may show that its writer has some real acquaintance with the Old Testament and that he presumes on such in his readers, but it were a false inference that he and they are Jews.

The believers at Rome and in Galatia were at least mainly Gentiles, yet Paul presumed on much knowledge of Old Testament Scriptures and their histories. See Rom. 4 on Abraham and David: chs. 9 to 11 on the problem of Israel's lapse, where the argument dealt with Abraham, Isaac, Moses, Pharaoh, and freely quoted psalms and prophets. And see especially in Gal. 4 the treatment of Sarah and Isaac, Hagar and Ishmael, Sinai and Zion as containing an allegory. The apostles were careful to illuminate their Gentile converts as to the contents and meaning of the Old Testament.

Therefore in this treatise we dismiss the title and regard the Epistle as addressed to Christians as such, both its comforts and its warnings. They who reject its warnings as not for believers ought to be consistent and refuse its comforts, such as that of the new covenant and the priestly ministry of Christ.

4. As regards the warning passages, special attention has been given to these. They can be treated in three ways.

(1) As addressed to true believers, children of God by the new birth, and as teaching that such may so apostatize as to lose their salvation entirely and eternally. We accept the former part of the proposition, but reject the latter as being contrary to many other passages which declare that eternal life is the free gift of God and is unforfeitable. This is discussed in *Note A* at the end of ch. xiii, p. 196.

(2) Others say that the passages are to warn those who profess to be Christians, falsely or by being deceived, but who have never been born of God. We reject this also as being contrary to the plain terms and clear arguments used.

(3) The alternative is to take the warnings as applying to the really regenerate and to show how their solemn terms can find fulfilment without challenging the final and eternal bliss

of the saved. This is the line here taken and which the reader is earnestly invited to ponder with candour and prayer.

In Scripture quotations and references the Revised Version is used, except where a stricter rendering seemed needful and helpful.

Words in square brackets [ ] are mine.

If the God of all grace shall use this book to enlighten hearts, establish faith, and kindle devotion to Christ His Son, to Him shall be all the glory for ever.

G. H. LANG.

1951.

PART I: THE SON (Ch. 1–4: 13)

CHAPTER 1

GOD HAS SPOKEN (1: 1, 2)

GOD, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners, hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in *his* Son (Gk., a Son).

THIS late portion of Holy Scripture begins where the first portion begins, with God. Knowledge of God and of His actings and plans is the basic need of man. Such knowledge slays self-importance, for in the presence of God even the saint says, "I am but dust and ashes . . . I was as a beast before Thee . . . I abhor myself" (Gen. 18: 27; Ps. 73: 22; Job 42: 6). It kills pride of knowledge, for "who can utter the mighty acts of Jehovah" (Ps. 106: 2), seeing that "His ways are past tracing out" (Rom. 11: 33), that we know but the outskirts of them (Job 26: 14), and, as a truly great student of nature said, are but as a child that has found a shell on the shore and the vast ocean remains unexplored? And this knowledge destroys self-sufficiency, for one who had been granted a far deeper insight into the mysteries of God than is usual exclaimed, "who is sufficient for these things? . . . we are not sufficient of ourselves . . . but our sufficiency is of God" (II Cor. 2: 16; 3: 5, 6). Blessed is he whose self-esteem has been annihilated by the knowledge of God.

But though the Writer begins with God he does not go back so far in the workings of God as did Moses. He commences with the fact, necessarily far later than the act of creating the universe, that God has spoken to man. God might have left man to plunge and flounder in ever deeper darkness, the ignorance into which he wandered by rebellion against the light he had. But Love would not suffer this, so God spoke.

Speaking is the method by which God puts forth His energy. Perhaps this results from the fact that His substance is *spirit*, as Christ said: "*spirit* God is"[1] for in the realm of spirit words are energy, and so here in ver. 3, "the *word* of His *power*."

Consequently, "the worlds were framed by the *word* o

[1] John 4: 24; no article before "spirit": and comp. I John 1: 5 "God *light* is" and 4: 8 "God *love* is".

God" (11: 3), "For He *spake*, and it was" (Ps. 33: 9). Darkness settled over that original earth: the Light withdrew because of sin. It was by *speaking* that God disturbed that dreadful pall: "God *said*, Let light be, and light was" (Gen. 1: 3). The vibration which light is was set in motion by the voice of the Almighty. We are familiar with the power of the human voice to set in motion that amount of vibration which we know as sound. The voice of God started that higher vibration which we know as light.

It is thus that all direct Divine activities are effected, in the subtler realm of spirit as in that of matter. The angels are "mighty in strength" for they "hearken unto the *voice* of His *word*" (Ps. 103: 20), for "the King's word hath power" (Eccles. 8: 4). It is when an honest and good heart receives something that God *says* that new life starts in the dead spirit of man, for "we are begotten again through the *word* of God, which liveth and abideth" (I Pet. 1: 23), being the vehicle of the eternal life of Him who speaks it, even as the Son of God said, "The *words* that I have spoken unto you are spirit and are life" (John 6: 63).

It is by *speaking* to us that God imparts knowledge, information, light, for "the opening of *Thy words* giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Ps. 119: 130); and His word is also the energizing medium for victorious conflict against sin and Satan, "because ye are strong, and the *word* of God abideth in you, and ye have overcome the evil one" (I John 2: 14).

Therefore for the Christians addressed in this Epistle, and all to whom it comes, and so to myself, the primary and the final practical question is, Am I of those who tremble at God's word? (Isa. 66: 2). If I am, then to me, though less than the least, and because I know myself this, God will look attentively and compassionately, with even me He will dwell, and will thus grant reviving to the humble and contrite heart (Isa. 57: 15). And so shall be healed the backsliding in heart of these believers; so shall be averted the threatening danger of apostasy; and so only shall healing and safety be secured by any one of us. For this is the means of actual daily holiness: "ye are clean because of the *word* which I have spoken unto you" (John 15: 3).

God has spoken: let me "make haste and delay not to keep His commandments" (Ps. 119: 60).[1]

God spoke of old, but not to all the world. As far as the

[1] A word is an audible or visible expression of something inaudible and invisible, that is, a thought. In this sense the Son is a personal revelation of a Person otherwise unseen by man, God the Father, and is called "*the Word.*" But this does not alter the fact stated in ver. 1 and other passages that God also spoke in *words.*

record shows, in the long stretch of sixteen centuries before the Flood God spoke only to Adam and Eve, Cain, Noah, and to the world at large through Enoch (Jude 14). Early after the Flood our race abandoned God deliberately and persistently, and in consequence God abandoned them (Rom. 1: 21–24, 26, 28) and only rarely addressed them. Abraham was a prophet, as God personally told the heathen king Abimelech (Gen. 20: 7). God sent Moses and Aaron to the powerful king of Egypt, also a heathen, and by His dealings with him forced upon all the nations a warning as to Himself the true God. Later all the earth came to Jerusalem to hear the Divinely given wisdom of Solomon, and at rare intervals God sent messages to Gentiles through Jonah, Jeremiah (ch. 25), Daniel; but in general, through 2000 years the world was left in its self-inflicted darkness.

But to "the fathers" God spake often. The description "fathers" is found at John 7: 22; Rom. 9: 5 and 15: 8, and means the patriarchal ancestors of Israel. But here it means the whole Jewish people, for to them through a thousand years God spake through a succession of prophets from Moses to Malachi, and so to them "were intrusted the oracles of God" (Rom. 3: 2).

But thus it was not to every Israelite direct that God spake. In the coming age of Messiah, with all Israel regenerate, and the Spirit of God poured upon all, they shall not need to teach one another to know the Lord, for they shall all know Him (Jer. 31: 34): there shall be no prophets. But of old such susceptibility to direct knowledge of God was not found, and God spoke through men whom He chose, fitted, taught, and empowered for this high and perilous task (Acts 7: 51–53).

It was not the prophet who originated his message. It was *God* who spake "in" the prophet, *i.e.* first in his mind and then in his speech (For "in" see LXX. Zech. 1: 9; 7: 12 *bis*). Speech being the use of words to express thought the *words* thus spoken must have been from God; and so in the passage just cited the last but one of the Old Testament messengers spoke of "the *words* which *Jehovah* of hosts had sent by His Spirit by the former prophets." There is no other explanation of how a prophet could deliver a message which he did not himself fully understand, for of necessity a man comprehends ideas which he himself originates (I Pet. 1: 10–12). This renders untenable the theory that God gave to the prophets great general ideas and they struggled to express these as best they could; so that while the ideas were right the expression of them was imperfect. Referring to the whole Old Testament as the "law" the Lord Jesus affirmed that not the smallest particle of any word should fail of fulfilment (Matt. 5: 17, 18).

Similarly Paul asserted that he spake divine things "not in *words* which man's wisdom teacheth but which *the Spirit* teacheth" (I Cor. 2: 13). These men knew inspiration by God as an experience. It is more reasonable to accept their view of the same than the opinions of moderns who theorize about inspiration but have no experience of it.

Truth has never been communicated by God as one complete body of divinity. There is no Divine scheme of theology for our study. Truth was imparted for immediate practical ends, and therefore as men needed it and as they were able to bear it. Hence the revelation of old was "in many parts and by many methods." Being thus fragmentary, piecemeal, it was of necessity always incomplete, and required and led on to further unfoldings. In consequence there was *advance* in revelation. But there was no *evolution* of knowledge or of the true religion. The advance in knowledge of God and His purposes did not come by self-cogitations of the human mind over an original all-inclusive germ of knowledge; it came by successive acts of revelation as God saw fit.

Still less true is the notion that mankind started with a low conception of religion and, by the mental effort of stronger thinkers and moralists, gradually developed nobler conceptions of God. This is abundantly false to secular history and to Holy Scripture. The evidence of the former is in line with the statements of the latter that at the beginning men knew God and lapsed from that knowledge. Rom. 1: 18–32, esp. 28, "they did not approve to have (*echein* to hold, keep, retain) God in knowledge."

Such assertions as that the first conceptions that Israel had of Jehovah were of a base type, as of a tribal god of a barbarous clan, are wholly false. It was "the God of *glory*" who made Himself known to Abram (Acts 7: 2), and declared Himself to be El Shaddai, God All-sufficing (Gen. 17: 1). Abraham calls Jehovah "the Judge of *all the earth*" (Gen. 18: 25), and this is in a part of the Pentateuch which even the documentary theorists ascribe to "J," their oldest "stratum" in the Pentateuch. It was the self-existing, unchanging, eternal I AM, the covenant-keeping Jehovah, who revealed Himself to Moses (Ex. 3: 14, 15), and the descriptions He gave at the first of His character and ways are full of majesty and perfection, nor are they surpassed by later declarations. See, *e.g.* Ex. 33: 19; 34: 6, 7. The endeavour to break the force of this fact by bringing the early histories down to a late date and then using them as proof of the alleged evolution of Israel's religious conceptions, is a palpable and unworthy device, a sheer distorting of history and falsifying of documents.

CHAPTER II

THE GLORIES OF THE SON (1: 1–4)

Ch. I. 1. God, having of old time spoken unto the fathers in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners; 2. hath at the end of these days spoken unto us in (his) Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, through whom also he made the worlds; 3. who being the effulgence of his glory, and the very image of his substance, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; 4. having become by so much better than the angels, as he hath inherited a more excellent name than they.

YET being given in the manner stated all former revelation required completing, which God did by sending as the afore-promised Prophet (Deut. 18: 15–19; Acts 7: 37) One who was in the special relationship to Himself of Son. See Darby, *New Translation*, note "c" *in loco*: "*en huio*, literally 'in Son,' is not exactly 'as Son,' because that would be the character of the speaking, yet is perhaps the nearest to an adequate expression. . . . On the whole, I have paraphrased it, 'in [the person of the] Son,'" See also Rotherham. It is upon the Person, offices, glories, and entire supremeness of the Son that the Writer now enlarges. The uplifted Son is God's centre of attraction for all creation (John 12: 32). To yield to that attraction is to be withdrawn from all that is not of God. This is salvation. To see Him as exalted is to overcome the world, that system of things which lies in the evil one as its all-pervading atmosphere (I John 5: 4, 5, 19). To see Him as the Man in heaven is to have the heart detached from earth and attached to heaven as its native, its eternal realm. Christ is God's Saviour for us from every peril, His supply for every need, His reservoir of every blessing. All is in Him, nothing is apart from Him. To Him the Writer points. Really to know Him will deliver his readers from every danger, and therefore he expatiates upon the glories of the Son of God. A sevenfold description is given.

1. "*Whom God appointed heir of all things*" (ver. 2).

i. The father who appoints his heir is the superior of the heir. Therefore the Son said "the Father is greater than I"

(John 14: 28). This superiority is one of position, not of capacity. A son may be fully the equal of his father in ability and energy; but in the sphere of the family, the business, the estates, the father is the senior, and the son acts under, for, by the authority of the father. So the Son of God taught plainly that it is by the gift of the Father that He has inherent life, authority to judge, power to raise the dead, and the right (granted to no other person) to surrender and to resume His human life (John 5: 19–29; 10: 17, 18). From this follows the place that prayer had in His life on earth and still has in resurrection (John 14: 16; Acts 2: 33; Ps. 2: 7, 8). See Note A at end of this chapter, p. 31.

ii. The property devised by this appointment as heir is "all things," the universe. How can He be less than God who can receive and control so vast an estate? Here is shown the primary reason why the universe was brought into being: it exists that the Father may show His love for the Son and Heir (John 3: 35): all other reasons are subordinate to and included in this. The Son explained that the basic ground for the working of the Father is "that all may honour the Son even as they honour the Father" (John 5: 23); and the basic evil of sin is that it disputes the purpose and donation of the Father; even as the Son added: "The one not honouring [as a permanent practice] the Son honoureth not the Father that sent Him." By consequence, the one who has ceased this rebellion, and entered into harmony with the Father as to the Son, hath eternal life; whereas upon the one who obeys not the Son there abides the wrath of God. How can it be otherwise? (John 3: 36).

The syllogism stands thus: All the universe belongs to the Son: I am part of the universe: therefore I belong to the Son. Am I, then, giving to Him His proprietary rights? or am I, with Satan, robbing Him of them? All unitarianism, ancient or modern, oriental or western, of whatever name, Islamic, or Jewish, or "Christian" (falsely so-called), denies to the Son the nature and glory and title which the Father gave to Him before the worlds were. It is of strict consequence that "whosoever denieth the Son the same hath not the Father," for no person is a father if he have no child. It is foolish to speak of God as Father while denying the Son, and equally so to allow deity to the Father while denying it to the Son, since father and son must be of the same essential nature. It is of equally strict consequence that "he that confesseth the Son hath the Father also" (I John 2: 23). To "confess" the Son means to give Him by mouth and in practice the rights that the Father has given Him.

The Jews voiced the claim that unregenerate men are by

nature sons of God: "we have one Father, even God" (John 8: 41). Jesus cut the notion to pieces by the one terrible sword-thrust: "Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father it is your will to do" (ver. 44).

iii. This appointment as heir was made before the universe was made. The translation here of the aorist by the perfect ("hath appointed", A.V.) obscures this, for it does not indicate how great or how brief a time before the Writer's date the appointment may have been made. The perfect intimates that the appointment was in force when the Writer was writing, but it might have been made only just before that time. The statement here by the aorist tense, taken in its context, puts the appointment back before time began, for it precedes the next clause as to the creating of the universe, even as this precedes the radiating of the glory of God upon the universe after it had been made.

God works not by afterthoughts. It was not that the universe was made and then He considered what to do with it. No; in advance of the creating it was decided that all that should ever be brought into existence should belong to the Son, He should *inherit* it. Therefore, as He was the *Heir* before time and creation, so was He then the *Son*, for the universal rule is "if children, then heirs" (Rom: 8. 17). One may by will devise his property to what persons he pleases, but if they are not of his family they are legatees, not heirs. The pre-creation heirship requires the pre-creation Sonship. See Note B at end of this chapter, p. 32.

2. "*Through whom also He made the worlds*" (Gr. *ages*) (ver. 2).

i. The "also" shows that the act of creating was *additional* to the appointment to heirship, and confirms that the latter preceded.

ii. "Through" (R.V.) is accurate; "by" (A.V.) is inadequate. The latter does not so closely link the activity of the Son with the volition of the Father. The Son did not act of Himself, but from and on behalf of the Father. He has Himself said distinctly that "the Son is not able to do anything from Himself [self-originated], except He see the Father doing it" (John 5:19). It is the habit of Scripture to trace all things through the Son up to the Father as the fountain. In reference to creation this is seen in John 1: 3: "All things *through* [the Word] came to be"; and in I Cor. 8: 6: "One God, the Father, *out of* whom are all things . . . and one Lord, Jesus Christ, *through* whom are all things." Here the Source and the Agent are clearly distinguished.

There are other connexions where "through" should be given, especially in relation to Divine messages, as Acts 28:

25; Rev. 1:1. Thus is the tongue also regarded as the instrument *through* which the man speaks (I Cor. 14: 9. In this place, as in Rev. 1: 1, "by" should be "through.") Or again, in reference to redemption, see Col. 1: 20 (three times). The whole paragraph is dependent upon ver. 12, "giving thanks to the Father" Who has done the numerous things next specified, including "*through* Him [the Son] to reconcile all things unto Himself" (ver. 20).

Thus are creation, inspiration, redemption all traced up to the Father, and the Son is shown as the Agent of the Father for effecting all His designs. Hence He said "I am the way . . . no one cometh unto the Father but through Me" (John 14: 6). The matter is deeply important. The Son did not first become the Mediator between God and the universe when He became man: it was His office from the beginning of creation. Therefore, when there entered the matter of reconciling to God realms estranged and defiled, this stupendous task devolved upon the Son as part of His office, and not only because "There was none other good enough, To pay the price of sin," nor another powerful enough to crush the rebel prince and host. In resurrection the Son holds the same office and pursues the same purposes, but now as *man*, glorified with the same glory which as Son He had with the Father before the world was (John 17: 5).

The understanding of this truth was vital to the purpose of the Epistle. It is the object of the Son "to bring us to God" (I Pet. 3: 18), to recover the sinner from that legal and moral alienation from Him, and to establish us in His *favour* (Rom. 5: 1, 2), yea, in His *fellowship* (I John 1: 3), and finally to set us before the *presence of His glory* in exceeding joy (Jude 24, 25; Eph. 1: 4; Col. 1: 22; Heb. 2: 10, etc.). It is the object of our Adversary to prevent this at one or more of its stages. He will prevent faith in the message, so that the heart may never rest in Christ as justified by His blood; or he will hinder the justified from enjoying fellowship with the Father and the Son; or he will deter us from continuing steadfast in faith and hope, and so rob the believer of his crown. It was principally to this last end that he was labouring with the Christians here addressed. In part he would by persecution frighten them from continuing to espouse the rejected and absent Jesus: in part he sought to beguile them by an interposing of angels, of priests, of ceremonies, as having mediatorial value. The same wiles were tried with the believers at Colossae (Col. 2: 8–19) and in Galatia (Gal. 3: 1–5). They have ever since been spread before the feet of saints, and they abound to-day.

The safety of the Christian lies wholly in a just appre-

hension of the Son of God in His office as the Mediator of the Father to the universe, and that since He has now come forth to the earth as such, no other mediator is permissible or possible. We must now adhere to Him alone with full contentment and full determination, or have no mediator at all. Therefore there is this presentation of Him as the original Mediator of the wisdom, will, and power of the Father for the creating of all things, expressed here by the term "through," that is, that by the agency of His Son God created them.

iii. "*the ages.*" The ancient discussion as to whether this means (1) time or (2) the material universe may surely be resolved by including both.

The notion of time is that of period succeeding period, whether a minute or a millennium. This dividing of eternal duration into defined periods, each having a commencement and a conclusion, is indispensable to the finite mind, for without it the creature could not retain any sense of the order of events or accurate remembrance of them, or form any clear anticipations of the future. The mind would be chaotic. The infinite mind of the Eternal does not need this device, this subdividing of eternity into sections for purposes of thought. Hence, the necessity for time, for period after period, arose only with the creation of finite creatures, and it must exist for ever. For us eternity is "ages of ages."

In reference to such finite beings, and by virtue of His foreknowledge of His own purposes and of what would develop in the creation to be made, God planned out the ages as spheres of time in which various developments would and should take place. He is "the King of the ages" (I Tim. 1: 17; Rev. 15: 3); His purpose runs through and controls all the ages (Eph. 3: 11), which purpose was all foreordained before time began; and it includes the glory of saints (I Cor. 2: 7).

It was for the fulfilment of this Divine programme, embracing all the ages that were to be, that the material universe was required and made; so that the making of the ages includes of necessity the making of all things which are to contribute to the purpose of the ages. And it was by the agency of the Son that time and all things connected with time came to be. This implies that the Son is before time, is eternal, and so Col. 1: 17 says of Him unequivocally, "He is before the all things" (*ta panta*), and therefore He cannot be one of the "things," a creature. This is stated absolutely in John 1: 3: "All things through Him came to be, and apart from Him not one thing came to be that has come to be." Unitarianism is merely a philosophy, a speculation about God, and it never ought to have been claimed that it is according to the Bible. It is the direct contradiction thereof.

iv. "*He made.*" The universe entire is a *creation.* Once it did not exist; it is not eternal, as some have conceived. Neither is it co-substantial with its Creator, as pantheism alleges. God is not the universe and the universe is not God. He himself in His essential deity, substance, trinity of persons, was what He is before the universe existed. Its creation added nothing to, changed nothing in His essential Being. Had He annihilated it when sin entered He would have remained what He was and is and must ever be: "I Jehovah change not" (Mal. 3: 6). He who changes as to his essence is not eternal; he who is not eternal is not God, for with Him to be eternal is an essential attribute. The created universe is a sphere in which is displayed His eternal power and Godhead (Rom. 1: 20), and which is interpenetrated by His universal presence (Acts 17: 27, 28; Ps. 139: 5–10); but from it He personally is distinct and it from Him: He *made* it. *How* He did this will be stated at 11. 3.

3. "*Who being the effulgence of His glory.*" As it is by means of its rays that the sun diffuses its light, heat, and benefits to the region of the universe it affects, so through the Son God displays His glory and dispenses His grace to the whole universe.

The participle "being" states the permanency of the fact. It has always been the case that the Son rayed forth the splendour of the Father; it will always be the case; only now it is His human form that is the focal point of that radiance (II Cor. 4: 3–6; Col. 1: 15–19; Acts 22: 6, 14; 26: 13–15). Therefore the "God of glory" who appeared to Abram (Acts 7: 2) was the Son of God, and He is "Jesus" who appeared to Saul of Tarsus. How can He be less than God whose person can endure to be the vehicle of the concentrated glory of God?

4. "*The very image of His substance.*" "Substance" means that which underlies, the substratum, the real existence which gives character to what is displayed. "Image" (here only as the rendering of Gr. *charaktēr*) means the indelible form taken from and exhibiting the underlying reality, as the moulding exhibits in permanent, changeless form the shape of the mould from which it was cast. Thus, as it has been translated, the Son is "the exact representation of God's very being," or by Grimm (Lex.) "precise reproduction in every respect (cf. *facsimile*)." From the moulded article we learn the shape of the die we have not seen; from the Son we learn the truth as to God: "he that hath seen Me hath seen the Father" (John 14: 9). Philip felt that such knowledge of the Father would "suffice," would cover all possible needs. This it does. So, then, if these tempted believers shall truly know the Son,

they shall forthwith feel no need of those earthly types of Him to which they were being enticed back, for in Him they will know the all-sufficing Father.

"I have seen the face of Jesus,
Tell me not of aught beside;
I have heard the voice of Jesus,
All my soul is satisfied."

And he who is satisfied is safe.

These two clauses, 3 and 4, are properly one double statement, governed by the one participle "being" and joined by the copulative "and." It is convenient to consider them separately, but in fact they are inseparable. The one teaches the relationship of the Son to the Father in itself, the other describes this as seen by the creature. The rays correspond to the size, shape, and splendour of the sun and would do so were there no eyes to see it; but to the seeing eye those rays represent the sun in exact visible resemblance.

5. "*Upholding all things by the word of His power.*" On words as the vehicle of energy see the opening paragraphs above. Man searches the universe in vain to discover the force by which it coheres and is orderly. Colossians 1: 17 gives the thoroughly rational account of this. It is "in Him," the Son of God, who is Himself "before the all things" (*ta panta*, the sum total, the whole, but regarded as a vast total of co-ordinated units), that "the all things [*ta panta*] hold together." The self-existing almighty Creator who brought all things into existence by commanding them to be, maintains them in existence by commanding them to continue.

The application of this to the soul is seen at 12: 25: "See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh." Since it is His word that keeps all things in order, he who refuses that word in any portion of his life lapses into disorder, confusion, misery in that portion of life, and may do so entirely.

6. "*Having made purification of sins.*" Thus far the Son has been contemplated in His essential, eternal Person, glory, and creatorial activity. The thought now advances to His becoming man and His work on this earth. This stupendous change is described in only five words (in Greek by only four), declaring its chief purpose and effect.

In the universe which He had made and maintained there arose a foreign element and energy. This showed its baneful presence by declining to give longer to Him the glory due and to submit to His word. It affected heaven first and later the earth. Its inevitable consequence was disorder, darkness, ruin. In nature it was rebellion, in character treason. It was an outrage not only against the Son, but also against the

Father who had appointed the Son to be Heir, for this appointment was now disregarded by the rights of the Son being violated.

There was no one qualified to vindicate the rights of the Father and the title of the Son save the Son. To effect this, as the sole Mediator of God and the universe, He renounced His original form and glory, stepped down into the realm of created things, took into indissoluble union with His divine nature the nature of His creature man, and, thus incarnate, by the sacrifice of Himself even unto death He dealt with this awful situation, and dealt with it to the full glory of God. This work of grace will be elaborated later by the Writer. Here it is the unutterably wondrous fact that is alone mentioned.

The work was a "purification," for sin is defiling, and the Holy One cannot tolerate defilement. The gloss "our" sins (A.V.) is a most regrettable limitation of the scope of the Mediator's work. Thank God it includes our sins, but the range of the work of the cross is far wider and grander. In Christ God was effecting a world- (*kosmos* universe) reconciling work (II Cor. 5: 19). The heavenly things as well as the earthly, and before these latter, had been defiled by the rebellion and must be cleansed (Heb. 9: 23). The Mediator of the Father to the whole universe grappled with the entire situation and settled it: "He made purification of sins."

The terms upon which each individual sinner may obtain the benefit of this work, the possibility of it being finally rejected by some, and all other subordinate questions, are not here noticed. The sublime work itself is set forth in its solitary sufficiency and glory. The blessed and the solemn implications and applications will arise later in the Epistle. Again, he whose heart feels the power of this perfect and reconciling work is safe from all the perils which beset the Christian.

For it *is* a perfected work, done once for all and of permanent virtue, as the aorist participle shows: "having made purification" He sat down. And that it is solely His work, in which none other shares, is shown by the participle being in the middle voice. This truth occasioned the gloss "by Himself" (A.V.); but the insertion is unnecessary, being expressed by the middle form. These two features will be the basis used by the Writer to urge that the heart should rest on Christ and His sacrifice alone, without the aid of other mediators and victims (chs. 7 to 10).

7. *"He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heights."*

i. "He sat down" for His work as sacrificing priest was completed (ch. 10).

ii. There is a locality described as "in the heights." The fact of locality is inescapable, for the glorified Son of Man retains a body of limited form, and He cannot in that form be everywhere in general but must be somewhere in particular. Therefore there is a spot in the universe where He sits. "In the heights" is the abode of Jehovah: "The Lord is wonderful in the heights" (Ps. 93: 4, LXX). In 4: 14 it is said that our High Priest has "passed *through* the heavens," where *dia*-erchomai may retain its full force of passing right through and beyond a region,[1] as in Matt. 19: 24; Luke 4: 30; 19: 1; I Cor. 10: 1; II Cor. 1: 16. In the last passage the idea is emphasized by repetition: "through you to pass through (*dielthein*, fr. *dia*-erchomai) into Macedonia." In my book *The Revelation of Jesus Christ*, Ch. 4, it is suggested that the location of the supreme dwelling of God is beyond the created universe, whereas the throne described in that chapter is an administrative throne within the universe, the heavenly part thereof. If that supreme throne were not beyond the realm of things created how would it fare when the heavens and the earth are dissolved by fire? (II Pet. 3: 10). Rev. 20: 11 pictures the earth and the heaven as fleeing away from before the throne and Him Who sits thereon, which involves the feature that the throne is outside of creation. When writing thus, and when writing the draft of this present chapter, I was not aware that others had pointed this out, but have since read the remarks of Canon Evans, in the *Speaker's Commentary* on I Cor. 15: 47, to much the same effect, where Delitzsch is cited in support.

On the right hand of the supreme throne the Son "sits," *i.e.*, has His proper and permanent place: He is only "before" the latter throne, and "comes" and "is brought" there (Dan. 7: 13), and is seen as "standing," (Rev. 5: 6) with a view to receiving publicly and officially the chief administrative authority. At the supreme throne He is acting as Priest, and all through this age: at the latter throne He is installed as Ruler, and only at the end of this age, for only then comes the time when His enemies are to be made the footstool of His feet (Psa. 110: 1; Heb. 1: 13).

For the security and steadfastness of His people, still harassed in the conflicts of earth, it is of much importance that their Representative is at the highest throne, from the decisions of which there lies no appeal and the mandates of which cannot be frustrated. "We have an Advocate with the Father" (I John 2: 1, 2). It will be seen shortly (chap III, 3, iii) that the distinction here shown throws light upon ver. 6.

iii. The Father is here described by the august title "The

[1] So Isaacs: "We have a mighty High Priest who has passed through all the heavens and beyond them." *Epistle to the Hebrews*, 4: 14.

Majesty"; not simply "Your Majesty" or "His Majesty," as men speak of kings each in his own realm; but "The Majesty," One of solitary, incomparable dignity and glory.

As the Son is distinct from the Father (though inseparable as to deity), so is the Father distinct from the Son; for the one sits at the right hand of the other, which presents the latter as equally distinct and local as the former. The theological denial to the Father of any form and locality would make impossible that One, the Son, having form and locality should sit at His right hand. One formless and unlocalized could have no right hand at which one with local form could sit. That both in their deity are universally present seems no more a barrier to a local manifestation of the Father than of the Son.[1] "In the heights" is a place: "The Majesty" there is a "Person,"[2] displaying inconceivable splendour, a light unapproachable by man as he is. The situation here described is as plain as when Solomon "sat down on his throne, and caused a throne to be set for the king's mother; and she *sat on his right hand*" (I Kings 2: 19).

The Son himself attributed *form* to the Father, and voice (John 5. 37). That the latter is actual is proved by its having been three times heard on earth (Matt. 3: 17; 17: 5; John 12: 28). He spake also of the Father's *face*, which also must be actual, or finite beings (angels) could not see it (Matt. 18: 10. Comp. II Sam. 14: 28, 32; Esther 1: 14). That His glory has a local manifestation is shown by the fact that glorified men are to be set in its presence (Jude 24: etc.).

The importance of this question lies in (1) The emphasis it places upon the unique position and dignity accorded to the Son in His glorified humanity. This is vital to the argument and the appeal of the Epistle. (2) The consequent emphasis upon the reality and value of His intercession. He is transacting with the Father literal business for the safeguarding of those "who draw near to God through Him" (7: 25). The sense of the reality of this advocacy is vital to the Christian finding courage to approach that Majesty. (3) If the Person of the Father be delocalized into one universal diffused Spirit He becomes to our minds virtually undifferentiated from the Holy Spirit, with a consequent loss of vividness and reality in speaking with Him in prayer. Scripture nowhere contemplates men addressing their petitions to the Spirit. If the believer who knows this holy experience of speaking with and listening to God as Father will analyse the state of his mind at such moments he will find that, whatever be his

[1] See Note D at end of chapter.

[2] See *Note* E at end of chapter.

theory on the matter, or if he have no theory, he does actually think of the Father as a local presence into which he enters, and a localized Person to Whom he speaks, by the enabling of the indwelling Spirit of God.[1]

In these few sentences the Writer thus presents to the meditative reader a striking picture of the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, as the central Figure of that wondrous realm above whence the government of the universe proceeds, whence flow all heavenly supplies for the present life, and where lie all the highest eternal prospects which redemption opens for faith to attain. If the believer will only sit long and quietly and contemplate this royal scene; if by serious discipline of mind he will "still and quieten his soul, like a weaned child with his mother" (Ps. 131: 2), then will the Spirit of truth gladly fulfil His gracious office to take of these things of Christ and declare them to that heart (John 16: 13, 14). He will make them actual, operative, effective; and in such experimental knowledge of the Son of God thus reached shall be found healing for every sickness of the soul, deliverance from every danger, defeat of every foe.

Christ, I am Christ's, and let the name suffice you,
Ay, for me too He greatly hath sufficed. (Myers, *St. Paul.*)

Note A. It may be disputed that the subordination of the Son to the Father inheres in their eternal relationship. It may be asserted that it belongs only to the Son as incarnate. It is highly significant that it is the Son Himself Who gave the fullest statements upon His relations to the Father, and John 5: 26, 27 is here specially important.

26. For as the Father hath life in Himself,
even so gave (aorist *edōken*) He to the Son also to have life in Himself;

27. and He gave (aorist *edōken*) Him authority to execute judgment, because He is Son of man.

Here is an instructive example of how the aorist tense denotes an act done at one time but leaves open the question of when that time is. This must be learned from the context or from the nature of the subject.

In ver. 27 the gift of authority to judge is connected with the Son of God having become Son of Man; though it was possible that the grant was before His incarnation but made in view of the Divine and certain purpose that He would become Son of man. The aorist would allow this, though the emphatic "is" (*estin*) looks the other way.

But as to ver. 26, the whole preceding argument has dealt only with the status of the Son of *God*, not of the Son of man; and, in the nature of the case, the gift of inherent vitality, of "life in Himself," must of necessity have been from eternity, being inherent in the begetting of the Son by the Father.

For were the "begetting" not eternal, then the Son must have had a beginning, as all Arians assert; in which case He would not be equal with God, being destitute of an essential quality of God, even eternal

[1] See *Note C* at end of this chapter.

existence. But His claim to equality with God, by virtue of relationship, is the very point which the Jews challenged and which the Son is here maintaining.

Further, had the gift of inherent life not been co-existent with the eternal begetting, then there was a period down to the time of this gift during which the Son lacked this other essential quality of God, self-existence, and thus, again, He would not, during that period, have been equal with God. Moreover, this would have involved, at the time of the gift, an *essential change* within the Godhead; but God is unchangeable because eternal. Nor does it seem conceivable that a father *can* beget a son and not impart to him *all* his own *essential* qualities, whether the father be man or God.

So that whereas the gift of authority was granted, or perhaps confirmed, in connexion with the incarnation, the gift of inherent life was from eternity, involved in the eternal generation of the Son by the Father.

By most of the early fathers, and by Stier, Olshausen, Alford, Westcott, and Govett, this "gave" in ver. 26 is taken to refer to the pre-incarnate relation. But that the Son derives from the Father His eternal inherent life plainly involves, as to relative status, dependence and subordination. It is part of the reality which He Himself declares in the words, "I can of Myself do nothing . . . the Father is greater than I" (John 5: 19, 30; 14: 28).

Note B. They who deny the eternal Sonship must deny the eternal generation, since one who is generated by another is son to that other. This denial confuses the whole doctrine of the nature of the Godhead. That the relationship of Father and Son did not commence with the Son becoming man, but preceded creation itself and is therefore inherent in the Deity and eternal, is further involved in the fact considered above that the Son was the Father's *heir* before anything was created.

That the relationship was certainly prior to Christ's incarnation He Himself made clear in the parable of the wicked husbandmen: "And the Lord of the vineyard said, What shall I do? (Luke 20: 13). . . . *He had* yet one, a *beloved son*, He sent him last unto them" (Mark 12: 6). In view of the past tense "He *had* yet one," this cannot mean that the one sent became son only when sent. He is set in manifest contrast to the "servants" who had been sent earlier. It were equally unreasonable to say that they became servants by being sent as that He became Son by being sent. They were already servants and He already Son.

J. N. Darby (*Coll. Writ.*, vol. XXX, p. 340) wrote:

> It is of immense import, because I have not the Father's love sending the Son out of heaven, if I have Him not as Son before born into the world. . . . I lose all that the Son is, if He is only so as incarnate, and you have lost all the love of the Father in sending the Son as well.

And on Col. 1 he wrote (*Synopsis*, vol. V. p. 15):

> The Son is here presented to us as Creator. . . . Inasmuch as born in this world by the operation of God through the Holy Ghost, He is the Son of God (Psa. 2: 7; Luke 1: 35). But this is in time. . . . But the Son is also the name of the proper relationship of His glorious Person to the Father before the world was. It is in this character that He created all things. . . . In the epistle to the Colossians that which is set before us is the proper glory of His Person as the Son before the world was. He is the Creator as Son. It is important to observe this.

On the same chapter, ver. 15, Ellicott, in his Commentary, wrote:

Christian antiquity has ever regarded the expression "image of God" as denoting the eternal Son's perfect equality with the Father in respect of His substance, nature, and eternity. [Observe: "the *eternal Son.*"]

It were no great theological journey from denying the *relationships* between the three Persons of the Godhead to denying the *distinctions* of personality in the Deity, and so to arrive at the Unitarian[1] error of Sabellianism (cent. 3), that the terms Father, Son, and Spirit do not import the relationships of three distinct Divine Persons Who yet are one God, but only three different ways in which one Being manifests Himself at different times.

Note C. A friendly critic writes that "God does not dwell in time or space. . . . To say that Christ must be 'somewhere' not 'everywhere' is correct provided you make it clear that the definition of 'somewhere' is not the physical one. That is what is wrong in your remarks on 'the Majesty on high.' You are doubtless right in insisting on localization, but you do not make it clear that it is a localization outside time and space as we know them."

This makes a demand on thought and definition which surely no finite mind can meet; at least, mine cannot meet it. I believe my friend the writer could offer no clear notion of what he means by God dwelling "outside space." He admits localization, which feature itself demands the idea of space. Very certainly the glorified human body of Christ cannot be "outside time and space," for it had a commencement in time and it occupies space, and is in only one place at a time. It left the earth and is at the right hand of God: it is later to leave the latter and to descend to the earth.

Saying above that the localized presence of God is "beyond the created universe" I have, I think, said as much as seems clear and warranted by Scripture. I do not, and cannot, define that "beyond" in relation to "space" for the latter word is itself indefinable by man.

It was a notion of Kant that "Space and time, the two essential conditions of sense-perception, are not data given by things, but universal forms of intellect into which all data of sense must be received" (*Enc. Brit.*, vol. XIII, p. 270). This implies that primarily time and sense are the product of the human mind, which is contrary to the fact of creation as revealed in Scripture. God is eternal and infinite, therefore while He was the only Existence time and space did not exist. But at the moment when He created something time and space began, for that "something" had a beginning and so is not eternal, and it was of limited size and therefore not infinite. Therefore time and space are not a product of human thought but a fact inherent in creation: they so existed before man existed to think about them.

By consequence it is evident that as long as finite objects exist (which will be for ever) time and space must continue, for the finite can never become eternal or infinite. Hence, for angels and men the future is not absolute eternity, as for God, but "ages of ages," that is, endless succession of periods. When perfected, man may well be able to comprehend vaster stretches of space and time than now, yet finite minds cannot conceive eternity or infinity, but demand time and space. But these are not creations of finite minds, but are facts inseparable from creation, "data given by things," antecedent to finite minds though objects of thought to be considered by them.

[1] Adolf Harnack (*Enc. Brit.*, vol. XIX, 790): "Sabellianism, in fact, became a collective name for all those Unitarian doctrines in which the divine nature of Christ was acknowledged."

The Holy Spirit not having come into the Epistle thus far I have not spoken of Him above; but for the stimulating of meditation, it may be here remarked that to Him also the Scripture attributes localization, and not only universality. The latter is clear in, for example, Ps. 139: 7–12: "Whither shall I go from Thy Spirit? or whither shall I flee from Thy presence?" Here universality is attributed equally to God and His Spirit; what is true of the one is true of the other, for, with the Son, they are one God.

It is thus with localization. In the *Revelation* the Father is shown as seated upon a throne and the Spirit is stated to be "before His throne" (Rev. 1: 4, 5; 4: 5; 5: 6). The term "seven spirits" must be a figurative expression, meaning the one Divine Spirit, for it were blasphemy to conjoin seven created spirits with the Father and the Son as the source of grace and peace to men. Thus the Spirit is given as localized a presence "before the throne" as is given to the Son "in the midst of the throne" (Rev. 5: 6) and to the Father "on the throne"; and to this localized presence of the Spirit visibility is attributed, as it is to the Father and the Son, for He is represented by "lamps of fire."

Into the mystery of this the mind of man cannot penetrate nor can unfold its harmony, but whoever desires to comprehend God as far as He is revealed in His written Word must include these features in his meditation.

Note D. The unity of God is as fundamental an article of the Christian faith as is the tri-unity of Persons: "Jehovah our God is one Jehovah" (Deut. 6: 4; Mark 12: 29): "I and the Father are one" (John 10: 30). Before creation the Father, the Son, and the Spirit did not need to manifest themselves each to the other; but this need arose with the creation of beings who, though intelligent, could not apprehend God in essence but only through manifestation. Now the manifestation of God in the Son in no way altered the essential unity of the Godhead: why, then, should it be held that a manifestation of the Father or of the Spirit should impair that unity? They *are* Three if unmanifested; they *remain* One when manifested. Manifestation does not alter essence. Therefore there seems no valid objection to taking in their literal sense the statements of Scripture as to a manifestation of the Father. Nor is there any other sense which yields any meaning at all to the statements.

Here in truth is the real crux as to interpretation. Treat the relevant statements as "metaphorical" and they are etherealized into *nothing* that the mind can grasp. This is virtually admitted by those who so take them, for they say that the realities behind the statements are incomprehensible. In support they will cite Matt. 11: 27: "no one knoweth the Son, save the Father; neither doth any know the Father save the Son," but they overlook the accompanying words, "*and he to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him.*" Therefore the statements of Scripture are intended to *reveal* the truth as to God, and they do so reveal it to the "little children." What intelligent child will take other than literally such a statement as that one is "sitting at the right hand" of another?

Take such statements as they stand, and at once we *learn* something concerning the world above. We learn of a local presence of the universal God, of the intercourse with Him there of the heavenly beings, who "see His face," and of the administration of His kingdom. He is seen and heard, and the presence there of His Son, and His advocacy for His people, become a reality to their heart.

Granted fully that the *mode* of that reality is heavenly and spiritual,

yet it is a reality, actually existing at a given place in the heavens. The angels are real beings; the Son of man glorified is there in His real resurrection body in which He ascended to the Father; and to that place glorified saints are to be just as actually removed in their resurrection bodies and to be "presented" (Eph. 5: 27; Col. 1: 22, 28; II Cor. 4: 14; 11: 2), which term means just what is meant by being "presented at court."

Treated "metaphorically" all this prospect fades into an indistinct blur. The sons are to be in the Father's house, yet will never see their Father!

Note E. John 14: 1: "believe also in Me." The "also" is emphatic. George Rogers, the first Principal of Spurgeon's College, pointed out that it is (1) *dis*junctive; it distinguishes the Son from God as an object of faith: (2) *ad*junctive; it adds the Son to God as an object of faith: (3) *sub*junctive; the Son is the second object of faith, the Father the first object: (4) *con*junctive; it joins the Son to God as an object of faith, being Himself essentially one with God.

As to the use of the word "Person" of God see Westcott on John 1: 1: "The absolute, eternal, immanent relations of the Persons of the Godhead furnish the basis for revelation. Because the Word was personally distinct from 'God' and yet essentially 'God', He could make Him known." So Alford on the same verses: "Again this *logos* is undoubtedly in our prologue, *personal*:—not an abstraction merely, nor a personification . . . but a PERSON." So the *Concise Oxford Dict.*: "person. Individual human being . . . *the three persons* (modes of being) *of the Godhead*, Father, Son, Holy Spirit." And Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology*, p. 31: "The term Person is also sometimes objected to. Like all human language, it is liable to be accused of inadequacy and even positive error. It certainly must not be pressed too far, or it will lead to Tritheism. While we use the term to denote distinctions in the Godhead, we do not imply distinctions which amount to separateness, but distinctions which are associated with essential mutual coherence or inclusiveness. We intend by the term 'Person' to express those real distinctions of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit which are found amid the oneness of the Godhead, distinctions which are no mere temporary manifestations of the Godhead, but essential and permanent elements within the Divine unity.

"While, therefore, we are compelled to use terms like 'substance' and 'Person', we are not to think of them as identical with what we understand as human substance and personality. The terms are not explanatory, but only approximately correct, as must necessarily be the case with any attempt to define the nature of God. As already noted, it is a profound spiritual satisfaction to remember that the truth and experience of the Trinity is not dependent upon theological terminology, though it is obviously essential for us to have the most correct terms available."

Discussion of these high and difficult themes is by no means outside the scope of such a treatise as this. The phrases which tell that the Son of God "passed through the heavens," is made "higher than the heavens," entered into "the heaven itself," and "sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in the heights" are in the Epistle and are intimately associated with His priestly work. It is clearly the duty of the expositor to show how he understands them, and to explain them in line with the plain principle of the Epistle that the heavenly regions are the archetype of which earthly things are Divinely appointed copies. How can there be a literal copy of something purely metaphorical?

If it be urged that the view offered of that heavenly world creates difficulties for such as give themselves to scientific research, as to atomic energy and the like themes, we remark that the understanding of the Word of God is not dependent upon man's inquiries into the works of God. The first readers of this Epistle were surely intended to grasp its meaning, though they knew nothing of modern investigations into nature. Man's understanding of the universe and its laws is still fragmentary, imperfect, and often contradictory, and is no safe guide to the interpreting of Holy Scripture. The word is still very true that the "natural man [man at his best, man intellectual and honest] receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him; and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually judged" (I Cor. 2: 14). Man may investigate the kingdom of nature: it is only little children who enter into the kingdom of God and to whom its mysteries are revealed (Matt. 18: 1–4; 11: 25–30; 13: 10–17; Jer. 9: 23, 24; I Cor. 1: 26–31).

CHAPTER III

CHRIST SUPERIOR TO ANGELS (1: 5–14)

Ch. I. 5. For unto which of the angels said he at any time,
Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee?
and again,
I will be to him a Father, And he shall be to me a Son?
6. And when he again bringeth in the firstborn into the world
he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him. 7.
And of the angels he saith,
Who maketh his angels winds, And his ministers a flame
of fire:
8. but of the Son *he saith,*
Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever; And the sceptre of
uprightness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.
9. Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; Therefore
God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness
above thy fellows.
10. And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation
of the earth, and the heavens are the work of thy hands:
11. They shall perish; but thou continuest: and they shall all
wax old as doth a garment;
12. And as a mantle shalt thou roll them up, As a garment, and
they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy
years shall not fail.
13. But of which of the angels hath he said at any time,
Sit thou at my right hand, till I make thine enemies the
footstool of thy feet?
14. Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service
for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?

THE dignity and glory of Christ is next displayed by proving Him to be superior to the most exalted of created beings, the angels. These are greater in power and might than man, but Christ is greater than they. This superiority follows from His heirship as the Son of God: "He hath *inherited* a more excellent name than they." For He is "the Son" by original uncreated derivation from the Father; they are only "sons" (Job 38: 7; 1: 6; 2: 1; Gen. 6: 4) by having been created by the Son and given a nature which is spirit and so akin to God Who is spirit.

As the glory of the Son was set forth in a sevenfold statement, so is His superiority to angels enforced by seven quotations from the Old Testament.

1. Ps. 2: 7. *"Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."* To no angel did God ever say this. To Christ only was it said, and to Him in resurrection. It is only of an act *in time* that God could say, "This *day*" have I done this or that. Therefore the eternal rights of the Son by heirship are here renewed to Him in manhood and resurrection. Now no angel has died and been begotten from that state into resurrection life. Christ only is the "firstborn from the dead" (Col. 1: 18), and therefore He is the only Head of that body of persons, the church, which shares in His resurrection through having accepted fellowship with His sufferings and death.

Those who, through grace and faith, have obtained association with Him in that resurrection life share potentially in His superiority to angels, and are to share it actually when actually sharers in body of His resurrection and ascension (I Cor. 6: 3). Being thus seated with Christ above all principalities and powers (Eph. 1: 18–23; 2: 4–7; I Pet. 3: 21, 22), it is not for them to relinquish their supreme position and turn to angels with worship (Rev. 19: 10; 22: 8, 9) or with requests for *their* intercession with God. In Christ the believer is a son of God with a nearer relationship than they who know only their created standing, not a relationship in regeneration and resurrection.

The argument from silence is to be much observed. God did *not* say to or of an angel that which He *did* say to His Son. It is not permissible to read into God's word what He has *not* said. His silence is to be noted and respected. His Word is perfect (Ps. 19: 7), and a work or a statement which is already perfect is spoiled as much by addition as by subtraction. Comp. the same argument from silence at 7: 14, and note Gal. 3: 16 to the effect that a singular noun must not be treated as a plural. In the Preface to *The Epistles of St. John* Westcott said: "I do not venture to pronounce that any variation is trivial or unimportant. The exact words are for us the decisive expression of the Apostle's thought."

2. II Sam. 7: 14; I Chron. 17: 13. *"I will be to Him (a) Father, and He shall be to Me (a) Son."* Darby and Isaacs translate "For father . . . for son." Thus was declared in advance that the taking of humanity by the Son should not alter the eternal relationship, for in the new status Each should be to the Other what Each had been before it. The emphasis is upon the relationship which Each should bear to the Other. In this relationship no angel ever stood.

The application of this sentence from Old Testament history to Christ is a signal example of how the full, the spiritual intent of many Old Testament statements may go beyond their first application. The words applied firstly to the man Solomon,

as is clear from the clause: "If he commit iniquity I will chasten him." But it is equally plain that some further descendant of David is required for the fulfilment of that portion of the promises which was not fulfilled in Solomon: "I will establish the throne of his kingdom *for ever* . . . thy house and thy kingdom shall be made sure *for ever* before thee; thy throne shall be established *for ever*." And the words "before thee" demand that the fulfilment shall be in resurrection, for only so can David see it. It is Messiah raised from the dead in and to Whom all shall be accomplished. The next quotation points to the time for this.

3. Deut. 32: 43, LXX; Ps. 97: 7. "*And when He again bringeth in the Firstborn into the world He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him.*" I take the *force* of this to be that when the time shall have come that the Father shall bring the Son again into the created regions He will command all angels to worship Him, i.e. the Son.

i. Since God only is to be worshipped (Deut. 6: 13; Matt. 4: 10; Rev. 19: 10; 22: 8, 9), He whom God commands to be worshipped must be God. Thus there must be two (at least) Persons in the Godhead, since One commands that the other is to be worshipped. But He who brings forward the Other and commands that He be worshipped must as to relationship be the senior of that Other. See ch. II, 1, above, p. 21. Again —which is the special point here—He who is to be worshipped must be the divine Superior of those who are to worship Him, the angels.

ii. The occasion of this is to be when the Father shall compel universal subjection to the Son: see on 1. 13 below. The prophetic vision of this is seen in Rev. 5, where all the heavenly orders, the living creatures, the elders, and the angels are seen worshipping God and the Lamb.

iii. The last-mentioned event takes place in heaven at the installation of the Lamb as supreme Ruler, prior to the opening by Him of the Seals. As when He opens these He is still in heaven, it is well before He comes to the earth; which shows that the *oikoumenē* of this passage in *Hebrews*, into which the Father will again bring the Son, cannot be limited to this earth. In any case it must include the realm of the angels. See ch. II, 7, ii above, where it is suggested that the present location of the Son at the right hand of the Father is beyond the created universe.

It is a loss that many have not seen that this word *oikoumenē* can mean far more than conceited Greeks and Romans meant, i.e. their own empires. Derived from *oikeo* to dwell, inhabit, it can mean any habitable region, heavenly or earthly, and it was occasionally so used. In Prov. 8: 27–31, Wisdom

speaks of having been present at the creation, distinguishes the heavens, the skies, and the earth, and appears to embrace them all in the statement (after the LXX) that God "was rejoicing in His *oikoumenē*," and especially rejoicing among the sons of men. It is obvious that the whole universe in its original pure and lovely condition must have been a source of joy to its Creator, not only this earth, though for special reasons, connected with His purposes for men, it and they were a special subject of joy when made. Moses (Ps. 90: 2) seems to have distinguished the earth from the *oikoumenē* by saying that God existed eternally "before (the) earth *and* (the) world were formed," where again the LXX used *oikoumenē*. The repetition in the LXX of the article ("*the* world") stresses the distinction. Similarly in the uninspired *Wisdom of Solomon*, in the *Apocrypha* (1: 7), a proof of the omniscience of God is His omnipresence: "Because the spirit of the Lord hath filled the *oikoumenē*, and that which holdeth all things together hath knowledge of *every* voice": therefore let man be cautious in speech, for, He who is everywhere hears everything. Here *oikoumenē* is the equivalent of *ta panta*, the all things, the universe, as in Col. 1; etc.

The necessity of this widest possible meaning will be seen at 2: 5.

4. Ps. 104: 4. "*Who maketh His angels winds, His ministers a flame of fire.*" Here is information as to the nature of the angelic substance. It is subtle, pervasive, mobile, energetic as wind: it is intense, brilliant, powerful as fire, and can be as destructive, when angels are employed as ministers of the divine wrath. This their nature and service are of Divine appointment. They are created thus, (*ho poiōn* the One making=the Creator), and they continue thus. Because of this nature they control the elemental forces, wind (Rev. 7: 1), fire (Rev. 8: 5; 14: 18; Acts. 7: 30). In these activities they are messengers (*angelous*) and "high commissioners" (Isaacs). On this second description (*leitourgous*) Westcott says: "The word seems always to retain something of its original force as expressing a public, social service." See 7, p. 42

Yet granting the greatness of angels in form and service, they are still infinitely below the Son in dignity, for to *Him* the Father has said:

5. Ps. 45: 6, 7: "*Thy throne, O God, is unto the age of the age* [=for ever],

And the rod [sceptre, as often in Old Testament] *the straight* [i.e. symbol of rule without crookedness] *is the rod of Thy Kingdom.* [Fallen angels rule: Satan is the Prince of this world—John 14: 30; and see Dan. 10: 13; etc.; but their rod (rule) is crooked: see Ps. 82.]

Thou lovedst [aorist: throughout His life on earth, viewed as one complete action] *righteousness and hatedst lawlessness: Therefore God, thy God, anointed Thee* [at His ascension; see Ps. 16: 9–11] *with oil of ecstatic delight* [exultation] *above Thy companions"* (*metochoi*).

(1) The Son is addressed by the Father as God: yet impious men deny that He is God. (2) The Father is His God. The Son on earth, in resurrection, owned this: "I ascend unto my Father . . . my God." (John 20: 17.) (3) The Son is enthroned, and eternally: but even senior angelic rulers have thrones only temporally: see on 2. 5. (4) The ground of this supreme exaltation and exultation is the state of heart, the inner character of the Son when in this scene and atmosphere of lawlessness: He abhorred it, but loved righteousness. (5) The Son exalted has *companions*. See on 3. 14, p. 71.

6. Ps. 102: 25–27. "*Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth,*

And the heavens are the works of Thy hands:
They shall perish, but Thou continuest:
And they all shall wax old as doth a garment;
And as a mantle shalt Thou roll them up,
As a garment, and they shall be changed:
But Thou art the same,
And Thy years shall not fail."

The title "Lord" was inserted by the LXX and continued by the Writer here. The psalm was addressed to the Lord (Jehovah), as the inscription shows, and the great Name is repeated eight times to ver. 22. Now this "Lord" is the One who, as is foreseen by the psalmist when speaking of millennial days, "has built up Zion, and appeared in His glory" (ver. 16), which work and display are elsewhere attributed to Messiah. It is Messiah, as having become man in humiliation, Who cries (ver. 24), "O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days," and only to Him as man can the words be addressed, "Thy *years* are throughout all generations . . . Thy *years* shall have no end." Only God could promise this to His Servant whose life was to be cut short in the midst, at thirty-three years out of seventy: so that it is here the Father Who is answering the cry of the Son in humiliation and weakness. Thus (1) The Son is given by the Father the divine title *Lord* (in LXX—*Jehovah* in Hebrew); and (2) is declared to have been the Creator; and (3) is assured of eternal, unchangeable duration, whereas creation is ever changing and shall be at last completely changed.

No pious Jew ever attributed such divine dignities to angels; but by the time of the Writer there was already developing that deceitful blend of pagan and kabbalistic thought known later

as Gnosticism, which sought to combine these false systems with Christianity, for the corrupting and destroying of the last. This satanic attempt persists in our day, exhibited in all those "parliaments of religion" and other endeavours to combine Bible truth with human error and Satanic lies.

Gnosticism taught that the things material were a creation of lower angelic powers, themselves a descending *emanation* from God, not a distinct *creation* by Him and distinct from Him. This pantheistic, soul-blinding system was definitely denied in advance by the psalm before us, and condemned by the psalm being quoted here.

Against this wholly false philosophy Scripture presents the true nature of Christ as being Himself, with the Father, essentially God, and as the sole Creator of all things, and therefore of the angels. The same errors are combated by Paul in Colossians: see 2: 18, 19 in the light of the noble presentation of the Son in 1: 13–20; and they are silently refuted by John in all his writings, with their exposition of the Son in relation to the Father, and as being personally the eternal life. Really to know Him is salvation from every error, for He is the Truth.

7. Ps. 110: 1.

"Sit Thou on My right hand,
Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet."

The quoting of this sentence completes and clinches the demonstration of the superiority of the Son to angels. The words, and their context in the psalm, grant to the One addressed a *position*, a *service*, and a *future* such as no created being could hold.

i. A *position* of divine glory: "sit at My right hand." Christ himself pointed out to the opponents of His claim to be divine that, by the sentence preceding those here quoted, God accorded a divine title to the Priest-King addressed: "The Lord said unto my *Lord*": in Hebrew, "Jehovah said unto my *Adon*" (Matt. 22: 41–46).

ii. A *service* in heaven both royal and priestly, such as that of Melchizedek. This will later be made the basis of an exposition and appeal of vast weight. See 4: 14–10: 39.

iii. A *future* of triumph over all enemies.

No angel could endure that glory, or fill that high office, or secure that universal victory. Their office, noble but subordinate, is to serve the counsels of that Sovereign; and at present these counsels concern chiefly certain objects of the grace of God who are yet to inherit salvation. What is meant by "inheriting salvation" is a principal theme of the New Testament. It is a design and task parts of which require angelic activity and are worthy of it.

CHAPTER IV

THE FIRST EXHORTATION AND WARNING (2: 1–4)

Ch. II. 1. Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away *from them.* 2. For if the word spoken through angels proved stedfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; 3. how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard; 4. God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to his own will.

THE word "salvation" may mean, I have been saved, or I am being saved, or I am about to be saved.

1. It is of first importance to discern to which of these three aspects of salvation any given passage refers. It is the first, e.g. in Eph. 2: 5, 8, "for by grace ye are having been saved," which union of the present indicative of the verb substantive with the perfect participle passive means that the believer has already and as a fact reached a state of salvation which is abiding: "you have already been saved and are in that status." It is the second in, *e.g.* I Cor. 1: 18: "For the word of the cross to those indeed perishing foolishness is; but to those being saved, even us, power of God it is." It is the third aspect in our present passage, the recognition of which has important bearing upon the interpretation of the whole Epistle.

That this is the aspect of salvation is clear from the statement that angels are rendering service to those "being about to inherit salvation" (1: 14). The present participle shows that the prospect of this salvation is already theirs; but the salvation itself is theirs in expectation only, not in possession; that is, it is a boon awaited in the future.

This is emphasized by the fact that the salvation is to be *inherited*; for it is only of something future that one can be an *heir*; as soon as the property is received one ceases to be heir and becomes owner.

2. Moreover, as we have seen above in the case of the Son of God, an heir must be child of the owner: "if children, then heirs" (Rom 8: 17). Thus at the very outset of the Epistle it

is shown clearly that the Writer is addressing children of God. This gives character to all his instruction, encouragement, and warnings. He is not addressing the unregenerate, even though professed believers: he writes to the children of God, to actual heirs, and this must be kept steadfastly in mind however severe and solemn some things he says may be. The child of God deals deceitfully with the word of his Father, and with his own soul, when he refuses medicine because it is bitter. He may but show thereby how desperately he needs the sharp and purging draught.

The aspect of the Epistle is therefore exactly that of Peter's first epistle (1: 3–7). He too wrote to those who had been "begotten again," and were therefore children of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. They had been made children with a view to the future, "unto a living hope" based on the "resurrection of Jesus Christ out of the dead." This living hope was an *heirship*, it was "unto an *inheritance*"; one of unique quality, differing from all lesser possessions in being, unlike them, incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading. This inheritance is held in reserve in heaven, where it is safe from all influences that could possibly corrupt, defile, and waste. In the meantime the children are under the guardianship of their all-powerful Father, with a view to entering upon "a salvation ready to be revealed in the final season" of the dealings of God with His affairs.

In this magnificent prospect the heirs of God exult, even in the midst of manifold present griefs. But, adds the apostle, this guardian care of God is experienced "through faith"; the child must trust the Father, stay at home, and submit dutifully to all parental discipline; for only so can the Father care for His child, train it for its high future, and confer at last the purposed inheritance.

3. In view of the high realm where this property is situate, in heaven, and in view of its noble qualities, and of the glowing contrast with the dismal prospects of men before they become children and heirs of God, this salvation may well be called *great.* Indeed it is the greatest thing that God can ever design or grant; for its essence is the sharing the relationship of son to the eternal Father (c. 2: 10; II Cor. 6: 17, 18; Rev. 21: 7); and it includes external conformity of body to the glorified Son of God (Rom. 8: 29; I John 3: 1–3), co-heirship with Him of the entire universe (Rom. 8: 14–17; I Cor. 3: 21–23), co-authority with Him as its Sovereign and Blesser (Luke 22: 28–30; Rev. 2: 26–28; 3: 21), and co-residence with Him in the heavenly habitation (John 14: 1–3; I Thes. 4: 16–18; Rev. 7: 15; 14: 1; 15: 2–4), rather than dwelling with others of the saved on this earth, whether the present earth in the Millennium

or the new earth in eternity (Is. 65: 17–25; 66: 22–24; Rev. 21: 1).

4. It is much to be observed that *this* great salvation was first announced by the Lord Jesus: "which a beginning received to be spoken through the Lord." This excludes from the meaning here that present aspect of salvation which consists in the forgiveness of sins, justification, and the new birth unto eternal life; for though the Lord Jesus did indeed speak of these initial, indispensable, and immeasurable benefits, He was by no means the first to announce these. Not to go back earlier, Moses in the law, fourteen centuries before Christ, had conveyed to Israel the divine assurance of forgiveness, e.g. Lev. 4: 20, 26, 31, 35; 5: 10, 16, 18. A thousand years before Christ David rejoiced in that free forgiveness (Ps. 32). Christ confirmed this earlier message of mercy, declaring that the repentant confessing sinner, who sought mercy on the ground of the propitiatory sacrifice, "went down to his house justified" (Luke 18: 14); but He was not the first so to teach.

The Lord forgave sins, as those of the man let down through the roof (Luke 5), and of the woman who wept at His feet (Luke 7). He declared that it was His own blood that would procure this remission (Matt. 26: 28). He commanded that remission of sins should be preached in His name (Luke 24: 47). He strongly emphasized the duty that the forgiven must forgive (Matt. 6: 12–15; 18: 21–35); and He warned solemnly against one fatal sin which for ever precludes forgiveness (Mark 3: 28–30). But if any one will go through in the concordance the words *forgiveness* and *remission* he may be surprised to learn that these are almost all the occasions and connexions when Christ is reported as having touched on the subject.

It was thus as to the new birth and life. Every saint of earlier ages must have received that life, or saint he never could have been; for the carnal Adam nature of man's first birth "is not able to please God" (Rom. 8: 6–8), yet ch. 11 of our Epistle will recount how very many before Christ walked well-pleasing to God by faith. This teaching also Christ confirmed, and showed the place of His own person and death as the basis of the new life (John 3); but so far was the Lord from being the first so to teach that He rather censured Nicodemus for not knowing these things, seeing that Old Testament scriptures taught the doctrine, as *e.g.* in Ezek. 37: 1–14, and Jer. 31: 31–34.

Let the student extend his survey into the Acts and the Epistles and he can find how those who confirmed the teaching of Christ, and saw it confirmed by the supernatural workings of God and the Spirit, maintained the same features as before

noted. They taught forgiveness and regeneration plainly and emphatically, as Christ had done, and on the same ground of His atoning blood, but the records of this are similarly few. It was the foundation of their message, its opening topic, but by no means its sole or even its most distinguishing feature. In this particular much modern evangelizing has been rather a contrast to than a continuation of the preaching of Christ and His apostles.

But let the earnest searcher turn now to the word *kingdom* and trace it through the Gospels, Acts, Epistles, and the Revelation, and he will be struck with the frequency and intensity with which the Lord and the apostles enlarged upon *this* theme. And not simply as to that earthly government by Messiah of which the prophets had sung in such glowing strains, but with the introduction of fresh elements which Christ was the first to announce and which constituted the distinctive topics of His ministry.

The Old Testament prophets had foretold that God would re-establish His sovereign rights on this earth. John the Immerser had enforced this and had directed men to Christ, and to His sacrifice as the Lamb of God, saying that repentance for sin and faith in Christ would give preparation for the judgment that the King would execute. But when the Lord Jesus took up John's ministry He introduced elements additional to what had been taught before.

i. He taught those who became His disciples that they were to regard God as their *Father* (Matt. 5: 16, 43–48; 6: 1, 4, 6–18, 26, 32; John 14 to 17). Thus He raised those who truly received and who followed Him to a share in His own relationship of Son to Father. This culminated in His first message to them after His resurrection, "I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20: 17).

In former times it had been God in His majesty and power Whom the godly knew; the mention of Him as Father was most infrequent and exceptional. In the whole Old Testament there seem to be only nine or ten places where this relationship is mentioned, and the third, fifth and sixth of these are prophetic of Israel's experiences in days to come (II Sam. 7: 14; I Chron. 22: 10; Ps. 89: 26; 103: 13; Isa. 63: 16 twice; 64: 8; Jer. 3: 4, 19; Mal. 1: 6; 2: 10).

But by Christ this was lifted into relief and given emphasis. He insisted that His followers must walk worthily of this high calling; it must be a regulating factor in their heart and ways. And this note is struck early in our Epistle: God is "bringing many *sons* unto glory" (2: 10).

ii. From the eleventh chapter (2–10, 13–16) we learn that

Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had been told of a *heavenly* city, that they embraced the prospect, became *heirs* of the promise of it, and regulated their life on earth accordingly. In this activity of faith Abraham became the ancestor of spiritual descendants of the time since the coming of Christ. This cannot be learned from the histories, and there is no mention that their descendants after the flesh expected that heavenly portion. Resurrection was but occasionally mentioned, as in Isa. 26: 19; Ezek. 37; Dan. 12: 2, 3, 12, 13; and then rather with a view to a portion in the kingdom of God on this earth.

This also Christ confirmed, as in Luke 13: 28, 29; etc. But to His faithful followers He opened up the earlier prospect and enlarged its details, and He was the first to do this. He told them that, if they were persecuted for His sake, their reward would be great in *heaven* (Matt. 5: 12): that they should set their hearts *there*, not here, and accumulate treasure *there* (Matt. 6: 19–21; 19: 21; comp. Col. 3: 1, 2). He promised them that if they thus lived for *that* world He would confess their names there, as belonging to that world (Matt. 10: 24–33). This line of teaching and promise, up till that time peculiar to His own ministry, culminated in the new and mighty assurance that He was going back to that realm above to prepare an abode there for them, and that He would duly return thence to take them thither, to be in His company there (John 14: 1–3).

As regards any express teaching of this aspect of salvation, it had its beginning from the lips of the Lord. The rest of the New Testament shows how fully and earnestly it was confirmed and enlarged by them that heard Him. See I Thess. 4; I Cor. 15; I Pet. 1 before quoted; I John 3: 1–3. The stress of the apostolic teaching fell upon the dominant note of Christ, that not this earth, even when renewed in Messiah's day, but the heavenly side of God's great empire is the proper sphere, prospect, and hope of the followers of Christ, their reward for suffering for Him now.

It is this supernal prospect that gives point to the passage before us. It is not here that salvation is *great*: salvation in its lesser range than this is indeed great (*megas*); but the adjective used here is rare in the New Testament, and very emphatic. *Tēlikoutos* means "*so* great." Its only other places are: Jas. 3: 4; the ship that is *so* great as compared with its small rudder: II Cor. 1: 10; "*so* great a death" as threatened Paul in Asia, something more terrible than men ordinarily face; and Rev. 16: 18; where the full force of the word is seen by its describing "*so* great an earthquake, so violent (*megas*), such as was not seen since there were men upon the earth."

Thus the point in our passage is that the future salvation

in view is something as wholly unexampled as was that earthquake. It is not that "common salvation" in which all the saved must share, or they would not be saved in any sense, but it is that highest height and splendour of glory to which the God of all grace is in this age calling us in Christ, even "unto His eternal glory" (I Pet. 5: 10); yea, "into *His own* kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2: 12); so that such shall obtain nothing less than "the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ" (II Thess. 2: 14), and be part of that company which, under the figure of a city, is seen by John as coming down out of heaven "having the glory of God" (Rev. 21: 11).

It did not demand unusual wonders and signs to assure repentant men of the pardon of a gracious God. David, the tax-gatherer, the woman that was a sinner, and millions more, of old and of to-day, have obtained the bliss of justification by believing the bare word of God. But the proposal that men should be elevated bodily from earth, man's natural home, to the heavens above, should share the glory of God Himself, and the sovereignty of the universe with the Son of God, *this* was so startling, so unimaginable, that God confirmed it as His message by exceptional signs, wonders, various powerful workings, and especially by distributions of His own Spirit, without Whose in-working aid it were scarcely possible to grasp the proposal or think it credible.

5. *The Exhortation.* The Messenger of God to us is immeasurably nobler than those He sent to earlier generations: "because of this it behoves *us* more abundantly to direct our attention to the things heard" through Him. It was always incumbent on men to heed a message from God, whoever might bring it; much more it is incumbent on us to Whom His own Son has been sent (Matt. 21: 33–44), and sent with an immeasurably higher message.

6. *The Danger* is that we may drift away from these things heard. In Isa. 44: 4 (LXX) the word used *pararheō* describes running water, water which is flowing by. In Prov. 3: 21 (LXX) it is used of not letting good counsel and understanding slip from one's attention. By Greek authors it was used in this same sense: a thing escapes me, slips from my mind. In our passage the danger in view may be compared to a ship being caught by wind and tide, and through negligence being thus carried past the desired haven. In this case the sailors will pay the penalty of missing the profits, comforts, and pleasures expected in port, and may also be exposed to further perils of the sea.

7. *The Warning* is given by a comparison. The message of God given through angels at Sinai (Acts 7: 53) took effect. Its solemn sanctions against wilful transgression and careless

disobedience were enforced. The history of Israel through over 3,000 years exhibits this. The Messenger sent to us is far nobler in rank, the message far richer in content: how, then, shall we escape if we neglect Him and it?

The word *neglect* is important. It is found in three other places. At 8: 9 it is said that the Lord *disregarded* Israel because they turned away from Him. If one party violates a covenant, the other party may treat it as null and void. This God did, deliberately and definitely, as the aorist tense here intimates. This shows that the word *neglect* involves deliberate action, not mere inadvertence. We are warned lest we with intention, even more than by carelessness, disregard this so great salvation offered to us as children of God. It is not here the sinner being indifferent to the first aspect of salvation, nor the unwatchful, prayerless Christian falling before common temptations, though such indifference will assuredly bring its penalties; but it is the believer putting from his mind the final privileges offered. This is seen in ch. 12 in Esau despising his birthright privileges.

I Tim. 4: 14: "Be not *neglectful* of the gift that is in thee." Here the imperfect tense stresses the continuousness of the neglect. If we once turn from the hope of the gospel, the hope of this "great salvation," the attitude may easily become permanent.

Matt. 22: 5: "But they *made light* of it," and went off about their personal affairs. Made light of what? Of a royal invitation to a royal wedding! Here the tense of the verb is the same as in our passage, which illuminates the latter. They deliberately disregarded the invitation, made light of the King and His Son, and showed they preferred lesser interests. It was precisely the sin of Esau: choosing a meal instead of a birthright. This is to be noted. The same elements and motives will be further stressed by our Writer.

8. *The Penalty.* "How shall we escape"—escape what? Obviously that "just recompense of reward" mentioned immediately before, such as followed under the law spoken through angels. The same analogy and warning will be enlarged in ch. 10: 26–31. *Misthos*, the root of the word used, means wages for work done: "the labourer is worthy of his *hire*" (Luke 10: 7; I Tim. 5: 18; Jas. 5: 4), and is used frequently of the reward the godly shall receive in heaven (Matt. 5: 12; Luke 6: 23; I Cor. 3: 8; Rev. 22: 12). The derived word in our passage *misthapodosia* is peculiar to our Writer, being found elsewhere only at 10: 35 and 11: 26, with the cognate *misthapodotēs* at 11: 6 only. The force of the compound word is, to give back an equivalent, hence a "*just* recompense."

Oh, let this be grasped. God is a *Rewarder* of them that

seek after Him (11: 6). He gives back according to the earnestness and faith of the seeker. It was by paying regard to the day of Christ, and the reward then to become available, that Moses was strengthened to throw up the honours and prospects of the royal house of Egypt (11: 26). Men of this world have their portion in this life (Ps. 17: 14; Matt. 6: 2, 5, 16); the prospects of the disciple of Christ lie where Christ's prospects lie, in the future; they are known by faith and hope. It is for us to be courageous and bold as was Moses, for this will "receive great recompense of reward" (10: 35).

The word recompense is a good translation. It means to make the scales even: to give back in goods the exact value received. The day of Christ will be a period of the administration of justice, and rewards will be strictly equivalent to service and suffering now. So also will be the penalty attached to "neglect" by the Christian of the high privileges possible of attainment by faith.

Westcott says the word *misthapodosia* "appears to emphasize the idea of an exact requital of good or evil by a sovereign Judge." Kelly translates it by "just retribution." "Exact requital," "just retribution": Let us face this seriously, for it is a serious prospect for the unheavenly believer. Something of what this retribution may mean will be opened out in later warnings. In this first and brief warning the basic elements of privilege and responsibility are concentrated, to be afterward expanded.

CHAPTER V

THE SUFFERING SON OF MAN (2: 5-18)

Ch. II. 5. For not unto angels did he subject the world to come whereof we speak. 6. But one hath somewhere testified saying,

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

7. Thou madest him a little lower than the angels; Thou crownedst him with glory and honour, And didst set him over the works of thy hands:

8. Thou didst put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he subjected all things unto him, he left nothing that is not subject to him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to him. 9. But we behold him who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honour, that by the grace of God he should taste death for every *man*. 10. For it became him, of whom are all things, and through whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the author of their salvation perfect through sufferings. 11. For both he that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause he is not ashamed to call them brethren, 12 saying,

I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the congregation will I sing thy praise.

13. And again, I will put my trust in him. And again, Behold, I and the children which God hath given me. 14. Since then the children are sharers in flesh and blood, he also himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death he might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; 15. and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. 16. For verily not of angels doth he take hold, but he taketh hold of the seed of Abraham. 17. Wherefore it behoved him in all things to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. 18. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

VER. 5. *For not to angels did He subject the oikoumenē the about to be, concerning which we speak* (i.e. *which is our present subject*).

1. After the foregoing exhortation the "for" resumes the

chief subject from 1: 14, but gives it a deeper meaning and ground.

i. Again the Writer defines clearly his subject. He is speaking (*a*) of things future, "about to be," not of the present aspect of salvation; and (*b*) of the inhabited universe which is to be. See par. iii above, p. 39. This widest meaning of oikoumenē is evidently intended here, for the argument to be developed is that man is the destined ruler of the whole universe. Comp. I Cor. 3: 21–23: "all things are yours . . . [the] *kosmos*"; either condition of existence in the *kosmos*, life or death; either period of time, present or future, which last idea is here expressed by the same term as in our passage "about to be" . . . "all things are yours."

That the heavens are to pass under the rule of man is seen at I Cor. 6: 2, 3: "Do you not know that the saints shall judge the *kosmos*? . . . Do you not know that the saints shall judge angels?" the inhabitants of the heavenly portion of the *kosmos*. Alas, that comparatively few Christians do know this; which is not surprising seeing that only a few *teachers* of the faith seem to know it with intelligence.

ii. The existing *oikoumenē* is under the control of angels. At the summit of the things invisible to man there are *thrones* (Col. 1: 16), and beneath these sovereign rulers are lower orders, lordships, princedoms, and general authorities. These thrones had been seen in vision by Daniel (7: 9, "thrones were placed"), and later they were shown more distinctly to John (Rev. 4: 4). The subject has been greatly obscured by the twenty-four elders being regarded as *men*. In my *Revelation* on that place it is shown, I trust conclusively, that they are heavenly beings. The archangel has an army of subordinates (Rev. 12: 7, "Michael and his angels"). Satan, the fallen cherub, likewise has subordinates: see the same ver. and ver. 9. This angelic rule extends to the earth, as *Daniel* exhibits at large (4: 13, 23; the judgment scene of ch. 7: 10, 13, 22; 12: 1). See also II Chron. 18: 12–22, and the *Revelation*.

iii. In the purpose of God the *oikoumenē* of the future has not been put under the control of angels, but of men. This is a key thought, the resolving of many obscurities and perplexities which hinder believers from grasping the exact significance of the plans of God and the final and highest outcome of redemption. It is the key to some present enigmas also. At present God is not saving the human race entire and its affairs corporate, but is selecting from it the company that are to rule the universe, superseding the existing government. He is preparing for a complete reorganizing of His entire empire, and is giving to these future rulers the severe training which is indispensable to fitting them for such responsible duties and

high dignities. The gospel has *not* failed, but is fulfilling the purpose God plainly announced, though not the end that many preachers have mistakenly proposed, namely, the conversion of the whole race. That general and most desirable betterment of this sin-cursed earth is in the plans of God, but falls for accomplishment in the *next* period of the divine programme, not in this age. There is manifest wisdom in a great Leader first training a body of efficient subordinates before seeking to reorganize society at large.

As with this whole salvation, so with this branch of it, it was the Lord Jesus who first began to announce it. Of the servant who was faithful while his lord was from home Christ (Matt. 24: 46, 47) said that, on his return, "he will set him over *all that he hath*," even as it was said later, "all things are yours." And again: "thou hast been faithful in a few things, I will set thee over many things" (Matt. 25: 21, 23): and again: "thou wast found faithful . . . have thou authority" (Luke 19: 17): and again: "ye have continued with Me in My trials, and I appoint unto you kingdom," *i.e.* (as the absence of the article intimates) royal status and authority, "ye shall sit on thrones" (Luke 22: 29–30). See also the promises to overcomers in the battles of the kingdom; especially Rev. 2: 26, "to him will I give authority over the nations," and 3: 21, "He that overcometh, I will give to him to sit down with Me in My throne."

2. It is next shown that this destiny for man is foretold in the Old Testament in Psalm 8: "Thou didst put all things in subjection under his (man's) feet." As usual, the Writer quotes from the LXX, whose rendering emphasizes the notion of subjection implied in the Hebrew "put under." The psalm is based on Gen. 1: 26: "And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion." Man is made to rule; the whole universe is his realm. His lust for power is the degraded survival of this grant from God; but alas, as a corrupted being he seeks his destiny by tyranny and cruelty, and in the pursuit of this ambition he destroys his kingdom and himself. Moreover, his utmost endeavours fail of their goal; he can destroy but not improve his domains; nor can he thoroughly subdue his subjects, but beasts, birds, fishes, and creeping things defy and destroy him in turn, as he does them, and the forces of nature now serve, now blast him. Indeed, "we see not yet all things subjected" to man (ver. 8).

In Gen. 1, Ps. 8, and Heb. 2 it is thus far man simply as man, not Messiah, that is in view; but our Writer widens the scope of the psalm to take the term "all things" in its fullest possible sense, that is, the universe entire. But though this subjection

is not yet a fact, it is God's grant and purpose, "For in that He subjected all things unto him [man], He left nothing that is not subject unto him" (man). Is, then, this original purpose of God to be frustrated? Is man for ever to be deceived by Satan and oppressed by the fear of death? (14, 15). By no means: for there is one Man in Whom this purpose of God is in process of fulfilment: "we behold *Jesus* crowned with glory and honour." His name as man is chosen with design. In this Man the lost situation is recovered, and

> "In Him the sons of Adam boast
> More blessings than their father lost."

i. In the grading of the universe man was made a little lower than the angels: comp. II Pet. 2: 11, angels "are greater in might and power" than man. Therefore to fulfil the purpose of God for man the Redeemer must become man. This He did. He took a truly human nature, partook of "blood and flesh"—the vital element, the seat of bodily life, the blood, being named first to emphasize that the humanity of our Lord was *vitally* human, and not (as the Docetic heresy afterward affirmed) only externally and apparently human. Thus in divine grace "He took the form of a bondservant, becoming in the likeness of men, and being found in fashion as a man" (Phil. 2: 6–8). "Being originally in the form of God" He became what before He was not, a man, born of a woman. To deny this is to wreck the purpose of God for man, for only in His humanity can Christ fulfil that purpose. Nor can any other man do this, for through rebellion every other man has lost the dominion granted, nor is able to regain it, being unable either to expiate the guilt of his rebellion or to bring his nature into subjection to the will of God (Rom. 8: 7, 8).

ii. Christ became man to do as man and for man what man cannot do for himself. The sinner's condition includes a triple misery. (1) He is easily overcome by temptation. (2) Through thus yielding and sinning he lies under sentence of death. (3) He thus has the terror of a slave in relation to the executioner-in-chief of that sentence, the devil. The vast majority of mankind have always worshipped demons for fear that these should injure or destroy them, and in man in general there is an instinctive reluctance to die.

He who would deliver man must meet effectually this threefold state. This Christ did.

(1) Being truly man He submitted to the temptations and trials to which man is liable: "He hath been in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart" (4: 15). This experience caused Him suffering (ver. 18); He *felt* the severity of the temp-

tations; the suffering was real, acute. Thus He understands our feelings, and now, in resurrection life, He is able to help us effectually, by sympathy, and by infusing into our enfeebled spirits His own moral energy, communicated by His Spirit sent forth into our hearts.

(2) But more was needed than moral improvement, even a work that should make that improvement possible. Man must die as the legal penalty of his sin (Gen. 2: 17; Rom. 6: 23): that is, the soul, the ego, must part from the body in which alone he can act on this earth, and the body must lose that animating principle, spirit, without which it will dissolve into dust. Thereupon the soul must descend to a distinct and altogether lower realm and state of existence. This bitter and humiliating experience, including banishment from God and endurance of His holy wrath, man's Redeemer must accept as if He had personally incurred our penalty by personally committing our sins. This also Christ did: "Jehovah hath made to meet on Him the iniquity of us all"; "Christ died for our sins according to the scriptures"; "Who His own self bare our sins in His body on the tree, that we, having died unto sins, might live unto righteousness; by Whose stripes ye were healed" (Isa. 53: 6; I Cor. 15: 3; I Pet. 2: 24).

By thus cancelling our guilt, as he who pays a debt thereby cancels it, Christ delivers from death those who by faith avail themselves of His sacrifice. This deliverance is available for all: "that He might deliver *all* them" that feared death: but each must personally accept the Son of God and His atonement or not benefit by it (Gal. 3: 22; "all . . . them that believe").

(3) Now he who cancels a debt by paying it thereby delivers the debtor from the hand of the bailiff, for he deprives the latter of legal right to touch the former debtor. That Satan, under authority from God and restraint by God, acts as the executioner of the penalties of the law, lesser and greater, Scripture shows. He acts personally, as in Job's case (Job 1 and 2); and see I Kings 22: 21 "*the* spirit"); or he acts through subordinates (Ex. 12: 23; II Sam. 24: 16; II Kings 19: 35; Acts 12: 23; Rev. 9: 11).

Of this power, as against the people of Christ, he has been deprived by Christ through His atoning death (Col. 2: 13–15). At death the believer now commits his spirit to the Lord, as Stephen did (Acts 7: 59); he "falls asleep" and this "through *Jesus*" (I Thess. 4: 14), not through Satanic action, unless indeed he foolishly place himself again under Satan's authority by living in wilful sin as formerly, when he served the Devil (I Cor. 5: 5; 11: 30; I Tim. 1: 20). And while believers do die, as to the body, and go to that paradise which is part of Hades, the world of the dead (Luke 23: 43; Eph. 4: 9), yet their

Redeemer, in resurrection power, now holds the keys of that realm (Rev. 1: 18), and its gates shall not prevail to detain them there when the moment comes that He shall call them thence to share His resurrection (Matt. 16: 18).

Only one free from debts can meet the liabilities of another. The Saviour of sinners must be without sin. The Redeemer must have a *nature* free from sin and also be free in practice. These conditions demanded such a birth as (1) should preserve Him from inherited taint of sin and tendency to sin. Birth of a virgin mother by direct action of the Holy Spirit was an imperative necessity in order that He should be "holy" and "Son of God" (Luke 1: 35). The absence of the article here implies that the humanity should share in His relation to God as Son. (2) His birth must cause Him to be truly human, and so be able to pass through all stages of human development —weakness, dependence, growth in body and mind (Luke 2: 40), temptation, suffering, death; and (3) that He should be able to live without sinning; so that (4) He might be acceptable as substitute in law for sinners, the Lamb of God without blemish, and so fit for the altar of God (I Pet. 1: 18–21).

And not only fit to be the victim but also qualified to act as the officiating Priest to present the victim before God on behalf of men (9: 14). For having been made "like unto His brethren" He can be at once merciful toward them and faithful toward God (2: 17). He is that competent Daysman, or umpire, for whom the suffering saint of a former age longed but saw only afar and by faith (Job 9: 33; 19: 25–27); but Whom the saint of to-day, by like faith, sees more nearly, a present acting Advocate at the throne of God, crowned with glory and honour. He is there as our Representative, yea, more, as our Forerunner who has opened the way for His followers, that through faith and long-patience they may run His race after Him and arrive where He is (6: 20; 12: 1, 2).

3. This divine-human Redeemer and His whole life—His experiences, death, resurrection, and ascension, are God's true "means of grace" for the fulfilment of His original and His standing purpose that man shall have universal dominion: "He is bringing many sons unto glory" (10). This clause must be analysed, for it is another key statement as to the plans of God.

i. "Unto *glory*." Upon this see above (pp. 52–54). Joseph, David, Daniel, Esther became more than subjects under their respective sovereigns. Each attained to rulership and glory. It is for such supreme honour that God is now training the co-heirs of His Son (Rom. 8: 17; II Tim. 2: 10–12).

ii. "Many *sons* unto glory." A royal father may have a large family, but of these only a few may prove competent to rule in the kingdom and share its glory. It is of such that the term "son" is here used. This is an important Biblical use of the term "son," implying a child who has grown up, who resembles the father in intelligence and character, and can co-operate in his affairs. This sense of the word affords yet another instance of teaching which "began to be spoken by the Lord" Jesus. His early discourse, the Sermon on the Mount, gives it. "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called *sons* of God . . . Love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you; so that ye may become *sons* of your Father who is in the heavens, for He maketh His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sendeth rain on the just and the unjust" (Matt. 5: 9, 44, 45; and see Luke 6: 35, 36). Here Christ spoke of disciples as already *children* of God, God was already their Father ("your Father"), for these had believed on the Son and so were born of God (John 1: 12, 13). It was for such so to act that they might "become *sons*" of their Father. The same meaning of "son" is applied by Christ to those who shall be accounted worthy of the first resurrection: "neither can they die any more; for they are equal unto the angels; and are *sons* of God, being sons of the resurrection" (Luke 20: 34–36).

This force of "son" is the basis of the discussion in Gal. 3 and 4 as to the essential difference in spiritual relationship to God of believers before and since Pentecost. So long as believers were under the law they were "*children*" (Gal. 4: 3), though heirs by promise, and were themselves ruled by guardians and their property managed by stewards: but now that the life-principle of an obedient faith has been introduced by the coming of the Redeemer, those who intelligently receive Him do, by baptism, "put on Christ,"[1] and as He is God's Son they also in Him thus become "*sons* of God" (Gal. 3: 26; 4: 4–7), and "because ye are *sons* God sent forth the Spirit of His *Son* into your hearts, crying, Abba, *Father*." The number is large who believe on Christ as Saviour but have no sense of sonship, nor experience of the Spirit of the Son crying, Father.

Of this the Old Testament usage of "son" is wholly confirmatory. The common word for "son" comes perhaps 4,500 times. Its usage Godward is as rare as its usage of the human

[1] This has no reference to regeneration, which is the renewing of the *inward* nature. To "put on" is an *external* act; here, the profession of a new, advanced status of *sons*, not merely children. Under the law, men of faith were regenerated, though baptism was not yet instituted; they became *children* of God. Under the gospel, baptism is the avowal of *son*ship.

relationship is frequent. Once it is applied to Messiah as in resurrection (Ps. 2: 7). In eight places it is used of angels (Gen. 6: 2, 4; Job 1: 6; 2: 1; 38: 7; Ps. 29: 1; 82: 6; 89: 6). Six times it describes what the saved of Israel will become when, at the advent of their Messiah, they shall pass from the state of children into that of sons, and the Galatian argument be realized in them (Isa. 43: 6; 45: 11; Jer. 3: 14, 19, 22; 31: 20). In only five places have we noticed it as used historically of Israelites of the past, and the histories show how utterly the majority failed to respond to the dignity open to them all in the purpose of God (Ex. 4: 22; II Sam. 7: 14; Isa. 1: 2; Ezek. 16: 21; Hos. 11: 1).

The argument of *Hebrews* is based on the truth set forth in *Galatians*, and even as in the latter epistle believers were exhorted to value their exalted status, to stand fast in its freedom, and not to sink back into the former and legal condition, so are those here in view exhorted and warned to the same effect; for the same danger imperilled their reaching the final privileges open for attainment as *sons* of God. This will illuminate these arguments and warnings as we reach them.

The burden of *Hebrews* is not the rescuing of sinners from hell, nor even the blessings of *children* in the vast family circle, but it is the bringing of *sons* unto *glory*. Of old Israel did not reach the enjoyment of being God's son, His firstborn son and heir (Ex. 4: 22). In this Christians also may fail. In essence this teaching and warning are continued to the end of the Word of God, for on its last page but one it is said by Him that sitteth on the throne, and said of the time and scene of glory, "He that *overcometh* shall *inherit* these things; and I will be God to *him*, and he shall be to Me *son*" (Rev. 21: 7). This is something greatly greater than the blessing of the water of life promised immediately before to the thirsty (ver. 6). This latter is the initial gift of grace, the former is the final fruition of grace. The one requires no more than thirst and the faith to drink; the other demands faith that fights and conquers. It is to this latter and indispensable matter of conquest that *Hebrews* is directed.

Had this emphasis by the Writer himself upon what is his theme been generally recognized, most perhaps of what has been said upon his warnings would never have been written, and thus had controversy and confusion been much reduced.

4. *The Son Perfected by Suffering.*

i. Its Necessity. ii. Its Nature. A goal so noble being in view, and such measures being indispensable to reaching it, it became Him (the Father), for whose glory all things exist,

and through Whose will and power all things came into existence, to make the Author of the salvation of the many sons perfect through sufferings. Here again the word salvation is used in its third sense, as equivalent to being "brought unto glory."

The Son did not need to be made perfect in His relationship to the Father or in His moral character: these were eternally and inherently perfect. But had He remained as He originally was, on equality with God, never could He have become the Author of salvation or have brought many sons unto God and glory. The corn of wheat would have continued perfect in its kind but would have remained alone. But love to His Father constrained Him to become man, for that was the will of the Father (John 14: 31); and love to us strengthened Him to suffer with and for us to save us. And having thus entered into our conditions, for Him, as for us, the way to glory lay through death and resurrection (John 12: 23–28), for

> "The path of sorrow, and that path alone,
> Leads to the place where sorrow is unknown":

and so "because of the sufferings of death we behold Jesus crowned with glory and honour." Comp. Isa. 53: 12: "therefore"; Phil. 2: 9: "wherefore"; Rev. 5: 9: "Worthy art Thou . . . for Thou wast slain."

5. *His Exaltation as Man assures Salvation for Man.*

By the grace of God Christ tasted death for every man. His exaltation gives effect to the purpose for which He died. Risen from the dead He is the Executor of His own will and testament (9: 16, 17). The fourteen Romish Stations of The Cross end with His burial. It suits a system of priestcraft to leave Him there in the minds of its devotees. For were He still in the tomb no present salvation or present assurance of salvation were possible, and the priest can batten on the dread uncertainties of the souls that so think. Were Christ not risen it would be plain that His sacrifice had not been sufficient to discharge the claims of the law against the sins for which He assumed responsibility and died. As long as the criminal is in prison it is clear that the law is not satisfied. But His having been raised from the dead by the glory of the Father Himself, and rewarded with highest glory and honour in the Presence on high where no sin can be tolerated, is God's own witness to the sufficiency of His atoning death.

"He tasted death for every man"; and His ascension makes the mighty benefits of this available to faith. As the salvation and glory of man (not, in possibility, of other beings) is the subject in hand, it seems better to confine the words here to

man, and not to extend their scope to others. Ch. 9: 23; Rom. 8: 18–25, and other scriptures show a wider blessing to flow from the cross. Here the truth stated is that given in, *e.g.* I Tim. 2: 1–6, where the triple "all" of vers. 1, 4, 6 covers the whole of mankind. This is seen in I John 2: 2 also, a statement equally definite and universal. Redemption is provided for all men: alas, that not all men avail themselves of it by repentance and faith.

6. vers. 11–13. *The Son and His Brethren.*

i. One Father. Having thus united Himself to mankind, and the believing of mankind to Himself, both He and they derive their nature and prospects from one Source, the Father; and the Son therefore acknowledges them as brethren. *They* call Him (not Brother or Elder Brother; such terms lack elementary reverence, but) Teacher and Lord and own themselves His slaves: but *He* in grace calls them His brethren, and introduces them to, and empowers them for, that life of trust in the living Father which was and is the principle and power of His life of praise unto God.

ii. ver. 16. The Redeemer human, not angelic. Seeing that the end proposed concerned man, the Redeemer did not take hold of (ally Himself with; Green, *The Twofold New Testament, in loco*) angels, but of man. (The translation "doth not give help to angels" asserts more than is revealed, and is unwarranted). He must descend lower than to the angelic rank and sphere, for the creature He would raise was lower than angels, and to have shared their nature and experiences would not have fitted Him to save man. But now, in resurrection, He is the High Priest perfectly competent to fulfil the whole counsel of God, even to this its chief intent, the bringing many sons unto glory.

iii. ver. 12. And being brought there, their first and chief office will be praise, and the incitement to this will be their full appreciation of the Name of God, of what God Himself is as expressed in His name. And of the praise of that heavenly chorus the Son will be the Precentor. He closed His life in the flesh by leading His faithful followers in a song of praise, most probably in the words of Ps. 118, and then He went forth to die (Matt. 26: 30). So blessedly full was His heart of filial trust in His Father that even when forsaken on the cross He was in the spirit of that word of prophecy, "But Thou art holy," thus praising the character of His God. He will resume that praise in fellowship with the glorified before God on high in heaven, the native home of joy and worship.

We often sing

"Oh, that with yonder sacred throng
We at His feet may fall,
Join in the everlasting song,
And crown Him Lord of all."

Proper and blessed indeed it is to address and worship the Son (Matt. 28: 17; Rev. 5: 8–14); yet for the *glorified* saint the standing and service are higher. We are to stand around Him; and He in the midst of that most august of all congregations will lead the praise beyond Himself (all-worthy as He is!) to His and our God and Father, to Whom be glory for ever and ever. Even now the songs and prayers of this character are the highest, when His people meet with Him in the midst, and He brings them to God in heart-fellowship and spiritual worship. This is the sweetest foretaste of the realm and service to which the pilgrims of hope urge their way, by the grace of the High Priest whom we confess.

CHAPTER VI

THE SECOND EXHORTATION AND WARNING (3: 1 to 4: 13)

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus."

Ch. III. 1. Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, *even* Jesus; 2. who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also was Moses in all his house. 3. For he hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honour than the house. 4. For every house is builded by some one; but he that built all things is God. 5. And Moses indeed was faithful in all his house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken; 6. but Christ as a son, over his house; whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end. 7. Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith,

> To-day if ye will hear his voice; 8. harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, like as in the day of the temptation in the wilderness; 9. wherewith your fathers tempted *me* by proving *me*, and saw my works forty years. 10. Wherefore I was displeased with this generation, and said, They do alway err in their heart: but they did not know my ways; 11. as I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.

12. Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God: 13. but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called To-day; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: 14. for we are become partakers with Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: 15. while it is said, To-day if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation. 16. For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses? 17. And with whom was he displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose carcases fell in the wilderness? 18. And to whom sware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that were disobedient? 19. And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

Ch. IV. 1. Let us fear therefore, lest haply a promise being left of entering into his rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. 2. For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also did they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because they were not united by faith with them that heard. 3. For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as he hath said, As I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. 4. For he hath said somewhere of the seventh *day* on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all his works; 5. and in this *place* again, They shall not enter into my rest. 6. Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, 7. he again defineth a certain day, saying in David, after so long a time, To-day, as it hath been said before, To-day if ye shall hear his voice, harden not your hearts. 8. For if Joshua had given them rest he would not have spoken afterward of another day. 9. There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God. 10. For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from his. 11. Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience. 12. For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart. 13. And there is no creature that is not manifest in his sight; but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

1. THE FAITHFUL APOSTLE.

i. ver. 1. *Those addressed.* Notice again the triple statement as to the kind of persons addressed.

(1) "holy": set apart unto God, and therefore, as in I Cor. 1: 2, "called to be saints," to be holy persons in fact as in standing.

(2) "brethren": members of the divine family, born of God, called to walk in love with all others of the family.

(3) "partakers of a heavenly calling." Israelites were sharers in high privileges connected with this earth, privileges associated, as to their enjoyment, with the land of Canaan. Christians are citizens of a realm above this earth (Phil. 3: 20); our portion is in the heavens.

It is only by persons of whom these three things are *actually* true that the ensuing exhortations can be obeyed, only in such can the warnings bear fruit.

ii. *The Apostle of our Confession.* What Moses was of old

to Israel that, and very much more, Jesus is to the people of God to-day. The children of God's covenant with Abraham their father had sunk in Egypt into heathen darkness (Josh. 24: 14). They did not know even the name of the God of their ancestors (Ex. 3: 13). They were enslaved by the religion, vices, and tyranny of Egypt. Moses became God's commissioned messenger (apostle) to enlighten, redeem, and emancipate them.

He enlightened them by his words, redeemed them from the capital punishment due to sin by means of the blood of the passover lamb, and led them into freedom by the passage through the Red Sea, their baptism (I Cor. 10: 2) into companionship with him in his separation from Egypt. Thus under his leadership they became partakers of the earthly calling and earthly privileges of their ancestors.

All this, only in deeper and higher measure, Jesus is to us to-day. He brings a fuller knowledge of God, making known to us the name of God as Father (John 17: 6, 26). He has wrought a fuller, even an eternal redemption (9: 12); with introduction to the richer blessings of the new covenant, both for the inner life now, and with nobler prospects, even the heavenly, for the future. And as it was necessary for each Israelite to trust, follow, and obey Moses if he would enjoy in fact the advantages of the new position into which the grace of God had called him, and which the power of God could assure to him, so must we set our undivided attention on Jesus. For just as through failure to trust and obey Moses many Israelites, though redeemed by blood, and set apart to God through their baptism, failed to enjoy the advantages of that position, even so must we give all heed lest we fall away and lose our heavenly privileges. If this is not the argument of these chapters they seem to have no definite meaning or force.

Yet as failure to enjoy the blessings possible in the wilderness, or to secure possession of the land of promise, did not undo the redemption by blood from temporal death in Egypt, so neither does failure to attain to the heavenly prospects forfeit the redemption from eternal death secured by the precious blood of Christ.

iii. The *High Priest of our Confession.* Israel needed not only a God-given Leader to regulate their affairs for God, but also a God-given Priest to regulate their affairs with God. Two lawyers were discussing whether man needs a priest in relation to God; the Catholic said Yes, the Protestant No. A well-known Q.C. offered the opinion that the Catholic had the best of the argument, that man does need a priest; but, he added, that where he differed was that the Catholic had the wrong

priest. He said that many years before he had committed his soul's affairs to the Lord Jesus Christ as his priest, and he needed no human priest.

It has been usual to view Moses as the type of Christ as God's Messenger (Apostle) and Aaron as the type of the High Priest, and in ch. 5 Aaron is thus used. Yet it may be well to recall that Moses was the priest, and the chief priest, in Israel before ever Aaron was appointed. It was Moses who instructed the people as to the offering of the Passover sacrifice (Exod. 12: 21). It was he who led the priestly worship and praise for deliverance at the Sea (Exod. 15: 1). It was he who built the altar that celebrated the victory over Amalek (Exod. 17: 15, 16). Moses announced to the whole people that, upon condition of obedience, God would regard them as a kingdom of priests (Exod. 19: 5, 6). It was Moses who sanctified the people to be ready to meet their God (Exod. 19: 14).

At Sinai it was Moses, and Moses alone, who drew near unto God as representing the nation; who again built an altar; who directed younger men in the priestly work of offering sacrifices at the foot of Sinai, thus acting as being himself in some sort chief priest; and he it was who sprinkled the blood of the covenant upon the book and the people (Exod. 24: 1–8). There were priests before the law was given, and Moses directed them (Exod. 19: 22), as their chief.

It was Moses who rendered to the people the priestly service of bringing to them the laws of their God and teaching them His statutes. This was priestly work, even as it is written: "the priest's lips should keep knowledge, and they should seek the law at his mouth; for he is the messenger of Jehovah of hosts" (Mal. 2: 7).

It was Moses who had access to that earlier tent of meeting which preceded the Tabernacle (Exod. 33: 7–11), and who also became so striking a type of Christ ascended by drawing near to God on the top of the mount. On different occasions of awful peril he interceded for the sinning people and secured their pardon (Exod. 32: 30–35; Num. 14: 13–35). This pardon, however, did but exempt them from the capital sentence, but left them subject to needed chastisement. Comp. David's case, II Sam. 12: 13, 14. In this also Moses and his intercession were an exact parallel to our great Priest; for He interceded for Peter, but did not seek his exemption from severe sifting by Satan (Luke 22: 31, 32); nor did his work on high preserve Ananias and Sapphira (Acts 5), or the evil living believers in Corinth, from death or lesser chastisement (I Cor. 11: 30); and our epistle (12: 1–13) will emphasize that those who are the sons of God, and so subjects of the priestly ministry of the

Son, must nevertheless expect the Father's scourging so that they may partake of His holiness.

And very striking it is, as showing Moses' rank as the true chief priest, that it was he who inducted Aaron and his sons into the office, offering the sacrifices on their behalf, when the time came for one family to exercise the priestly office because the people as a nation proved unfit for so sacred a service (Lev. 8).

Thus was Moses at the first both Prophet, and Priest, as also King in Jeshurun (Deut. 33: 5), and was thus as full a type as possible of the Son of God. It may be, therefore, that in our passage it is Moses alone who is in view as apostle and high priest, and that later, in ch. 5, Aaron is brought in as type when the duties of the priest are to be considered in detail.

iv. *Fidelity Indispensable.* The supreme feature of Moses and of Christ in these offices was *fidelity*. God laid on Moses extraordinary responsibilities and burdens. No other man ever undertook so severe a task. But God had reared him in Egypt and disciplined and tempered him in the desert. In the royal palace he had learned to govern men, in the desert to govern himself. The former developed strength and confidence, the latter weakness and dependence. The benefit of the earlier years remained, sanctified and safeguarded by humility gained in the desert, and he was found faithful in all God's affairs.

Jesus, the Man, is also faithful. From eternity dwelling in the eternal glory of God, the Doer of all the works of God, the Ruler of all creation, He learned by experience on earth what it is to obey and suffer. He was tested at all points by all means, and was proved faithful in all things.

It is this that we are called to ponder. We too are destined to rule, we too must be trained to obey. We are, and are yet to be, stewards of God, and it is required in stewards that one be found faithful (I Cor. 4: 2). "The fruit of the Spirit is (not faith, as A.V., but) faithfulness", dependability (see *pistis* in LXX, Lam. 3: 23; Jer. 5: 1). I watched a managing director write a letter of commendation for a clerk who was leaving. It concluded: "Mr. X. can be relied upon to carry out anything he undertakes to carry out." The Christians here addressed were being hard-pressed by the Devil to show themselves undependable toward God. Let them therefore consider the faithfulness of Jesus under all the mighty trials of His pathway in the same desert, as well as in His present patience and service; and then the Lord would direct their hearts into His love and into the patience of Christ (II Thess. 3: 5). Thus by the very patience of Christ filling them, they will wait steadfastly

for His and their day, even as He is patiently waiting for it, and will not be "moved away from the *hope* of the gospel" (Col. 1: 23).

v. *The House of God.* A house is a building where a person dwells and can be found. God being spirit dwells in a spirit dwelling, and especially in and among living persons, manifesting Himself to and in their spirits, causing them to display His own glory, His holiness. A material dwelling is not essential to such a dwelling of God on earth (Acts 7: 47–50). Such a structure as tabernacle or temple is simply a condescension to man's limited ability to recognize God as at hand in spirit. In the finally perfected conditions of heaven there will be no temple (Rev. 21: 22).

It was intended at the first that it should be thus with Israel. "When Israel went forth out of Egypt . . . *Judah* became His sanctuary, Israel His dominion" (Ps. 114: 1, 2). The earthly building was but a visible exhibition of the existing spiritual reality, the presence of God: it did not create the latter but merely displayed it to the eye.

The church of God is now to be such a structure: "that thou mayest know how it behoves to behave in the house of God, [the] church of [the] living God, pillar and support of the truth" (I Tim. 3: 15); *i.e.* it is the office of God's people, singly and unitedly, to exhibit and maintain before men the truth concerning God and His Son, and to demonstrate His presence among His people. One instance of this dwelling of God with His church is that, when Christians are together, and their worship and teaching are ordered and energized by the Spirit of God, the unbeliever will be constrained to exclaim "*God is among you* indeed" (I Cor. 14: 24, 25). A severe test this of the actual spiritual state of a church.

This figure of a house is the first and chief figure to teach the privileges attaching to association with the Son of God; as He said: "On this the rock [the truth of His own Messiahship and Deity confessed] I will *build* My church" (Matt. 16: 18). It was employed frequently by Christ and the apostles (Luke 12: 35–48; Matt. 24: 45–51; Eph. 2: 19–21; etc.). It is a loss when this first and principal figure of a building is neglected and the figure of the "body" is overstressed, as if it expresses *all* truth as to relationship with Christ.

It is to be observed that "house" often merges into and means "household," the inhabitants rather than the structure. Thus Nathan said to David, "Jehovah will make thee a house" (II Sam. 7: 11); and so in Eph. 2 cited: "ye are of the household of God." Over this household the Son of God is the sole Ruler (ver. 6). In this sphere He alone holds rights direct from the

Father of the family: all lesser authority (as, *e.g.* of elders) is derived from the Son, and is to be exercised strictly according to His directions, without variation caused by human opinion or preference (see 8: 5). Here is one chief matter in which faithfulness is required from His servants, and far too seldom has it been found. Man's desires and ideas have largely ousted the rule of the Son as Head over God's house, wronging Him and ruining the house.

Of old Moses acted for God in the capacity of chief servant, but Jesus acts as Son over the Father's household. Moses dealt with things then present as indications in advance of nobler things to follow (3: 5): Christ has now introduced those higher and heavenly arrangements, and will duly bring them to eternal completion. How blessed to be dutiful and faithful and to walk in this divine sphere, rather than to turn back to the earthly, imperfect, and transitory foreshadowings of it. Yet Christendom has largely done this, by its resumption of the visible and fleshly in worship, and in the arrangements for what it calls God's house. Stately edifices, elaborate ceremonies, splendid vestments, a caste of priests or ministers, altars, sacrifices, incense, music—what is all this but a lapse back from the heavenly and spiritual to the elements and weakness of the Mosaic and external which Christ abrogated (John 4: 19–24)? It was against this that the Writer uttered his warnings and appeals: would that they had been generally heeded, and that the household had held fast to the *Head* of the house.

2. *The Warnings.*

Let us give most earnest attention to these. They are four, based upon the conditions for sharing in i. the house of God; ii. companionship with the Messiah; iii. for reaching Canaan; iv. for sharing in God's sabbath rest.

i. "*Whose house are we IF*" (3: 6).

(1) *Judah God's Sanctuary.* Writing from the distance of many centuries the psalmist here cited could say that it was "when Israel went forth out of Egypt" that "Judah became His sanctuary." Yet in the fact this was not so till a whole year after they left Egypt (Exod. 40: 17). It was not till the first day in the second year that the tabernacle was reared up and God descended to dwell among them. This is seen in three further particulars: (*a*) that to meet God Moses had to ascend the mount (Exod. 19: 20, etc.): (*b*) that the earlier tent, where Moses alone met God face to face, was beyond the limits of the camp (Exod. 33: 7–11). These audiences were occasional, and the cloud, the sign of the presence of God, descended on those occasions. (*c*) It was on the summit of Sinai that God

said to Moses "Let them make Me a sanctuary that I may dwell among them" (Exod. 25: 8).

(2) *Redemption and Baptism necessary but inadequate.*

Thus redemption and baptism (of both of which Israel had partaken in type) do not of themselves assure the indwelling of God in a believer. The first disciples were sincere believers in Christ, devoted to Him, and used in service, long before Pentecost. Comp. also Acts 8: 4–17; 19: 1–6. The case of Cornelius and his friends shows that the indwelling may take place at the very moment of first faith in Christ (Acts 10: 44–48); the other instances show that it may come later. But until that indwelling at Pentecost the first Christians, though regenerate, were not yet a house unto God, and until an individual believer is so indwelled neither is he.

(3) *Israel nearly missed this honour.*

Israel only narrowly escaped the entire forfeiture of the dignity of becoming a house unto God. Because of their sin in making the golden calf God said (Exod. 33: 2), "I will send *an angel* before thee . . . for *I* will not go up in the midst of thee; for thou art a stiffnecked people; lest I consume thee in the way." But Moses felt that no angel could afford him sufficient support for his heavy responsibilities, and he argued the case before God until the promise was given, "My presence shall go [*i.e.* in the midst of the people, see ver. 3], and I will give thee rest" (Exod. 33: 12–16), that is, while still carrying his load.

(4) *Israel twice lost the honour.*

God continued to dwell with Israel until they in their blindness and carnality trusted in the symbol of His local presence, the ark of the covenant, and not in Himself; whereupon, suffering them to take their own course, "He delivered His strength into captivity" by the Philistines, and "forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh" (I Sam. 4; Ps. 78: 60–62; Jer. 7: 12). Thenceforth He was not in their midst, and consequently they ceased to be to Him a house. It was so for just over a hundred years until He graciously descended in glory to Solomon's temple. Here He dwelled until the wickedness of His people caused Him to abandon that house also and give it up to destruction by Nebuchadnezzar (Ezek. 10: 18, 19; 11: 23). Never since has God dwelled among Israel or have they been His house, for the Glory did not return to the second temple.

(5) *Applications to ourselves.*

Thus the type shows that the indwelling of God may be withdrawn. It had not been possible for the Chaldeans to destroy the temple while the God of glory was there. It had not been possible for Satan to destroy the bodies of the wicked brethren at Corinth while the Spirit of God was indwelling them as His sanctuary (I Cor. 5: 3–5; 11: 30). An assembly

also may corporately forfeit the presence of the Lord and cease to be His sanctuary. Thus the Lord declared Himself to be outside of the church at Laodicea (Rev. 3: 20).

Surely it cannot be fairly doubted that this corresponds to patent facts and explains them. There are men once owned much by God as His servants, once so filled with His Spirit that men came into contact with God in them, but upon whom for long years "Ichabod" has been plainly written, The glory is departed! There are Sardian churches of whom it is sadly true that they have a name to live and are really dead (Rev. 3: 1). But if they are dead then the Spirit of life cannot be in them. It is spiritual folly to maintain a theory against facts. Wisdom admits the facts and accepts the remedies (Rev. 3: 3, 18, 20).

Every believer might be indwelled by the Spirit of God, but not every believer is; every believer might know this indwelling to the end of life, but not every believer does. And hence the powerful warning before us: "Whose house are *we* [emphatic] IF the boldness and the boasting of the hope [of sharing the glory of God; see Rom. 5: 2] steadfast unto the end we should hold fast." The aorist subjunctive used *kataschōmen* regards the holding fast as one continuous act completed at the end of each life, and the verb takes emphasis at the close of the sentence. "If" with the subjunctive declares a condition. Being to God as a dwelling place depends upon steadfastness of hope and of witness to that hope. Similarly does Col. 1: 22, 23 lay down that our being "presented before" the Lord, "holy and without blemish and unreprovable," depends upon the same steadfastness: "*if so be* that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the *hope* of the good tidings which ye heard."

By the third century the *hope* of the gospel had been too generally abandoned, though they still professed the *faith*; they avowed salvation to come through Christ and His death, but had given up His return as the true hope of the Christian. In consequence the many who named the Name readily accepted the proposal of the world to become the official State religion, and the presence and power of God in the churches that did so soon ceased. Thenceforth it has been the minority that have confessed the hope and walked in Abraham's path as a stranger among the peoples, and always it has been among such that the spiritual glory of God has been displayed.

Israel and we may remain the people of God—they beloved still for the fathers' sake and we for Christ's sake—yet cease to be to God for a house, a dwelling place. As we have seen, the tabernacle and temple are used in the New Testament as types of the believer and the church; but it is for us to benefit

by the *whole* typical history, its course and conclusion, not only its glorious commencement, and to profit by its warnings as well as its comfort.

As regards the church of this age and its testimony, it began with Pentecost, it will end with apostasy (Matt. 24: 12; II Thess. 2: 1–3; I Tim. 4: 1–3). The grave peril is that we may "fall from our own steadfastness" (II Pet. 3: 17). Whether one will reach the glory and rule the nations depends upon whether he overcomes and keeps the Lord's works *unto the end* (Matt. 24: 13; Rev. 2: 26). Salvation from perdition is definitely without works (Rom. 4: 1–8), and to teach otherwise is to falsify the gospel: but equally definitely ruling with Christ depends on works, as Rev. 2: 26 states, and to teach otherwise is to falsify our hope, by putting it on a false basis. Here it is *fidelity* that matters, in us as in Moses and in Christ.

ii. *Messiah's Companions.* (3: 14). Moses had his personal attendant, Joshua. David had the "king's friend," Hushai (I Chron. 27: 33). Rehoboam had "the young men that were grown up with him, that stood before him" (II Chron. 10: 8). The Lord in His kingdom will have those who "walk about with Him in white," arrayed thus in white garments then because they overcame now in the battle with sin and did not defile their garments here (Rev. 3: 4, 5). They are "the called and chosen and *faithful*" (Rev. 17: 14). *It is faithfulness that matters.*

To the little band who, in spite of failings and failures, had gone through with their Teacher and Lord *to the end*, He said: "I come again, and will receive you *unto Myself*, that *where I am* [at any time] ye may be also" (John 14: 3). He had said before: "If *Me* any one serve, *Me* let him follow; and *where I am* there shall also My *servant* be: if any one serve *Me*, him will the Father honour" (John 12: 26). Complacency makes this to read, If any one believes on Christ as Saviour, he shall be with Christ and be honoured by the Father. But the Lord said that companionship with Himself, and being honoured by the Father, results from serving and following. And the context is that following Christ involves being a corn of wheat that dies to itself that it may live in others. Therefore let the believer ask: Whose interests am *I* serving: Christ's or my own, Christ's or those of this world? Whose maxims, whose example, whose ambitions and ends do I follow: those of Christ or of others? In the nature of the case only one who does literally follow the steps of another can arrive where that other arrives. Another path will lead to another place.

The summit of the Christian's true ambition is the immediate presence and continual company of the Son of God in glory.

The honour and the bliss of this is otherwise pictured as the mutual joy of bridegroom and bride.

"He and I in that bright glory
One great joy shall share;
Mine to be for ever with Him,
His that I am there."

Elsewhere this dignity is set forth as sitting with the King on the royal dais at a banquet (Luke 22: 30), and again, as sharing His throne (Rev. 3: 21). In all such relationships the dominant thought is that of sharing habitually the personal company of the Lord. And this is the distinctive element in the word *companions, i.e.* being habitually in the company of one another; and it is equally the distinctive thought of the word thus translated *metochos.*

To his translation of Heb. 3: 1, where this word is found ("*partakers* of a heavenly calling"), Darby adds the note: "Here *metochoi,* who have been made, called to be, partakers of it. They had been *koinōnoi* of Israel's rights." These two words are indeed so similar in meaning as both to be rendered *partakers* and *partners.* But one may be a "sleeping" partner, and never be seen at the business; but the *metochoi* would be habitually together conducting affairs in common. The word is used in the LXX at Eccles. 4: 10, and Ps. 45: 7 before considered.

Too many Christians are content to have a share in the "common salvation," and show little desire or care to enjoy the company of the Lord or of their fellow-partners. How shall such indifference here lead to intimacy there? No; ch. 1: 9, using the same word, speaks of the Lord having *companions*; our present verse (3: 14) declares that "*companions* [emphatic] of the Christ [the Messiah] we have become *if at least* [*eanper*] the beginning of the assurance unto the end steadfast we may hold." We "*have* become" such companions as regards the calling and purpose of God, and we may enjoy this privilege already in heart fellowship with Christ: we *shall* become such in outward and visible and glorified reality IF we are steadfast unto the end of our course. It is reaching well *the end* of the race that matters as to gaining the prize. He who fails in staying power, and does not reach the goal, does not lose his *life,* but he *does* lose the prize. It will be much to be in the kingdom of the saved: it will be far, far more to be a companion of the King. Ponder this second IF!

Note on *eanper,* if. It comes here and at 6: 3 only in the New Testament. It is not found in LXX, but Grimm-Thayer

here is wrong in stating it is not in the Old Testament Apocrypha. It is in 2 Macc. 3: 38, and the passage distinctly shows its emphatic sense. Heliodorous had been sent by the king of Syria to rob the temple at Jerusalem. Angels had appeared and flogged him nearly to death, his life being spared only at the intercession of the high priest. Upon the king asking him who should next be sent on the errand he answered: "If thou hast any enemy or conspirator against the State, send him thither, and thou shalt receive him back well scourged, *if* he even escape with his life" (*eanper kai diasōtheiē*).

iii. *Reaching Canaan. "they were not able to enter in"* (3: 19). Nothing is clearer than that every redeemed Israelite that left Egypt had a right to enter Canaan. The purpose and promise of God were universal to them as sons of Abraham. Their title was beyond question. Yet nothing is plainer than that of the 600,000 adult men who left Egypt only two, Joshua and Caleb, did in fact enter Canaan. The histories of this failure are narrated with significant fulness (Num. 13 and 14). The grounds of failure and of success are stated with unmistakable distinctness. The later references to it are striking and solemn. Ps. 95 impressed it upon Israel; Heb. 3 and 4 impress it upon us; and the detail use of the failure in I Cor. 10 emphasizes that the warning is as fully applicable to Gentile Christians as to converts from Judaism.

That Canaan must be *won* is as certain as that it may be lost. That the promised power of God was adequate and available to enable them all to take possession was no guarantee that they would get possession. In the cases of the few who did so the praise belonged to their God of grace Who gave them the victory (Ps. 44: 3). That the majority did not reach the land was, as we are here told, because of unbelief and disobedience.

What is the antitype of Canaan for the Christian? Whatever it is will have three dominant features. (1) It will be a gift of covenant grace, and therefore undeserved. (2) It must be won by conflict. No more is possessed than the warrior sets his foot upon (Josh. 1: 3). (3) It may be lost by distrust of God and disobedience to His commands.

The two last particulars show that neither justification nor eternal life is in view, for these are described plainly as "free" gifts (Rom. 3: 24; 6: 23). "Free" (*dōrean, charisma*) means free of conditions, what is termed in law an absolute gift, as distinct from a conditional gift; a gift which therefore can neither be withdrawn by the donor nor forfeited by the receiver. See *Note A* after ch. XIII, p. 196.

What, then, does Canaan represent to-day? A careful examination of the records will show that the whole national history of Israel, from redemption in Egypt to Solomon, is one continuous type. Parts of this type have been treated helpfully, especially the tabernacle; but it needs an Andrew Jukes to expound this subject as comprehensively, as spiritually, as profitably as in his *Types of Genesis* he dealt with the long history from Adam to Joseph.

Slavery in Egypt is Rom. 1 and 2: redemption by blood is Rom. 3 to 5: freedom from Egypt, by passing through the Red Sea, is Rom. 6, baptism into fellowship with Christ in His death and risen life: the wilderness is Rom. 7: the crossing the Jordan is Rom. 8: 1–17, experimental transference from being "in flesh" (the wilderness) to being "in spirit" (the land of promise), and thus becoming free from bondage and its fear, even as Israel lost the reproach of having been a slave race by being circumcised at Gilgal, at the entrance of the land. This leads to Rom. 8: 15, 16, the joy of adoption and communion, so as to become heirs of the goodly land thus reached. This in turn involves suffering with Christ (Rom. 8: 17, 18), as Israel in the land shared with Joshua the sufferings of the wars of possession. The history of *Judges* pictures the groaning and travailing of the church of God not yet perfected (Rom. 8: 22, 23), in which experiences there develop the still remaining weaknesses and failures of our mortal state, and in which the power of the hope of perfect possession and rest supports the godly (Rom. 8: 24, 25).

For the Christian this hope is to be realized at the "redemption of the body" (Rom. 8: 23). Thus the sequence of thought has reached the second coming of our Lord. Now His own final word as to that His advent is that He will come as "the root and offspring of *David*" (Rev. 22: 16); that is to say, that David in his rejection, hardships, and wars was a type of Christ, now rejected and hidden, but whose public appearing will secure victory over Satan, with liberation for the earth, and glory for those who fought and suffered with Him. Thus did David's return to public life free Palestine from the Philistine oppression and bring to glory in his kingdom the men who had shared his rejection.

But Rom. 8: 19–21 adds the material feature that at that revelation of our now absent Lord, with the many sons who by then will have been brought unto glory, there is to be a releasing of creation itself from its pains and groans. Previous prophecies had foretold this, as Ps. 72: 16; Isa. 11: 6–9; 30: 23–26; 55: 12, 13; etc. In other words the period we have now reached in this line of thought is the millennial reign of Christ, the Prince of peace, the foreshadowing of which was the earlier

part of Solomon's reign of peace and glory. But failure marked the close of that period, and failure will mark the close of the Millennium (Rev. 20: 7–10); whereupon will follow a final judgment and final reconstruction of heaven and earth, a new and eternal order.

Thus Canaan as a type does not extend beyond the days of Solomon, and therefore is not a picture of things eternal, but of two things: (1) of the present era of spiritual conflict as in *Joshua* and *Judges* and in Eph. 6. In this experience rich knowledge is gained of the power and goodness of God, but it is accompanied with groaning: but (2), and more fully, Canaan prefigured that millennial period, the era upon which hope is called to fix itself, even upon "the favour that is being brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1: 13).

Seeing that failure and sorrow marked Canaan through the whole past it cannot be a type of the eternal ages, for these will never be marred by failure. It follows that it is the millennial glory which must be won and may be lost, won by faith that obeys, lost by distrust and disobedience. To this there is no alternative except the forfeiture of eternal life and salvation entire, which meaning has been based upon our present chapters but which we think unscriptural.

This urgent theme will come again in ch. VI, where Israel's fearful failure will be stated in detail and be applied to us of this age.

iv. *The Rest of God.* "*There remaineth therefore a sabbatism to the people of God.*" (4: 9).

(1) Restfulness of nature is an essential quality of God. A restless, anxious being could not be God. This eternal quietness of spirit results from omnipotence. The consciousness of possessing entirely adequate resources prevents fear of contingencies; indeed, foreknowledge allows of no contingencies.

(2) But rest of spirit is compatible with activity. When sin had disturbed the original order of creation (Gen. 1: 2), God *acted,* became active, "the Spirit of God *moved,*" and "God *said,*" and thus set His energy in motion, and the reconditioning of heaven and earth was effected (Gen. 1).

(3) That was accomplished in the six days, and on the seventh day "God rested from all His work" done in those six days (Gen. 2: 2).

(4) But again sin wrought ruin (Gen. 3), and again God resumed activity to restore order through redemption and regeneration. This activity of God is still proceeding, even as the Son said when here, "My Father worketh even until now,

and [therefore] I work" (John 5: 17). This working of God will continue until that day when the Son will take over the active government of heaven and earth. Until then the Father acts, even as He said to the Son, "*Sit* Thou at My right hand until *I* make Thine enemies Thy footstool" (Ps. 110: 1; Matt. 22: 44; and in Heb. 1: 13). This is another key word to the plans of God.

(5) When this end shall have been achieved, and the enemies of God and His Son have been subdued, then will God return unto His rest, as it is written: "*He will rest* in His love" (Zeph. 3: 17). Now the time contemplated in this scripture is when Jerusalem is to be saved, Israel's captivity to be ended, and that people to be a joy unto Jehovah (vers. 14 to 20), and He Himself be dwelling in their midst. This supremacy of Christ and restoration of Israel is the beginning of the Millennium, which therefore is the era of God's rest, His sabbatism.

This is necessitated by the very word itself, for a *sabbath* rest is a rest that follows labour, and therefore cannot be that original, eternal rest of God mentioned in (1) above, for *that* rest *preceded* God's activities, is never disturbed, and is not a *sabbatismos*. Neither can the word intend the final epoch of new heavens and earth. That will indeed be a rest after labour, but it will not be the hour when the Son will cease to sit at the right hand of the Father or the day when Israel will be restored nationally. These events usher in the millennial rest, not the eternal. God will rest when He shall have installed the Son as again the active Agent of the Godhead (Rev. 4 and 5). Thenceforth, throughout the Millennium, the Son will carry forward the purposes of the Father, and at its close will complete them by establishing new heavens and earth.

(6) It is evident that Joshua and Israel did not reach *this* rest. "The land had rest from war" (Josh. 11: 23), but that rest was incomplete and was temporary, for the conquest of the land was incomplete (Judges 1). If that rest had been the rest of God spoken of in Num. 14, argues our Writer, God would not have been heard several centuries later speaking again of His rest and offering it to men, as in Ps. 95. The conclusion is that therefore there still remains a sabbath rest for the people of God.

(7) But it is vital to recognize that this rest is future to our present age. It is not that rest of conscience toward God which the soul gains by reposing on the sacrifice of Christ, nor is it that peace of mind which is promised concerning the trials of the desert way and which trust on God confers (Isa. 26: 3, 4; Phil. 4: 4–7). These are a blessed foretaste of the other, but are not the sabbath rest of God. For these are *our* rest in God,

the other God calls His own rest, "My rest." This cannot intend rest of conscience or freedom from fear of foes or of to-morrow, such distresses being wholly impossible to God.

The English Versions greatly obscure the meaning here by inserting a very small word, reading "we who have believed *do* enter into that rest" (ver. 3). The Greek says: "For enter into the rest we (or those) having believed." This last verb is an *aorist* participle, which shows, as the context here indicates, that the whole course of faith is viewed as a completed act of faith. The course is finished, the goal is reached, and faith has characterized the runner to the end.

This is the more abundantly clear from ver. 10: "For the one entering into His [God's] rest, also himself rested from his works as God did from His own works," "Rested" is again an aorist, and signifies that the believer has laboured and has reached once for all his rest. But this is precisely what no saint does while life on earth lasts. Now is our period of toil and conflict, and to us who are afflicted rest comes "at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from heaven" (II Thess. 1: 7).

(8) It appears therefore that the full intent of God's solemn words to Israel in the wilderness meant more than that they should not enter Canaan at that time, but also that they should not share in that larger and more glorious era to which God was looking forward as to be His own rest, that is, the time and rule of Messiah. This need cause no surprise, for it is certain that both Abraham and Moses had been instructed as to that future era, even as Christ said: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8: 56). Now the period of the Lord's humiliation was not "His day" but part of man's day. The day of the Lord is the chief Old Testament term for His second coming and rule in glory.

Likewise with Moses. It was the prospect of reward in Messiah's day that strengthened him to bear the loss and reproach of espousing the cause of Messiah's people (11: 25, 26); and the close of his final prophecies shows how much he had been taught as to that era and that he passed on this knowledge to Israel (Lev. 26: 40–45; Deut. 32: 35–43; 33: 26–29).

It is clear that Israelities of like faith with Abraham were governed by like faith as to Messiah's day. This our Writer will display in ch. 11. It is the great theme of all the prophets, and of them all Christ has said that they shall share in the kingdom with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, as also many from all lands; while many of the "sons of the kingdom," the natural heirs to it, shall forfeit that era through lack of faith (Matt. 8: 10–12; Luke 13: 28, 29). Joshua the high priest and Zerubbabel are promised a share in that day as their reward for

fidelity here (Zech. 3: 6–10; Hag. 2: 23). Daniel also (Dan. 12: 13), as well as all who, like Abraham, have foregone this present world to lay up treasure in heaven (Matt. 19: 21; Luke 18: 22; and contexts), and have so acted as to secure their recompense at the resurrection of the righteous, the first resurrection (Luke 14: 14).

(9) To the line of thought here being developed, concerning sharing or not sharing in the millennial kingdom, it will be objected that it will put the Christian under law as regards this prospect, and will negative grace. This is a misconception. The fact that Abraham and Moses lived in the light and power of Christ's day before the law had been given at Sinai shows the true grounds of their hope to have been independent of that law. The argument of Gal. 3: 15–4: 31 applies here. The law came in later for certain needful ends, but it did not affect the preceding covenant with Abraham. This latter included, not only justification but the promise of being "heir of the world" (Rom. 4: 13) and so of sharing in the day of Messiah, for only then will all the families of the earth be blessed under the covenant of God with Abraham (Gen. 12: 3).

Again, it was before Sinai that Moses accepted the reproach of Christ, looking on to His day for the reward.

Again, Joshua and Caleb reached that typical promised land, not because they were punctilious observers of the Levitical law, but on quite independent grounds. These were as follows (Num. 14: 7–9; 13: 30):

(*a*) They set a just value upon their inheritance: "The land is an exceeding good land." (*b*) They had a just confidence in God: "If Jehovah delight in us, then He will bring us into this land." (*c*) They had a just fear of the sin of rebelling against God: "only rebel not against Jehovah." (*d*) They had a just disregard of enemies and obstacles: "neither fear ye the people of the land; for they are bread for us: their defence is removed from over them [that is, their demon gods will prove powerless], and Jehovah is with us: fear them not . . . Let us go up at once and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it."

By contrast, the rest of the men of war (*a*) "despised the pleasant land," (*b*) believed not God's word of promise to give them that land (Ps. 106: 24), and "believed not in His wondrous works" (Ps. 78: 32; Num. 14: 11). (*c*) They were rebellious from the Red Sea and onwards (Ps. 106: 7), and at Kadesh Barnea they "hearkened not unto the voice of Jehovah" when He bade them to go up to the land (Ps. 106: 7, 25): and (*d*) in consequence of this lack of faith in God they were fearfully afraid of their foes. The question, therefore, as to getting their inheritance was their heart attitude to that inheritance

and to God Who had opened the way to it. And we see that through *that* disobedience, and through unbelief as to *that* promise, they were not able to enter in(3: 18, 19).

(10) An all-inclusive fact and principle are stated in the inspired words: "So then they that are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham" . . . and if ye are Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3: 9, 29). All blessings, earthly and heavenly, to all men, Jews and Gentiles, flow through the covenant of grace God made with Abraham. But each who would inherit must exercise the faith of the faithful Abraham (Rom. 4: 12, 13), even the kind of faith that made him a pilgrim and alien as to this scene where men distrust his God.

This covenant is revocable as against the distrustful and rebellious of the children of Abraham. God had ratified that covenant with an oath; but upon the rebellion at Kadesh Barnea God cancelled that oath by another oath to the contrary (Num. 14: 23, 28; Ezek. 20: 5, 6, 15). There is here no inconsistency on the part of God. To the covenant with Abraham that his seed should possess the land God had added a condition that they should be circumcised (Gen. 17). Now Rom. 2: 28, 29 shows that circumcision to be valid and effective must include circumcision of the heart, not merely of the flesh, and be shown by a man keeping the law of God in spirit, not merely in the letter. These men who came out of Egypt did not fulfil this condition. Their rejection of Moses showed they were uncircumcised in heart, as were their later descendants who similarly crucified their Messiah (Acts 7: 51). Ezek. 20 shows this at length. And therefore Moses said to the following generation: "Circumcise therefore . . . your heart, and be no more stiffnecked" (Deut. 10: 16). It were immoral in God to grant favours in disregard of morality in man. He cannot thus encourage sin in His people. God will gladly circumcise the heart, and so make possible love and obedience; but if we will not consent to this it cannot be done, and then there will not be found in us the indispensable condition for inheriting the blessing.

"The righteousness of Christ is necessary to *entitle* us to heaven, personal holiness to *qualify* us for it. Without the former we could have no *claim* to glory; without the latter we could have no *fitness* for it" (Wesley: *Wesley Studies*, p. 205).[1]

In consequence, God said to the 600,000 "ye shall know My alienation," *i.e.* as the margin, "the revoking of My

[1] I use this terse statement simply as it stands in the work cited. Its context I have not seen.

promise," for though that promise was confirmed by an oath, it was limited by a condition (Num. 14: 34). The word *alienation* is noteworthy. It comes elsewhere only in Job 33: 10, where the afflicted saint expressed his misconception of God's ways by saying "He findeth against me causes of alienation, He counteth me for His enemy." In Job's case that was pure misapprehension, but as to Israel in the wilderness, some seven centuries later Isaiah said with sorrow that, in spite of God's most abundant mercy and care, "they rebelled, and grieved His holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy, and Himself fought against them" (Isa. 63: 9, 10). What Job wrongly feared was his case, was actually their case.

Thus their failure to reach both the typical rest and to secure the millennial rest is here solemnly urged upon us as a warning and an incentive. It is not at all a question of them having been under law and we being under grace, for as regards the promised land, the rest of God, the heirship of the world, they were not heirs through Sinai but through Abraham, and through grace, as we also are and on the same terms and conditions, even that we must walk in the faith of our father Abraham.

Who would share Abraham's blessing
Must Abraham's path pursue;
A pilgrim and a stranger,
Like him must journey *through.*
The foes must be encountered,
The dangers must be passed;
Only a faithful soldier
Receives the crown at last. *Paul Gerhardt.*

3. *The Practical Applications.*

i. "*Harden not your hearts*" 3: 8. The call of God ran counter to their inclinations. It was a clear command; Go up! but it threatened trouble and danger, which the weakness of unbelief could not face, so they hardened their wills against it. Of this God said: "this people *despise* Me . . . *tempt* Me . . . *murmur* against Me . . . *reject* the land . . . [they are] an *evil* congregation" (Num. 14: 11, 22, 27, 31, 35). This is God's view of unbelief and disobedience.

ii. Are there not Christians who have distinctly heard the call of God to Go up!—up into a higher, richer spiritual life with Himself, and to devotion to His will and His cause among men, but for whom the cost seemed too high? It involved loss of friends, or marriage, or business prospects, and portion and honour in this world and, perhaps there

threatened also overt opposition, persecution, disgrace. Have not true children of God failed at such tests? Alas, I could narrate cases from personal knowledge.

Such turning back from the holy commandment involves a deliberate decision, a deliberate hardening of the will against God: this provokes Him to holy wrath, it greatly displeases Him (3: 8–10); it is described in ver. 12 as "apostasy from God, the living." Apostasy is to take up a different position from that formerly occupied. Faith adopts the attitude of obedience to God; rebellion is apostasy, the reverse attitude to faith, the contrary attitude to that of Abraham, Moses, and Christ, each of whom is described as *faithful.*

iii. This hardening of the heart results from the deceitfulness of sin (13). At such crises of apostasy the believer may beguile himself by most deceitful reasonings in his heart. He may say: I am saved from hell; other things are not of great consequence! or, I am a subject of sovereign grace; these fearful warnings *cannot* apply to me, but must refer to the unregenerate! or, I belong to the body of Christ, and I *must* share in the first resurrection or His body would be incomplete! or, God is not a stern taskmaster, but a loving Father; He will not think too hardly of His child for loving the pleasant things of time: indeed, are they not His own gifts for my enjoyment? or, The letter kills, it is the spirit that matters, so I need not pay too strict obedience to the letter of Scripture! or, Quite good people act as I propose to do: indeed, Joshua and Caleb are a negligible minority! or, If I take the course I wish—if I marry an unconverted partner, or if I enter a business partnership with such, I may win him or her for Christ! or, If I make money and grow rich, I can do much good with it! or, I can use a high position in this world to promote morality!

By all such specious deceits, the more specious that in part they are perverted truths, the heart is hardened, the rebellious spirit is confirmed and may reach permanence, until the believer risks the solemn sentence "They shall not enter into My rest," but shall die in the wilderness; they shall never pass from Rom. 7 into Rom. 8! For it is only "if so be that we suffer with Christ that we shall be glorified with Him" (Rom. 8: 17). The spiritual desert is strewn with spiritual skeletons. The all-knowing God knows that they are those of His faithless children, and at last the Spirit of life shall breathe into them resurrection energy unto eternal life (John 5: 28, 29; 6: 39, 40, "I will raise him up *at the last day*"; Rev. 20: 5); but such will have missed the rest of God, to their permanent loss.

iv. Therefore the urgent word of Ps. 95, "To-day," is repeated in our passage no less than five times (3: 7, 13, 15;

4: 7, twice). To-day! Give immediate attention; render instant obedience to the call of God to go forward. Do this to-day "IF ye shall hear His voice" offering to you this noble prospect. Should you harden your heart perhaps He will not again give the call, or perchance you may have become dull of hearing (5: 11) and may not hear His voice; but if you do hear it, oh, "give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience" (4: 11). We, as they, have had good tidings preached unto us; let each see to it that the message enters an honest and good heart, there to be mixed with faith, the faith that at once obeys the call, otherwise that word will be but as indigestible food which does not profit the receiver; yea, let it be our care to unite at once by faith with that minority who have preceded us in giving to God full obedience and confidence.

Let us be encouraged by the fact that we shall join the minority. A great teacher said: "Brethren, we have a saying, Great is the truth and will prevail: but this is never so in this age; in this age truth is always with the minority; and so convinced am I of this, that if I find myself agreeing with the majority I make haste and get over to the other side, for I know I am wrong" (Dr. A. T. Pierson). The sabbath rest remains, the offer is open still: if it should be repeated to you personally, then oh, give diligence! Comp. II Pet. 1: 5–11, esp. 5 and 10.

v. 4: 12, 13. Obedience to the Word of God is the crucial matter. God is the living God, not a dead or quiescent Being. He cannot be ignored with impunity, not even by His children. He has living energy; power to succour, power to punish. His word likewise is a living word; it is never obsolete, inoperative, ineffective, a dead letter. It is active, two-edged, pointed; it cuts, it pierces, it dissects. Blessed are they who welcome its surgery, for it promotes health; miserable is he who resists its point and edge. For if the words of a sinful mortal can be sharp as a two-edged sword (Prov. 5: 4), how much more those of the sin-hating God.

This word of God enables us to distinguish between what in our thoughts and intentions is merely natural, of the soul, and what is spiritual, of the Spirit of life working in us. It is all too easy to be actuated mainly, or even only, by the instincts and notions of the natural man. It was very natural that Israel feared to face giants and attack walls fortified up to heaven. Only faith in God gave Caleb and Joshua victory over natural fear and inspired them with conquering courage.

The joints connect the limbs together, the marrow is the vehicle of life; without the latter, joints and limbs were dead, powerless. Similarly, the soul contains and combines our

various faculties; but these are dead Godward unless vitalized by the life of God acting through the regenerated spirit of man. This distinction is peculiar to the Word of God, and it is vital to a right conception of the perils and the possibilities of the believer. Therefore did Paul dwell upon it at the very outset of his letter to the carnal or the natural Christians at Corinth, so that they might learn to distinguish between soul and spirit as the divergent sources and spheres of our inward life, and might cease from the carnal, rise above the natural (the soulish), and live by the instincts and impulses of the spiritual. "Spirit" means here the new nature begotten in the believer by the new birth, by which thenceforth he is to live: "walk by spirit and desires of flesh ye shall in no wise fulfil . . . If we live by spirit, by spirit also we should walk" as our new rule of life (I Cor. 2: 10–3: 3; Gal. 5: 16–25; Rom. 8: 1–16).

It is of the highest importance to recognize these two types of life, the soulish and the spiritual; for this distinction, and these two realms and orders of life, are manifest in His sight before Whose all-penetrating eyes all things are naked and laid open. It is with having to face such an One that we have to reckon. We may deceive ourselves, and fondly think that the soul life, because it does not indulge the viler lusts of the flesh (carnality), will pass His scrutiny. But the heavenly world, to which we are called, is spiritual, not soulish, and only that element of our present life and activity which is of the spirit is preparing us for that upper and purer realm or contributes to our fitness for it and its activities. As with the resurrection body, the outer man, so much more must it be with the inner man, that the spiritual must swallow up the soulish (I Cor. 15: 44–46). It is in the soul that our severest perils rise and work; it is in the natural heart that sin deceives us, and never more subtly and successfully than by the notion that the natural life is sufficient though not infused by the light and energy of the spiritual life.

It is our wisdom to submit always to the searching, challenging, directing, enabling action of God's words; for His life is in His words, "they are spirit and they are life" (John 6: 63), the life that is life indeed. "To-day, if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts," but rather, as is the design of these present pages, "exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called to-day," *i.e.* so long as the offer of the heavenly calling is open and the glory of God is still set forth for faith to attain.

PART II: THE PRIEST
(Ch. 4: 14–7: 28)

CHAPTER VII

THE PREPARATION OF THE PRIEST (4: 14–5: 10)

Ch. IV. 14. Having then a great high priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. 15. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. 16. Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help *us* in time of need.

Ch. V. 1. For every high priest, being taken from among men, is appointed for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins; 2. who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; 3. and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins. 4. And no man taketh the honour unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron. 5. So Christ also glorified not himself to be made a high priest, but he that spake unto him,

Thou art my Son, This day have I begotten thee:

6. as he saith also in another place,

Thou art (*a*) priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

7. Who in the days of his flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and having been heard for his godly fear; 8. though he was (*a*) Son, yet learned obedience by the things which he suffered; 9. and having been made perfect, he became unto all them that obey him the author of eternal salvation; 10. named of God (*a*) high priest after the order of Melchizedek.

1. In the opening description of the dignities and offices of the Son of God it was mentioned that He "made purification of sins" (1: 3). The means by which He did this were indicated in 2: 14, 15: He became man, taking part in flesh and blood, in order that He might die, an event impossible to Him in His original condition in the form of God. But only by death could He provide a righteous and lawful deliverance for

creatures in bondage to death under the just law of the holy God.

A further result of becoming man was that He obtained experimental acquaintance with the essential elements in the case of those He came to rescue, and in particular with the power of their Enemy the devil, as he tempts them to rebellion, and their own weakness against him. By these various and severe trials He became able to sympathize with and to succour those who will accept His service unto salvation. Through sufferings He was "perfected"; not, that is, as to His moral nature and character, for these were inherently perfect; He was always completely devoted to the will of God; but perfected as the Author of salvation for sinful man (2: 10).

The keen tests which the devil was permitted to apply to Him served to show that He was without sin, and so without liability to the law of God, and therefore able, as one rich in righteousness, to accept and discharge the liabilities to the Divine law of sinners wholly bankrupt morally, with no righteousness to present to God.

Criminals under sentence of death have no access to their Sovereign. Any hope of reprieve must arise by the activities on their behalf of some person acceptable to the Sovereign and having access to him. In England, the Home Secretary can so act, and when he does so he becomes virtually a priest, a mediator between the King and the criminal. This gracious office Christ, risen from the dead, and gone to the audience chamber of God, now holds in heaven, this saving service He now renders to those who draw near to God through Him. He has "become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (2: 17).

It is upon this High Priest that we are exhorted to fix our attention: "consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, even Jesus" (3: 1); and, having turned aside to enforce the need of this by the solemn considerations that follow in chs. III and IV, the Writer now returns to the main theme and enlarges upon the priestly labours of the Son of God.

2. *The Fact and use of the Priest* (4: 14–16). The following features are presented for our attention.

i. The Priest *exists*. We have Him. The present participle "having" indicates that He exists and acts as priest continuously, without intermission. At all times He is available.

ii. He is no *insignificant* person. Jeroboam was ready to appoint as priest any nobody that came along (I Kings 13: 33); but God's Priest is "great" in person and standing and power.

iii. He is *high* priest, not a subordinate. He has access to the throne, He has authority over all God's affairs, He dispenses all God's bounties, He can introduce unto God all whom He will (Matt. 11: 27; John 6: 37–40).

iv. He has passed *through* the heavens, as the high priest in Israel passed through the courts and the veils into the audience chamber of the Most High. None can debar Him access; He is already there and there permanently.

v. He is *Jesus,* the man of human nature, experience, sympathy. The man Who never drove away even one who sought Him, but right warmly welcomed all; He is Bunyan's Man at the Gate into the King's highway, Who when the trembling pilgrim asked if he could pass in, replied "With all my heart!" Rome encourages her devotees to appeal to "Mary" because of her womanly tenderness, in contrast to an alleged sternness of Jesus. The answer to this gross misrepresentation is simply the name JESUS.

vi. *He is the Son of God,* personally acceptable to the Father, the Son He loves pre-eminently; able to understand God and His rights and able to meet them fully; even as He understands man and his needs and is able to meet them fully. He is the perfect Mediator, able perfectly to understand both parties, God and man.

vii. He is *without sin.* In Him there was nothing carnal to respond to temptation. He felt it, indeed, the more keenly that His susceptibilities were not dulled by sinful indulgence; but in Him there was no response to its overtures, but perfect revulsion and complete rejection. He *suffered* under temptation, suffered exquisitely, agonizingly (Luke 22: 44); but He did not succumb.

3. *Our Response.* Because of this full provision to meet our need we are required.

i. To *hold fast* our confession. The heathen confesses Siva, Krishna, Vishnu, or some other demon to be his god and he seeks the help of the priest of his god in his approach or prayer. The Moslem confesses Allah to be his god and that Mohammet is the prophet of god. Israel of old confessed Jehovah to be their God and Aaron to be their priest to secure for them the blessing of God. The Christian is one who confesses the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ as his God and draws near unto Him through Christ. Against this confession Satan hurls his heaviest attacks. To maintain it courageously is at once the conflict of this age, the method by which the Spirit of truth illuminates and delivers others, the basis of reward in the day of Christ.

The power for this confession is that the heart be in the present enjoyment of the mighty facts expressed in the name

Jesus the Son of God. If He is to me what this name means then I shall talk about Him; one cannot help doing so. As Spurgeon said: We are fools for Christ's sake, and therefore we must be allowed to preach Christ crucified, for *every fool talks about what is uppermost in his mind.*

ii. We must *draw near* unto God. Jonah fled from Him, with painful results. The publican (Luke 18) sought His mercy, but could get no nearer than the front gate of His holy house, where the victim on the altar procured for him pardon. He was justified there and then; but he went down to his own house, he dared not go forward into God's house, for the way into the holy place had not yet been made manifest (9: 8).

But since Calvary the veil is rent, the new, the living way has been dedicated for our use (10: 20), God is personally accessible; the Mediator is there to bring us to God in peace, and we are therefore to *draw near*, not merely to "come" (as A.V.) but to "draw near," as Moses to the burning bush (Acts 7: 31), and Philip to the chariot of the eunuch (Acts 8: 29) (where the same word is used), and we are to do so with boldness. Then we shall learn that we have access to the throne whence issue decisions against which lies no appeal, and shall experience that at this holy throne we are sure of grace, of undeserved Divine favour, the favour deserved only by the Son but shared by Him with the sons.

> "So near, so very near to God, nearer I cannot be,
> For in the person of the Son, I am as near as He."

It is needful to hold this as a doctrine, to hold it tenaciously, but this is not *enough.* One may hold the doctrine, yet break down as a confessor. The soul must be in the joy of it all: "realization is everything in the things of God" (A. N. Groves). And he who, by confidence in the Priest, with the energy of His Spirit of sonship, does thus enter into the presence of God in heart consciousness, and does this habitually, will find that he gains there what can be gained nowhere else, even mercy to forgive his failings, and grace, that is, succour and strength, to meet every need of his pilgrim life as a confessor of God and His Son.

4. *The High Priest* (vers. 1–10). Such boldness toward God is the very opposite of presumption, seeing that it is God Himself who has made the approach possible by appointing the adequate Mediator. We ought to draw near with assurance "for," on account of, the High Priest. To seek God tremblingly is to show that the soul has no proper appreciation of Christ or reliance upon Him.

There were certain features applicable to "every high priest" of old.

i. He was "taken *from among* men." He is no stranger to the parties he has to represent in court. He is one of their race and nature.

ii. "He was appointed *for* men"; the office exists for their benefit.

iii. His special sphere was the "*things pertaining to God.*" It was his office to adjust man's relations with God. He meets the claims of God against the guilty; He instructs the godly how to please God and infuses into them His strength to do this.

iv. With this in view *He presented to God* two kinds of offering, namely, "gifts" and "sacrifices for sins." Gifts have priority, for angels and men offered to God gifts of love and gratitude before sin entered; and unfallen angels and redeemed men will continue to do so for ever after the Son shall have reconciled heaven and earth to God, having removed in reality the sin that He put away judicially by the sacrifice of Himself on the cross. This priority was recognized by that discerning scribe who said that "to love God with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength, and love his neighbour as himself, is much more than all whole burnt-offerings and sacrifices" (Mark 12: 33). To re-establish this normal condition is the work and object of the High Priest, to which end holy angels and reconciled men are privileged to co-operate with Him and each other.

v. *Personal infirmity.* The Priest knows by experience the weakness attaching to human nature. It is as a chain hampering movement and restricting freedom (Acts 28: 20); yea, as a millstone slung around the neck and threatening one with destruction (Mk. 9: 42; Luke 17: 2); or (as in the only other place (12: 1) where the word [*peirkeimai*] comes) it is a crowd encompassing one, which may impede progress. All this the High Priest knows by experience, and so

vi. He "can *deal gently,*" or, more accurately, can "moderate his feelings" (*metriopatheō*) toward those who fail. Human nature forms swift and severe opinions about failing fellow-mortals, and is ready to pass harsh judgment. But the truly qualified priest remembers his own weakness. As he watches the criminal going to the gallows, he says: "But for the grace of God, there goes John Bradford."

vii. But it is with "*the ignorant and the erring*" that the High Priest deals gently. And the assumption here is that they are not *willingly* ignorant, much less wilfully rejecting knowledge had or available. From the word rendered "ignorant" comes *agnostic,* the self-chosen title of certain modern deniers

of God, for whom the light of revelation is available but they reject it. It is not such that are here presented as the objects of pity and sympathy, but such as are genuinely ignorant as to God and His law.

Moreover, in the word rendered "erring" (*planaō*) there is prominent the notion of one being led astray by some malevolent deceiver or influence. The sinner is blinded by the god of this age (II Cor. 4: 4), who hoodwinks and beguiles Eve's children as he did Eve (II Cor. 11: 3). And as on this account God dealt gently with Eve and opened for her a door to freedom, so does God's Priest treat other deceived and ignorant souls.

But, on the other hand, for such as are wilfully ignorant in spite of opportunities of knowledge, and who willingly, from love of sin, follow the Deceiver, there is no mercy, at least not until they repent and seek mercy. For in ch. 3: 10, the same words are associated as regards perverse Israel, of whom God said (Ps. 95: 10): "They do always *err* in their heart: but they did *not know* My ways." But this was because they had deliberately and repeatedly hardened their hearts against God, though they saw His works of power, in grace and in wrath, for forty years. The Writer will later make clear that the High Priest cannot help such, but that in them is fulfilled of just necessity the prayer, "Be not merciful to any *wicked* transgressors" (Ps. 59: 5).

But where there is some sincere desire to know and to do what pleases God, yet there is failure, even grievous failure, through ignorance and weakness, then the High Priest is compassionate and ever glad to save, for

> "He knows what sore temptations mean,
> For He has felt the same."

viii. All the foregoing particulars are easily seen to apply to Christ as high priest, but how can this be said of the connected statement that the high priest is under obligation (*opheilei*), "as for the people, so also for himself to offer for sins" (ver. 3)? There would appear to be only one sense, and this a modified sense, in which it can be so applied, and here enters one of the deepest elements of His sacrifice of Himself, even that, in a real sense, it was for Himself. Personally He was always without sin, as much on the cross as before and after it. But "Jehovah made to light on Him the iniquity of us all." "It was exacted and He was made answerable" (Isa. 53: 7; Lowth, Newberry). Lev. 4: 24 says of the goat offered as a sin offering that "it *is sin*," and the goat slain on the Day of Atonement was to be "*made sin*" (Lev. 16: 9). Equally of Christ it is

said (II Cor. 5: 21), that "Him who knew no sin God *made sin* on our behalf." Having thus, in divine grace, accepted the legal responsibility of sins not His own, there was no way by which He could release Himself from the liability save by discharging it, and in this sense the sinless Priest and Lamb of God offered His sacrifice "as for the people, so also for Himself." By His atoning death He delivered Himself as well as His people from death, the penalty of sin. On this account it will be said later (9: 12) that it was "through [the merit of] His own blood that He entered into the holy place." His blood was "as a key opening the holiest to Him" (Alford, *in loco*). By assuming our guilt He debarred Himself from entering the presence of God; by discharging our guilt He regained His right of access, and acquired it for us also.

ix. No such priest can be self-appointed or man-appointed but must receive his charge from God, as did Aaron (ver. 4; Exod. 28: 1; I Chron. 23: 13). The sin of self-appointment was met by God with summary death, as in the case of Korah and his company (Num. 16). The sin of appointment by man caused the destruction of Jeroboam, the appointer, and his house (I Kings 13: 33, 34).

The writer proposes to show later that Christ has superseded Aaron (ch. VII). He therefore establishes his argument by showing that the Son of God did not arrogate to Himself this honourable office. The fact illustrates that even in His resurrection life the Son receives all from the Father. Not only in the humble conditions of His life on earth, but in His glorious status in heaven, He does nothing "of Himself," by His own separate initiative or action. It is the Father who appoints and who announces the appointment. This last had been done in advance by the Spirit of prophecy, as in the second psalm, ver. 7. God had then said:

> Thou art my Son,
> This day have I begotten thee;

and later had declared (Ps. 110: 4):

> Thou art priest for ever
> After the order of Melchizedek.

x. Paul described his career of conflict and hardship as "the life which I now live *in the flesh*" (Gal. 2: 20). It was through the body that the stern struggle was carried on and its intensity felt. Similarly in ver. 7 the severe battle waged by the Son of God is described as "the days *of His flesh*." The acute strain was a consequence, accompaniment, and proof of

His humanity, its reality and sensitiveness. That humanity was no mere but unreal semblance, as the Docetics and Gnostics taught, thereby earning the description of deceivers and antichrist (II John 7, 8).

So intensely real and acute were Christ's human feelings and conscious weakness that He was necessarily a man of prayer, and "offered up prayers and supplications to Him that was able to save Him." Prayers (*deēsis*) point to the particular petitions; supplications (*hiketēria*) seem rather to hint at the lowlier rank of the petitioner, who does not prefer a request as of title but as a *suppliant.* The Son having become man felt and owned His dependence upon God. He felt also and intensely the urgency, the desperateness of His position; it constrained Him to "strong crying and tears." Gethsemane was no light affair, but a terrible ordeal causing sweat like blood to drip from His veins upon the ground. Yet were "the sufferings of His body the body of His sufferings, and the sufferings of His soul were the soul of His sufferings" (Spurgeon).

From *what* did He so earnestly cry to be saved? Not from the act of dying; that He had recently faced, and had challenged Himself whether He should ask to be saved from being as a grain of wheat that falls into the ground and dies. Nay, He had replied: "for this cause came I unto this hour" (John 12: 24, 27). We take the words "able to save Him *out of* death" to mean deliverance from the death state and realm into which He was descending willingly, but which to the Prince of life was an awful experience. See *Note* at end of this chapter, p. 92.

Moreover, had He remained there, were He still there, He would have suffered on the cross in vain; no sinner could have been justified and redeemed, nor could He Himself have known the answer to His prayer, "Now Father, glorify Thou Me with Thine own self with the glory which I had with Thee before the world was" (John 17: 5). His resurrection was indispensable and it was an answer to prayer.

How vital is piety to prayer: it was on account of His godly fear that His prayer was heard.

xi. It was through these prolonged and painful experiences that He, though Son to God His Father, learned what obedience to the Father's will costs in a world ruled by that Father's enemy and by sin. He did not learn to obey; that He knew from the first by the instincts of His sinless heart: but he learned the nature and the benefit of obedience, for thereby He became perfectly, experimentally fitted to be the "cause of eternal salvation" to those who in their turn learn to obey Him as He obeyed the Father.

Good is Chrysostom's personal application of this: "If He, being Son, gained obedience from His sufferings, much rather we" (Westcott *in loco*).

Note to p. 91. At first sight the usage of *ek thanatou* seems to vary.

(1) In II Cor. 1: 10, "who delivered us *out of* (*ek*) so great a death," the sense is that Paul was kept from dying. (2) It is the same in Jas. 5: 20. "He who turneth back a sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul [life] *from* (*ek*) death," that is, from dying prematurely under the summary judgment of God. Comp. I John 5: 16; I Cor. 5: 3–6 with II Cor. 2: 5–10; I Cor. 11: 27–32; Acts 5: 1–11. (3) But in I John 3: 14, "passed *out of* (*ek*) death into life," the man is viewed as having been *in* spiritual death and having been raised *out of* it; which (4) is a repeating of Christ's words given in John 5: 24 that the believer "has passed *out of* (*ek*) death into life."

But it is possible that in cases (1) and (2) above *ek* is used because the deaths in question were regarded as so seemingly inevitable that the persons were already "as good as dead," and the deliverance was reckoned to have brought them *out of* the death state where they were *deemed* to be, though not yet *actually* in it.

The usage of the Septuagint is similar. (1) In Job 5: 20 *ek* means kept from dying or being killed: "In famine he shall deliver thee *from* (*ek*) death, and in war he shall free thee *out of* (*ek*) the hand [power] of the sword." (2) Ps. 29 (30): 3 has this sense; "Lord, thou hast brought up (*anēgages*) my soul *out of* (*ek*) Hades, thou hast saved me (*esōsas*) *from* (*apo*) those going down into the pit." The preceding verse shows that this was a matter of bodily healing, not of actual death and resurrection: "I cried to thee and thou didst heal me." Yet here also death may have seemed so certain that the writer thinks of himself as having been in Hades as to his heart's contemplation, and so of having been brought up *out of* it. (3) But Ps. 33 (34): 19 has the meaning of being brought out of circumstances in which one actually is: "Many are the afflictions of the righteous; but *out of* (*ek*) them all the Lord will save them." (4) Ps. 116: 8 reads: "He has delivered my soul *out of* (*ek*) death, my eyes *from* (*apo*) tears, and my feet *from* (*apo*) sliding." The two latter clauses require the sense of the writer having experienced tears and sliding, which suggests a metaphorical sense of the first clause; he was to himself as already dead, according to ver. 3: "The pangs of death compassed me, the dangers of Hades found me." (5) Esther 4: 8. Mordecai charged Esther to "speak to the king concerning us, to rescue us *out of* death" (*ek thanatou*). They had not actually been killed, but were legally dead, being under sentence of death, and so deliverance would be, as it were, *out of* death. (6) The natural force of *ek* is seen in I Macc. 2: 59: "Ananias, Azaria, Misael having trusted [in God] were saved *out of* (*ek*) the flame." These had been literally in the fire. But (7) in the next verse, "Daniel for his innocency was rescued *from* (*ek*) the mouth of lions."

Jude 5 speaks of Israel having been "saved *out of* (*ek*) the land of Egypt," in which they had actually been, and in John 12: 27, the Lord regards Himself as having already reached a certain hour for a definite purpose, and therefore He would not ask the Father to save Him "*out of* (*ek*) this hour." This sets aside any thought that He would ask to be saved from dying, and so requires that Heb. 5: 7 be taken, as above, as a prayer for resurrection.

CHAPTER VIII

THE THIRD WARNING (5: 11–6: 20)

Ch. V. 11. Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing. 12. For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. 13. For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe. 14. But solid food is for full-grown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

Ch. VI. 1. Wherefore let us cease to speak of the first principles of Christ, and press on unto perfection; not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God; 2. of the teaching of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3. And this will we do if God permit. 4. For as touching those who were once enlightened and tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Spirit; 5. and tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the age to come; 6. and *then* fell away, it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame. 7. For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God: 8. but if it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned.

9. But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak: 10. for God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye shewed toward his name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister. 11. And we desire that each one of you may shew the same diligence unto the fulness of hope even to the end: 12. that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

13. For when God made promise to Abraham, since he could sware by none greater, he sware by himself; 14. saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee. 15. And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. 16. For men sware by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation. 17. Wherein God, being minded to shew more abundantly unto the heirs of

the promise the immutability of his counsel, interposed with an oath: 18. that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us; 19. which we have as an anchor of the soul, *a hope* both sure and stedfast and entering into that which is within the veil; 20. whither as a forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become (*a*) high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

AGAIN the flow of teaching is stayed, by a blockage in the understanding of the readers. This leads to another serious exhortation. Observe

1. *The Persons warned.* They have spiritual life, for they have spiritual hearing, and spiritual appetite for milk. They are distinctly compared to infants; they have capacity for growth, and they can walk, for they are exhorted to press on. Evidently they are not dead persons, for to such none of these activities is possible.

Moreover, the Writer will shortly term them "beloved," will commend their work, and the love which they showed toward God's Name, in that they ministered unto the saints and still minister (6: 10), and later he will speak of how they had endured joyfully a "great conflict of suffering," with "the spoiling of their possessions"; assured, as they were, of a better and abiding possession (10: 32–36). It was steadfastness that they now needed. But no one exhorts the dead to be steadfast. These addressed, therefore, had spiritual life, were Christians.

2. *The Need for Warning.* Their hearing was less acute than it had been: "ye have become (*gegonate*) dull of hearing" (5: 11). They had been believers long enough to have become teachers of the faith to others; but from not growing and from not teaching they were losing ground. We must teach, or we shall forget what we know.

> Ceasing to give, we cease to have;
> Such is the law of love. (Trench.)

As their appetite failed the power of digestion weakened. They could not now master advanced lessons or assimilate solid food. Milk was all they could endure, and even this light diet they could not find for themselves but had to be spoon-fed by others. In consequence they were weak in understanding; they found it difficult to distinguish between good and bad food, and were in danger of arrested development, instead of being on the way to become full-grown men. Using less and less their spiritual senses (*aisthētēria*, the aesthetic sensibilities) their sensitiveness in things heavenly became impaired. Such

torpid natures can take unwholesome food, or even poison, and not know it; they can sustain injuries and be unaware of it. There are to-day believers enough of this type. Their dangers are many and serious; hence the warnings given, the exhortations pressed home.

3. *The Exhortation:* "let us press on." He has mentioned "the rudiments of the beginning of the oracles of God" (5: 12). He further speaks of "the word of the beginning of Christ" (6: 1).

It is obvious that the oracles of God and the word or message concerning Christ had their "beginning" in the Old Testament.[1] Therefore he who would become versed in the oracles of God and their message concerning their chief topic, the Messiah (*tou Christou*), must begin with and sufficiently understand the Old Testament. Failure in this is an initial reason for the infantile condition of so many Christians and indeed, so many preachers and teachers.

On the other hand, to learn only the A.B.C., the multiplication table, or but the rudiments of any subject, is to remain a child in understanding. It is for us to press on unto full growth, to attain to years and stature, to become *men* of God. This was one of Paul's last exhortations (II Tim. 3: 14–17). Observe the progress from a *babe* to a *man* of God. It is the message of Gal. 3: 15–4: 11; children are to grow up and become sons, in the full sense of sonship, grown-up sons, able to understand and to co-operate with their Father; and the danger with these Galatian believers, as these here, lay in turning back to the rudimentary things and being contented with them (Gal. 4: 9). Thus were the Ephesians also urged to "grow up in all things into Him Who is the head, even Christ" (Eph. 4: 11–16), and so to be no longer children.

The growth of a child does not just happen. It requires at first the diligent care of mother or nurse, feeding, washing, clothing, training it. And when that first stage has been passed, then must the growing child, youth, man himself diligently render to himself these same services, or growth will cease, health fail, decline set in.

[1] After the above was written I was glad to find the following in Nairne (*The Epistle of Priesthood*, 334/5), the only one of a dozen commentators read who confirms the application to the Old Testament:

> In the last paragraph [5: 12] "the rudiments of the beginnings of God's oracles" would most naturally mean the simplest and most obvious instruction that could be drawn from the Old Testament. Here [6: 1] "the argument of the beginning, or first doctrine of the Christ" would be that doctrine of Christ in the Old Testament which even to a Jew meant much, though a Christian learnt at once to fill it with a new significance. The doctrine of washings, of imposition of hands, of resurrection and of eternal judgment, could all be found in those books of the Old Testament in Greek which the author habitually used.

The Old Testament oracles give the foundation of knowledge of God and of God-fearing living. The foundation is indispensable and permanent, but its use is that upon it a superstructure can be built, and without the latter it is of small value, is incomplete. The Old Testament foundation is formed of six elements, which form three pairs:

(1) Repentance from dead works, and
(2) Faith toward God:
(3) The teaching concerning washings, and
(4) Laying on of hands:
(5) Resurrection of the dead, and
(6) Eternal judgment.

(1, 2.) The Old Testament entire may be summarized as a continuous call to men to repent of sin and set their trust in God. Of this repentance and faith the offering of a sacrificial victim was an expression, being an acknowledgment by the sinner that he deserved to die, yet trusted in the mercy of God.

(3, 4.) But God sought, yea demanded, that to this judicial transaction there be added actual visible purity, together with a renewal of the nature and its powers by the imparting of gifts from Himself. The former was symbolized by the frequent washings ordained under the law, the latter accompanied the laying on of the hands of the priest.

It is clear that the distinctively Christian baptism cannot be here meant by the plural "washings," nor the laying on of hands as in New Testament times; for these are later than the Old Testament. Yet do these teach the same lessons as those older ordinances, namely, personal purity and enduement from on high.

They who lay too heavy a stress on these God-appointed externals, should observe that not the washings and the laying on of hands themselves were part of the foundation. The passage says that it was *the teaching* connected with these that was of the foundation. This did not warrant non-observance of the external rites, nor to-day of the Christian rites; but it does forbid attaching virtue to the mere outward observance without the spiritual conditions they taught being personally realized.

(5, 6.) The Old Testament did not speak much of the resurrection or eternal judgment. Yet must it not be inferred that these solemn prospects were little known in early times. It would be of interest and profit if some competent scholar would gather together the ancient pagan myths which embody these expectations, however confused and corrupted be their form. It would show that the primary revelation by God included this knowledge and placed the race under responsibility to walk as those who knew that death does not end all,

but is followed by resurrection and judgment. And the Old Testament sufficiently emphasizes this.

A few centuries after the Flood Abraham is found expecting confidently the raising of Isaac to life "accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead" (Heb. 11: 17–19; Gen. 22: 5, "*we* [himself *and* Isaac] will come again to you"). And later men of faith anticipated the like outcome of life, so that at the close of that Old Testament period and the commencement of the new age Martha could express the general belief as to the dead: "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection in the last day" (John 11: 24). A little later a learned Jew could declare in public that the hope of attaining to resurrection was an inspiration to all pious Israelites (Acts 26: 6–8); and in 11: 35 our Writer will mention that some of old were expecting a better resurrection than a speedy resuscitation after the death of the body.

These truths were therefore the foundation of true religion, and Paul could assert that his preaching had as its basis that men "should repent and turn to God doing works worthy of repentance," which covers points (1–4) above; and then he adds that thus his teaching was that of the law and the prophets, fulfilled in Christ as the Victim offered in the suffering of death and as the personal proof of resurrection and judgment, which is points (5) and (6) above (Acts 26: 20, 22, 23).

This, then, is the foundation, and on it all godly living in all ages has been built, and must still be built; *yet it is only the foundation.* It is the foundation of Christianity, *but it is not Christianity*, even as the foundation is not the superstructure. What the Lord and the apostles built hereupon will be opened out by the Writer later; for the present he presses the necessity of a mind, a purpose, a resolute effort to move onward from knowing the beginning of what God taught concerning Christ to ever fuller understanding of the complete Divine message concerning Him. To hinder a sinner from getting on to the foundation is a first endeavour of Satan; but failing in this, then he studies to make the believer *satisfied with the foundation*, and here souls innumerable are deceived and dwarfed and despoiled. The perils of this are great; and to warn, to exhort, to encourage, to foster growth and advance, is the immediate object of the Writer.

To be limited to the truths that form the foundation is like one who should repeatedly lay a foundation of a house but not build thereon. This is what too many are doing. It marks largely the great organized Churches; it is the basic reason why they perpetuate the ritual of the Old Testament, and it

explains why even true but simple believers in such communities are commonly infantile in knowledge of the purposes of God and in spiritual experience.

Therefore "let us press on. . . . And this will we do, if [*eanper*, if at least] God permit." IF GOD PERMIT! Is there then some possibility that God will *not* permit a Christian to press on? Or is this merely a pious compliment to the Almighty, an ancient form corresponding to (D.V.)? The context will show that the remark is made with solemn intention, that it is sadly possible for a Christian to reach a state of soul when God in equal love and righteousness will no more allow him to press on.

4. *The Warning* (vers. 4–7). The line of teaching along which the Writer was led by the Spirit was that of constant reference to the Old Testament. In these five chapters preceding he has quoted fourteen passages, and has drawn his lessons and warnings from the ancient histories and institutions. It is therefore somewhat surprising that expositors have not used this feature as the key to open this present passage. For want of it the warning has been found difficult to explain and apply. Is it addressed to mere professors? Or can it apply to the regenerate? If the latter, how does it agree with the teaching of other passages that the life of the regenerate is *eternal* life and that therefore their security from eternal death is assured?

The great second warning was drawn from the failure of Israel at Kadesh Barnea. Is this still in his mind? Is it the needed key?

i. *Enlightenment.* When God was commissioning Moses to return from the desert to Egypt and set Israel free Moses answered that, when he should inform the Israelites that the God of their fathers had appeared to him and was intending to deliver them, they would reply, "What is His Name?" (Exod. 3: 13). This implies that they had lost the knowledge of the God of their fathers and of His covenant with them and their descendants. Fifty years later Joshua threw light on this by reminding their children that their fathers, the generation to which he himself belonged, had served the gods of Egypt (Joshua 24: 14). Nine centuries later God, through Ezekiel (20: 6–8), confirmed this, reminding Israel that their fathers did not forsake the idols of Egypt, for they quickly made a golden calf and worshipped it, which was a chief form of Egyptian idolatry.

Israel had succumbed to their surroundings and had adopted the religion of their oppressors, quite possibly in the hope that

the oppression might thus be lightened. In consequence they were in the dark as to their true God and His purposes concerning them. But through Moses they were, as our Writer puts it, "*once for all enlightened.*"

ii. *The Heavenly Gift.* As soon as Israel had commenced their walk with God in the desert the question of food became urgent. The desert yielded no bread. Nine hundred years afterward, in the days of their deepest apostasy, their God told them that His heart had been touched by that venture of faith: "I remember concerning thee the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals; how thou wentest after Me in the wilderness, in a land not sown" (Jer. 2: 2). Though their love was but as the morning dew and passed early away (Hos. 6: 4), yet it was sincere at the time, and thus they are a type of such to-day who feel some true if immature love to the God Who has first loved them.

In response to their trust and cry God gave them manna: "I will rain bread from heaven for you" (Exod. 16: 4). Thus they "*tasted of the heavenly gift,*" that gift which was the type of the true Bread from heaven, even Jesus the Son of God, the gift of His Father to hungry men (John 6: 32 ff).

Two considerations are vital:

(1) That the English verb "*tasted*" is here used in its less usual sense of *to experience fully*, to *appreciate* the quality of a thing. The Writer has already so used it at 2: 9 "that he should taste of death," meaning that deep and thorough experience of death which the Redeemer endured. On our present verse (6: 4) Alford says: "*have tasted* (personally and consciously partaken of)"; Grimm (*Lexicon*) says: "to feel, make trial of, experience"; and Westcott writes: "*Geusasthai* expresses a real and conscious enjoyment of the blessing apprehended in its true character"; and so Cremer "practically and in fact to experience anything." It is not, therefore, here a mere mental or aesthetic appreciation of Christ that is in view, as when a sceptic or social reformer acknowledges His moral worth; it is a true heart enjoyment such as only the regenerate can know.

(2) And this is made certain by the apostle's assertion (I Cor. 10: 3, 4) concerning even Israel in the desert that "they did all eat the same *spiritual* food; and did all drink the same *spiritual* drink; for they drank of a *spiritual* rock that followed them [went about with them]; and the rock was Christ." It is thus evident that, though so carnal, they were at least spiritual enough to know that they partook, for their inward man, of spiritual counterparts to the material food and drink for the body. It follows that they cannot be types of persons still really dead to things heavenly, whatever their profession,

but only of such as have some true, conscious enjoyment of the heavenly Bread.

iii. *Living Water.* Directly after the giving of the manna came the smiting of the rock and the supply of living water. From the statement just quoted from I Cor. 10: 4 it is plain that in some real degree they were made "*partakers of holy spirit,*" that they experienced some measure of the Spirit's grace. Referring to that period Isaiah, seven centuries later, said: "Where is He that put his holy Spirit in the midst of them? . . . the Spirit of Jehovah caused them to rest" (Isa. 63: 11, 14).

That the manna and the spiritual rock accompanied them all the journey teaches that Bread and Water are the only provision that God makes for His children in the desert. To demand more than these is disastrous. Israel did so: "Give us flesh . . . there is nothing at all save this manna to look to" (Num. 11: 4–6); upon which history the Divine comment is: "He gave them their request, But sent leanness into their soul" (Ps. 106: 15).

Here, as wherever water is a type, is meant the blessed Spirit of God (John 7: 38, 39). First manna, then water; first Christ the Bread of heaven (John 6), then the Spirit, the Water of life (John 7). First Calvary, then Pentecost; and only one who has availed himself of the blood receives the water. That the Writer had in mind a definite, known reception of the Spirit is shown by the use of the *aorist* participle (*genēthentas*), "they became partakers" at a distinct point, and experimentally.

iv. *The Word of God.* Israel reached the desert of Sin on the fifteenth day of the second month after they left Egypt (Exod. 16: 1). The next fortnight was momentous. In it were given the manna and the living water; there followed the fight with Amalek, and Moses judging the people; and on the first day of the next month they came to mount Sinai (Exod. 19: 1). There God appeared in glory and the people heard His veritable voice speaking unto them, commanding them, statutes and ordinances "which if a man do, he shall live in them" (Ezek. 20: 11, 13, 21). For this "commandment was unto life," this "law is holy, righteous, good," and "spiritual" (Rom. 7: 10, 12, 14); of which Israel had ample experience, in so far as they obeyed it. They "*tasted the Word of God that it is good.*" The above force of *to taste* applies here also: "those spoken of had not merely tasted, but recognized, the goodness of the word of God" (G. Milligan, D.D., *The New Testament Documents*, 68).

Thus Israel exemplified the course of all spiritual life, today as then: redemption from wrath by blood; deliverance

from bondage by power; Christ the food to strengthen; the Spirit to refresh and vitalize; and now God's words to instruct and regulate. It is to be noted that the law at Sinai was not given to effect salvation from wrath (the angel of destruction) and from Satan (Pharaoh); but to guide and rule men already redeemed and free. The guilty it could not justify, nor grant life to the dead; but it could bless the living, if they would be obedient; and this it can do to-day, if the Christian will render loving obedience. The saint of old could say: "Oh how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119: 97): the saint to-day can say: "I delight in the law of God after the inward man" (Rom. 7: 22). Both they of old and we "*taste the word of God that it is good.*"

v. *The Coming Age.* But there was another privilege of that age and this. They experienced "*the powers of a coming age,*" and so it has been in this age of the gospel. Under law and under grace mighty works have been seen which are a foretaste of the coming age, the Millennial.

The cloud of glory, which did not scatter in the fierce winds of the desert, was a picture of that canopy of glory, which is compared to the cloud by day and the fire by night in the desert, and which shall abide over mount Zion in that coming day when Jerusalem shall have been purged (Isa. 4: 2–6).

God's personal and visible presence, His daily guidance and protection, constant supplies of food and drink, victory over enemies; healing of disease, preservation of health; these and similar displays of heavenly powers will be known yet more fully in the age of glory yet to come. In measure they have been known in this age, both in spiritual blessings and external advantages. This last was especially the case at the commencement of Israel's national career and at the commencement of the church of God; but all through both ages those powers have worked which will be more largely known in the next age in the full subservience of nature to the good of man, in bodily health, and other ways.

But not only in acts of grace were those powers displayed, but also in chastisement upon the unfaithful in Israel; and so it is to-day, and so it will be during the Millennium. For in I Cor. 10 the correspondence between Israel and ourselves covers both privileges and warnings. Did they, as we, partake of Christ, so are we most solemnly warned lest their judgments also overtake us; for "these things happened unto them by way of example; and they were written for our admonition upon whom the ends of the ages are come" (vers. 6–13). Both aspects, blessings and judgments, are foretold of the Millennial age in one sentence (Isa. 65: 20), as elsewhere.

vi. *Falling away.* What then is the lesson for us? They

"*fell away*" (*parapiptō*); "let him who thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall (*piptō*) (I Cor. 10: 12). "The idea [in *parapiptein*] is that of falling aside from the right path, as the idea of *amartanein* (sin) is that of missing the right mark" (Westcott).

When did Israel thus turn from the right path? At Kadesh Barnea (Num. 13 and 14). The right path lay straight ahead; but it led uphill, with giant defenders, monsters by descent, size, vice, and ferocity. Faith failed, courage fled, so they turned aside and resolutely refused to go up.

Thus at Kadesh Barnea they "*fell away*," and God saw and declared that "it was impossible to renew them to a change of mind," that is, to make them thereafter dutiful and trustful. What was their cry "Would God that we had died in the land of Egypt" (Num. 14: 2) but a hasty regret that they had accepted redemption at all? What was their resolve "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt" but an impulse to reverse the salvation effected by the blood of the lamb slain and a putting Moses to open shame as, in their view, an unsafe leader? In this they were a type of those to-day who so openly turn from Christ and return to a worldly life as to "crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and to put Him to an open shame."

Such cases we have known. In an eastern land it was our joy to lead to Christ a cultured Englishman of good family. From the first he gave a fine public witness and maintained it for several years. Then he lapsed into the darkness of theosophy and occultism where he had wandered before his conversion, and openly repudiated the Son of God and His atonement. Now had he died before his lapse no one could have questioned the reality of his conversion. But as all those earlier years the evidence was adequate, some other explanation of his fall must be found than the suggestion that he was never born of God, for the facts prove the contrary. And he is but one of many cases.

Those who so readily offer this too easy explanation should reflect that some to whom it would apply have returned to faith after many years, thus showing the reality of the early faith. It was so with the person mentioned and the celebrated Professor F. W. Newman is another instance. In early manhood he was an earnest, devoted disciple, a companion of Groves, Darby and the first Brethren. Then, for perhaps thirty or forty years, he was a leading sceptic; but at the close of his long life he returned to the faith of his youth, and it was stated over his grave, by his own request, that he had died trusting to the precious blood of Christ for salvation.

No one therefore is justified in saying that any particular person is beyond the possibility of repenting; nevertheless

there are such who die in this apostate state, and it is these who are in question in Heb. 6. Their unchangeable condition is known to God in their lifetime, though not to us.

Of the men of war, Caleb and Joshua were like the land that gives due response to the heaven-sent blessings and "bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake also it is tilled"; the many were as the plot that bore only the thorns and the thistles of faithlessness and rebellion. These latter were "rejected" by God: "they shall not see the land which I sware unto their fathers" (Num. 14: 23); for they had rejected God's special gift. And how "nigh unto a curse" they were these awful words of their God tell: "I will smite them with pestilence, and disinherit them" (ver. 12). And just as the present end of weed-producing land is that it be "burned," so it was said to them "your carcases [shall] be *consumed* in the wilderness" (ver. 33), a word which is used once again of Israel when later on God was rejecting them nationally: "The bellows blow fiercely; the lead is *consumed* of the fire; in vain do they go on refining; for the wicked are not plucked away. Refuse silver shall men call them, because the Lord hath rejected them" (Jer. 6: 29, 30).

5. It will be still asked, Can such apostasy be possible in a real child of God? Are we not in this place at least driven to suppose that here (Heb. 6) it is only professors making a fair show in the flesh, but not knowing the reality of divine grace, who are described? Let us notice:

(1) These were *born heirs* to the land, being children of the covenant, and they were those who had been actually redeemed and emancipated.

(2) The partaking in the benefits implies the truly regenerate person.

(3) Though they were "nigh to a curse" they were not actually cursed. Their noble leader interceded for them, and God said, "I have pardoned according to thy word; but in very deed, as I live" these rebels shall not see the land. Our great Priest delivers His own perpetually from the wrath to come (see I Thess. 1: 10: "delivereth"), but He cannot, and would not, hinder the severest chastisement and loss where such are due.

(4) God saw to it that they never did get back to Egypt. They perished in the wilderness, as a backslider may die in his apostate state; but to the place which pictured unalleviated separation from God they were not permitted to get back.

(5) Even though they had forfeited the fullest of the proffered blessings yet did God in most wondrous grace still deal with them as His people, and not as foes. "In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them:

in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them and carried them all the days of old" (Isa. 63: 9). "For about the time of forty years suffered He their manners in the wilderness" (Acts 13: 18), feeding, clothing, guiding, and protecting them, and in fact doing for them all that He could do short of restoring to them the prospect of entering the land that they had rejected. It was thus, as we have already noticed, that Reuben and Esau were dealt with by their fathers.

(6) That in *Hebrews* the Writer regarded those he addressed as genuine saints is abundantly clear in the next verses (9–12). He was "persuaded better things" of them, though he thus warned them: it was not of salvation itself but of "things that *accompany* salvation" that he was writing, not of escaping judgment and slavery in Egypt, but of the benefits and prospects which accompanied that deliverance. Unlike the salvation, these latter were not yet secured and might be missed.

It is to be conceded that here is a picture of the extremest kind of rebellion possible, and not of what we may term ordinary failure. Lot's conduct in deliberately consorting with the sinners of Sodom was a very different offence to Abraham's failure of faith and of courage when he saw, as he thought, his wife in danger in Egypt, and it was very differently dealt with by God. For Abraham, though humbled, was helped, and was restored to the hill-top communion with God, whilst Lot was left barely to escape, and finally to close his days in shame, conscious that his course had desperately corrupted his own daughters, and involved himself in lasting dishonour. Let us remember the teaching in Gal. 5: 21, as to the *practising* of gross moral or physical sin resulting in a disinheriting from the kingdom.

As in Esau's case so with these men of war, it was a deliberate turning from high advantages offered, and indeed desired in measure, and a choice of the lower state because it seemed easier and more immediate. And have there not been instances of disciples facing God's call and leading towards high and noble living and full concentration upon heavenly things, but who, alas, have feared to cut loose from the things that bound to the world? Do none ever set the heart on the things that are on the earth though pleaded with by the Spirit to set the mind on the things that are above? The full record of this aspect of powerful spiritual meetings, of holiness conventions, and of private labours of men who walk with God, has yet to be made known. A sad chapter it will prove to be as its tale is told of how alluring business or professional prospects, or worldly or fashionable marriage offers, or social and political ambitions,

yea, and even sheer carnality, not to speak of a hesitant timidity that grieves and insults our faithful God, have caused some of His own people to turn back from the heights of conflict and of glory to the low level of being saved from perdition, as is believed, and then "making the best of both worlds," as is the hideously deceptive phrase, whereas it is in reality a making the worst of both.

Workers of long experience in the gospel have known ungodly persons who seemed utterly callous to external solemnities and impervious to heavenly appeals, whilst yet admitting theoretically the truth of all that the Bible teaches. And not so infrequently as might be thought it is learned that once or oftener such had been brought by the Spirit to a crisis, when a decision for or against Christ had to be made, and that it was by deliberate rejection that the state of apathy was reached which seems, and often proves to be, unalterable. And let those who have long and adequate experience in seeking to serve the people of God reflect upon cases of such as gave a clear account of a good conversion and of walking with God for a time, but who seem immovable as regards aspiring to elevated present experience and future and heavenly prospects. These admit the desirability of such a life and future, but present no sign of any determination to attain thereto. Most certainly it is not for us to pronounce upon any individual case, but rather to exercise the love that "hopeth all things"; but it is impossible at times not to inquire in one's own mind whether certain have not passed the limit of forbearance and been turned back to spend their days in the wilderness: "we shall press on, *if God permit.*"

As the Spirit ceases to strive with the ungodly remarked upon, so is it written of Israel as the people of God: "He said, Surely they are my people, children that will not deal falsely; so He was their saviour. In all their affliction He was afflicted, and the angel of His presence saved them: in His love and in His pity He redeemed them; and He bare them, and carried them all the days of old." (Isa. 63: 8–9). They were His people, His sons, whose afflictions He shared, giving them divine love and pity. Himself was their Redeemer, and those whom He redeemed He bare and carried as a father his child. "*But they*"—they "rebelled and grieved His holy Spirit: therefore He was turned to be their enemy—Himself fought against them" (Isa. 63: 10). And similarly we Christians are warned that it is possible, not merely to grieve, but to *quench* the Spirit. Do we reflect sufficiently upon the inevitable consequences, present and future, that must surely attend so grave sin?

Thus is given, and given expressly for *our* admonition, the

supreme example of how individuals may lose their place in the body corporate and their share in the fullest blessings open to attainment. Of course, God will perform His covenants, however long be the delay occasioned by His people's waywardness. In the fourth generation Abraham's posterity duly returned to Canaan; but *not all did so who might have.* Thus, too, God will have in His glory His church, and Christ will have His bride, and the universe will have its executive government. But let us each give heed that we obtain a full reward, and let us in love "exhort one another day by day, as long as it is called To-day"—that is, so long as the opportunity for attainment remains open.

It surely ought not to be needful to add that the words, "whose end is to be burned," do not import the endless perdition of those so treated. If it means that the thorns and thistles are to be burned, that would benefit and not finally ruin the land, and this would be a picture of the finally sanctifying effect upon the believer of even the severest chastisement. But taking the meaning that it is the land that is to be burned, it still remains a picture of temporary affliction, for in any case the land abides. And though burning it is a last resource of the farmer, yet the ultimate design and issue is beneficial. "*Our* God is a consuming fire"; but the same fire which destroys the alloy cleanses the gold, though the process is drastic and may need to be prolonged. The destruction of the flesh contributes, in the case of a child of God, to the salvation of the spirit, not from eternal wrath—that is secured by the cross of Christ—but as regards what must be faced "in the day of the Lord Jesus" (I Cor. 5: 5).

Interpreted thus by Israel's history this passage in chapter 6 of *Hebrews* enforces the same lesson as the Second Warning in chapters 3 and 4, as follows:

That for them of old as for Christians now:

i. Rebellion, definite and persistent, can induce a state of heart of which there will be no reversal in this life. The limit of time arises from the example of Israel as narrated in God's histories. These do not introduce the question of the *eternal* prospects of those in question, which question therefore does not arise in the application the Writer makes to Christians.

ii. The penalty of such rebellion may include (*a*) the wasting of this present life in a desert experience, as to which more will be said; (see pp. 192–196); (*b*) the death of the body under summary judgment—see again I Cor. 10: 8–10; Acts 5: 1–11; I Cor. 11: 27–32; Jas. 5: 20; I John 5: 16, 17, etc.; (*c*) the loss of Canaan, that is, the Millennial age, which carries also the for-

feiture of sovereignty for ever, since it is only those who rise in the first resurrection who form the bride, the wife of the Lamb, and are said to reign for ever and ever (Rev. 20: 4–6; 21: 9; 22: 5).

iii. That these possible penalties, though indeed severe, do not involve the *eternal* destruction of regenerate persons. The type forbids. Not one Israelite was able to return to Egypt, from which they had all been separated by blood and water. Not one reached again the former standing as condemned and liable to die without mercy. So also no regenerate person can ever return to the lost condition of the unregenerate. God will not suffer it: He has too much respect to the blood of His Son, even though a believer may repudiate its value. It is never to be assumed that the bodily death of a person under the judgment of God necessarily implies his eternal death; nor is it to be assumed that "fire" or "burning" must mean *eternal* fire, the lake of fire. Such terms are used much more often of the temporal judgments of God. See p. 179.

6. *Consolation and Exhortation* (ver. 9–12).

As remarked above the Writer has a genuine affection in the Lord for those addressed. He would not have them think him stern and callous, nay, they are "beloved." It is wise to set before them the full possible outcome of declension; "faithful are the wounds of a friend"; nevertheless he is assured that they have not reached that state, but are evidencing in some real measure their salvation by displaying the things that accompany salvation. What could he say to make plainer that he writes to them as really "saved" persons? No unreal professor can produce things that belong to salvation, seeing that he is not saved.

For this assurance he finds reason in their love to the Name they had professed, shown by serving His saints, a love, which God, its Object, would not forget. Ponder the thought that God's *righteousness* determines His conduct towards His people and their works. It is at once encouraging and warning. This is one of many passages the force of which lies in the very real peril of liberty, and even life, incurred in periods of persecution by espousing the cause of the persecuted. Consider in the same light I Cor. 12: 3; I John 3: 13, 14.

But the spiritual life is like riding a bicycle: one cannot stand still, but must go on or go off. Therefore he expresses the most urgent concern and appeal that the former diligence be maintained, so that their hope may be retained to the reaching its full end. It is their *hope*, their expectation of things future that is in danger of dying. Thus Paul reminds the Colossians that, being already reconciled to God by the death

of His Son, their prospect was the highest of all honours, the being "presented" before God in glory, as one is "presented at court": comp. Eph. 1: 4; 5: 27; Jude 24. But that, unlike the reconciliation which results entirely from the death of Christ on the cross, this final honour is contingent upon their *continuance* in the *faith* and their not being moved away from the *hope* of the gospel (Col. 1: 22, 23).

Christians may easily become "sluggish" as to this hope and goal, as these already were as to keenness of hearing. The word is the same as in 5: 11. The alternative is that they constantly bestir themselves to be "imitators of those who through faith and long patience inherit" what God has promised. For the promises of God are not absolute, in disregard of the moral state of His people, but are expressly made dependent upon the response of faith and the exercise of long patience. This strong exhortation to extended patience (*makrothumia*) is inharmonious with the unfounded notion that the early Christians were taught that the return of Christ was to be expected by them at any time. On the contrary, they knew from Christ Himself that it would be only "after a long time" that He would return (Matt. 25: 19), and that throughout that lengthy period they must be steadfast in hope.

7. *An Encouraging Example* (13–20).

Of this extended patience Abraham, the father of all the faithful, is a shining example. From the beginning the utterances of God to mankind include two major elements, warning and promise: warning—"in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die": promise—the seed of the woman shall bruise the serpent's head (Gen. 2: 17; 3: 15). Our Writer has warned; now he would encourage to long patience. Such steadfast endurance was amply rewarded in Abraham's case, whose children we are in faith and hope and need to be in patient waiting.

God promised to Abraham that his posterity should be numerous, saying, "multiplying I will multiply thee" (Gen. 22: 17). This was an amplifying of the first promise, "I will make of thee a great nation" (Gen. 12: 2), a promise given when he was childless. He then waited no less than twenty-five years for the son to be born through whom the promise should be fulfilled (com. Gen. 12: 4 with 21: 5); and later, as this son of promise was a ripening lad, the hope centred in him was seemingly dashed to the ground by the command to slay him (Gen. 22). But Abraham's faith prospered on the test because he kept on "looking unto the promise of God"; so that faith grew, and he became "fully assured that what God had promised He was able also to perform" (Rom. 4: 20, 21).

Now a promise from GOD is warrant enough for assurance of hope; but God in great grace was "minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His counsel," to which end He confirmed it by an oath, and an oath based upon His own existence and character; so that these shall cease should His promise fail of fulfilment, which is impossible. Now men regard the oath of a fellow mortal as confirming a matter beyond further dispute; how much more ought a Divine oath to dismiss all doubt!

Thus by two unchangeable things, the promise and the oath of God, He has given us adequate ground for strong encouragement and steadfast endurance. For as Abraham was given a great future as the object of his hope, so we have a great hope set before us, only one of far greater dignity and glory. Abraham's hope attached him firstly to a glorious future connected with his national descendants on earth; our hope connects us with a future to be realized in the heavens.

8. This hope is

i. A refuge. Hope saves from despair. By looking forward we are kept from looking back, as did Lot's wife; and also "by hope we are saved" as regards present difficulties daunting the spirit: as a poor youth, struggling with present poverty, is saved from giving up the battle, by reason of a hope that one day he will secure an inheritance left to him, but situate in a distant land, and for the enjoyment of which he must wait till he come of age.

ii. Hope is an anchor, enabling the ship to ride out the gale. The security of an anchor depends firstly upon the firmness of the unseen ground which it grips. Our hope attaches our hearts to the realm "within the veil," the region which is eternally stable, the kingdom and presence of God. The storms which rock the surface of the sea do not disturb its rock-bottom, so neither do the tempests of earth disturb the tranquillity of heaven, where our hope is fixed.

iii. The figure is changed. Into that high and holy place Jesus has entered, and is for ever beyond and above the storms of time. He braved their fiercest blusterings and passed through into the haven of eternal peace. But even as His passage through this tempestuous world was for our benefit, so has He entered within the veil for our good. It is as a forerunner of all who will follow His steps that He has gone into the immediate presence of God, having become High Priest for ever.

What, then, must be our response? We are urged (1) to flee to the refuge, and to abide there. (2) To lay fast hold of the hope and never to relax our grip. (3) We must cast our

anchor within the veil, nor ever slip the cable of faith that links us to it. (4) We must follow after our Forerunner, nor turn from His path, for only so can we arrive at the place whither He has gone in advance of us.

Let us therefore run with patience the race that lies before us, looking off unto Jesus, and thus finding Him to be both author and perfecter of faith (12: 1). "Wherefore girding up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope perfectly [=undividedly] upon the favour that is being brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1: 13).

This strenuous and ceaseless advance each must make for himself. It is no use waiting for others, "*for*" (ver. 4) as touching those who have been described they cannot and will not go forward, so it is useless to wait for them, even though they be dear to our hearts in the Lord or by ties of nature. "He that loveth father or mother more than Me, he is not worthy of Me; and he that loveth son or daughter more than Me, is not worthy of Me. And he that doth not take his cross and follow after Me, is not worthy of Me. He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that loseth his life for My sake shall find it" (Matt. 10: 37–39).

CHAPTER IX

THE MELCHIZEDEK PRIESTHOOD (Ch. 7)

Ch. VII. 1. For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him; 2. to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is King of Peace; 3. without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually.

4. Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils. 5. And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham; 6. but he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises. 7. But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better. 8. And here men that die receive tithes; but there one, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth. 9. And, so to say, through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; 10. for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

11. Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron? 12. For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. 13. For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar. 14. For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests. 15. And what we say is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth another priest; 16. who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless [Gr. indissoluble] life: 17. for it is witnessed of him,

Thou art (*a*) priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

18. For there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness; 19. (for the law made nothing perfect), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh to God. 20. And inasmuch

as it is not without the taking of an oath; 21. (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but he with an oath by him that saith of him,

The Lord sware and will not repent himself, Thou art (*a*) priest for ever);

22. by so much also hath Jesus become surety of a better covenant. 23. And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing; 24. but he, because he abideth for ever, hath his priesthood unchangeable. 25. Wherefore also he is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near to God through him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

26. For such a high priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher than the heavens; 27. who needeth not daily, like those high priests, to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people: for this he did once for all, when he offered up himself. 28. For the law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the law, appointeth a Son, perfected for evermore.

THE stimulus needed by the sluggish having been administered the main theme is resumed. Such as have been revived by the stimulus will find their spiritual understanding quickened to master the teaching otherwise difficult to explain to them (5: 11).

Christ is the heavenly High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Ponder the situation implied by the Writer. One who cannot grasp the significance of the fact stated is dull of apprehension, is a spiritual babe. Then, alas, is not the church of God mainly an infant nursery?

Jesus has been proclaimed by God as "high priest after the order of Melchizedek." Not "*a* high priest," as if there were other high priests. God appointed in Israel only one high priest at a time. It is so in the heavenly realm. Jesus is that high priest, and there is no other. The main argument of the Writer hangs on this fact; so that he who would draw near to God must do so through *this* High Priest or he cannot do so at all. And this High Priest does not belong to the order of priests of which Aaron, the God-appointed high priest in Israel, was the head, but to the order of a priest named Melchizedek.

Of this Melchizedek the sole and very brief historical record is as follows: (Gen. 14: 17–20):

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him [Abram], after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer and the

kings that were with him, at the vale of Shaveh (the same is the King's Vale). And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High. And he blessed him and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, possessor of heaven and earth, and blessed be God Most High, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him a tenth of all.

Our Writer draws lessons from two features of this short account: (*a*) from what is said; (*b*) from what is not said.

1. The first fact mentioned is that Melchizedek was priest of "*God Most High.*" This was not the title of God which marked Aaron's ministry. The inscription on the gold-fronted plate of his turban was "Holy to *Jehovah*" (Exod. 28: 36). Full revelation of His character as *Jehovah* came four centuries later than the time of Abraham. In the time of the latter He made Himself known chiefly as El Shaddai (Exod. 6: 3), that is, God Almighty, or All-sufficient; or as El Elyon, which emphasized His solitary exaltation above all creation. That the Person was one and the same is true, and is intimated by Abraham in Gen. 14: 22, where he speaks of El Elyon as Jehovah, but the emphasis was on the former title then, on the latter in the days of Aaron.

Thus in that oldest period of history God asserted by His Self-chosen titles the dependence of all men upon Him and His sufficiency for them, as well as His supremacy over and control of His universe. Already by the time of Abraham men generally had set aside this knowledge of the true God which they possessed and had created of their own fancy, or by the seduction of demons, gods many and lords many (Rom. 1: 18–32); but there remained some who maintained among the nations a witness to the true Creator, God Most High, and of these Melchizedek was standing for this only true God, though amidst races devoted to and degraded by idolatries most foul. One can imagine the strength it was to the newly found faith of Abraham to find in Canaan a noble representative of the God whose glory he had seen in distant Chaldea, and the pleasure it was to Melchizedek that a devout worshipper of his God had come to the land.

The revelation of El Elyon by the name Jehovah was made in due season to draw back to Himself the estranged race of mankind, by the declaration given in that name that the Most High was desirous to cancel the moral distance that separated sinful rebels from Himself and to enter into covenant relations with them, and that they could count implicitly upon His faithfulness.

But the chief point, it would seem, why the Writer quotes

the earlier Divine title is to show that Melchizedek lived long before Aaron and represents an older and primal relationship between man and God; a relationship which the Aaronic system of religion was designed to restore, not to supersede, being thus itself but temporary.

2. The next feature stressed is that Melchizedek was a *royal* priest, a priest-king. His name interpreted means king of righteousness, and the name of his city, Salem, declares him king of peace. This sets him forth as an ideal sovereign whose rule being righteous will assure peace, because for evermore "the work of righteousness shall be peace; and the effect of righteousness quietness and confidence for ever" (Isa. 32: 17).

This union of the kingly and the priestly offices in one person is ancient. It was found in earliest times after the Flood. In ancient Babylon, the centre of the first empire,[1] the sovereign was the high priest. This continued till century six B.C., when Cyrus the Persian having crushed the Babylonian monarchy the priestly caste probably left Babylon. They seem to have moved their headquarters to Asia Minor, and in 133 B.C. Attalus, king of Pergamum, bequeathed his kingdom and priestly headship to the Romans. In the next century Julius Caesar revived the dual dignity by constituting himself, first, Pontifex Maximus, and later Emperor. The Emperors of Rome retained this twofold office until Gratian (emperor A.D. 375–383) refused the priesthood.

This feature marked the systems of idolatry that branched out of the original Babylonian idolatry. Thus Balak the king of Moab is shown offering the sacrifices required by Balaam (Num. 23: 2, 14, 15, 29, 30). Down to quite recent years the Emperor of China acted as chief priest of his people, annually offering supplication to heaven on their behalf.

But the Bible shows that the union of ruler and priest obtained earlier than Babylon, for Noah was both head of the family and also as priest offered its sacrifices unto God (Gen. 8: 20), and it was thus with Abraham (Gen. 12: 8; 13: 4; ch. 22), Isaac (Gen. 26: 25), Jacob (Gen. 33: 20; 35: 3) and Job (Job 1: 5). Though the head of a family or clan may not have been styled king, he was so *de facto*, and its priest also.

Thus Melchizedek was one example of a general feature of those earliest times, and Moses was another instance. For, as was shown above (pp. 65, 66), he acted as chief priest before

[1] There were earlier kingdoms in Sumeria, in different districts, and sundry wars to the end of the 3rd millenium B.C. "In the struggle which followed between various small cities, Babylon was successful, and under Hammurrabi she became the capital of 'Babylonia,' ultimately obtaining the position of the most important city in Western Asia." (*Enc. Brit.*, vol. II, 840.)

Aaron was appointed and he is also styled law-giver and "king in Jeshurun," the senior over all heads and tribes of Israel (Deut. 33: 4, 5).

If we inquire as to the origin of this primal conjunction of king and priest, it must be observed that it is an original fact of the whole creation, for from its beginning the Son Who created it was both its Sovereign and the Mediator between it and God. In this as other matters the heavenly is the original, the earthly the copy.

And Scripture suggests more. The breastplate of the high priest in Israel was adorned with precious stones, on which were engraved the names of the tribes he represented before God. Now a heavenly original of this had existed, for that anointed cherub, who stood next to God, and "covered" (as the cherubim in the holy place "covered" the mercy seat where shone a ray of the Divine glory), was adorned with "every precious stone".[1] The whole picture in Ezek. 28, read in the light of the earthly copy, suggests that Satan in his unfallen state had a priestly office.

Again; in ch. v of my commentary on the *Revelation* it is shown that the twenty-four elders are angelic beings having royal rank, for they are throned and crowned, and also render priestly service of worship and intercession (Rev. 5: 8).

And when at last certain redeemed and glorified men, in fellowship with the glorified Man their Redeemer, take the place of that angelic government and priesthood they are a "royal priesthood" (I Pet. 2: 9; Rev. 1: 6); and the picture of them in Rev. 22 is a holy city which also is "adorned with all manner of precious stones" (Rev. 22: 19), this figure again corresponding to the earthly copy, the breastplate of Aaron.

3. All this makes plain

i. That Melchizedek was one of *an order* of royal priests, not a solitary individual holding that rank, which feature the Writer stressed by noting five times that Ps. 110: 4 mentions "the *order* of Melchizedek" (5: 6, 10; 6: 20; 7: 11, 17). It shows also that this order is heavenly, primal, and to be permanent, which at once involves the argument of the Writer that the priesthood of Levi, in the persons of Aaron and his sucsors, must of necessity be but temporary, to make room at some period for the full establishment of that superior order.

ii. That the proper and permanent Head of this order is the Son of God shows why it is said that Melchizedek was "made

[1] The most ancient monuments constantly depict the king as having standing by him an official who "covered" his head with a screen of feathers or palm leaves. It suggests that the original knowledge men had of high things persisted, and influenced their earthly arrangements.

like unto the Son of God." It is not that the Man Christ Jesus has been made like unto Melchizedek by being appointed a priest of a royal order, but, on the contrary, that Melchizedek has been honoured to share in the dignity belonging properly to the Son of God. It is because of this that his history is so narrated in God's record of him that, as far as that record goes, he is presented as without ancestry, birth, or death. Not that he was actually without these, else would he be eternal, uncreated, immortal, the Son of God Himself. This has been suggested, but the thought is forbidden by the statement that Melchizedek was *made,* and made *like unto* the Son of God. No one can be made like unto himself, for he is already himself.

Here the Writer builds upon the negative fact of the record, upon what is *not* said. Nothing can more emphasize the divine nature of the Old Testament histories, the perfect control by the Spirit of the historian, than that the omissions and silences give important lessons. The brief mention of Melchizedek was so given as to make him in the record correspond to the uncreated and eternal Royal Priest, the Son of God, in Whose order he was a subordinate.

iii. It is further clear why Melchizedek is, with accuracy, termed "*priest* of God Most High." Though he was in his day the chief holder on earth of the royal priesthood yet was he not *high* priest; for the Son of God was already the holder of that supreme office.

iv. Because the order to which Melchizedek belongs exists in perpetuity, being an essential element in the ordering of the universe, therefore a man who is granted membership in it partakes of its permanency, and so it is said of Melchizedek that "he abideth a priest continually" (ver. 3).

Westcott remarks that the force of *eis to diēnekes* (continually) is "satisfied by his actual continuance for ever," but adds that this "supposition is excluded by the circumstances." Presumably this refers to the death of Melchizedek; but it is to be borne in mind that the order and office of royal priesthood belongs primarily to that world to a realm of which the death of the body dismisses the soul and to the glory of which the first resurrection introduces those then raised. The statement that Melchizedek "abides a priest continually," taken simply, shows that death does not deprive a royal priest of his dignity, or it would do so for those mentioned by Peter as being such to-day.

But as this priesthood is not cancelled by death, but persists in that realm beyond, then obviously it is superior to that of Aaron, for priests of his order "by death are hindered from continuing" (ver. 23).

. . . . .

Thus the facts as to Melchizedek introduce the heart to a realm anterior to and superior to the economy of Israel and its priesthood. This latter was indeed of God and every way helpful to repentant and believing men of that period. The higher and royal priesthood had ceased on earth. It had been proposed to Israel as a redeemed people soon after their deliverance, when at Sinai God said: "If ye will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant . . . ye shall be unto me a *kingdom of priests*" (Exod. 19: 5, 6). But Israel neither could nor would fulfil the necessary condition; the Divine offer could not take effect; the rulership was separated from the priesthood, and remained so until at length the "sceptre departed from Judah" and passed to the gentile Nebuchadnezzar; and at last, with the destruction of the temple by Titus, the priesthood also ceased.

Even at its best the Aaronic priesthood was but interim, a stop-gap; and all the circumstances called for a better covenant, a nobler priesthood, a better sacrifice, to which the Aaronic was designed to lead and to yield place. They therefore who upon faith in Christ had reached these better and higher privileges had attained to the heavenly realm and royal priesthood, and should not for a moment yield to pressure or allurements to return to the earthly and transitory. This the Writer enforces by

4. *The Relationship of Abraham to Melchizedek.* Now Abraham was the father and founder of the Israelitish economy, the fount and head of the whole nation, the holder of the original covenant and promises of God from which that people, and indeed the whole race of mankind, derived all hope and favour. And yet Abraham accepted the blessing of Melchizedek and owned his superior dignity by rendering a tithe of the spoils of war.

Evidently therefore in Abraham's judgment Melchizedek was of a nobler rank than himself, for "without any dispute the less is blessed by the better" (ver. 7).

Again, Levi, the head of the priestly tribe in Israel, was descended from Abraham and therefore inferior to him; but when Abraham, his forefather, gave tithes to Melchizedek, for all practical purposes so did Levi, for the latter was bound by the precedent of his ancestor. Thus Melchizedek is superior to Levi and therefore to Levi's descendants, Aaron and his sons. This introduces a further consideration of weight.

5. *Levi and Melchizedek.*

i. *The Levitical priesthood was bound to prove temporary* because it could not serve the indispensable end of bringing in a perfect state (vers. 11, 19). God, by virtue of His own

perfection, must desire and require perfection in the relations between Himself and His creatures. Man must desire and strive after normal, perfect relation with his Maker, or he cannot be satisfied. This end Aaron and his sons could not fully serve. They could bring about a temporary accommodation between God and the sinner, but a perfect reconciliation, perfect in quality and duration, they could not effect.

ii. Neither Aaron nor any one of his successors could guarantee the eternal security of a worshipper because in due time he would pass off the scene by death and be no longer able to serve the worshipper (ver. 23).

iii. Those priests were themselves infirm and imperfect and could not raise others to a state higher than their own (ver. 28).

iv. The sacrifices they offered for sins were not adequate to the establishing of an eternal standing before God and therefore had to be often repeated (ver. 27; 10: 4).

Because of this essential and ineradicable imperfection in the Levitical order, God, after it had acted for four hundred years, announced prophetically the coming of a new priest who should belong to the order that had preceded the Levitical (Ps. 110: 4), which implied the superseding of the latter.

6. *The Law of the Aaronic Priesthood transitory.*

i. The law here in view is not the moral law as embodied at Sinai in the Ten Commandments. That law had been in force since man was created, and was prior to and independent of God's covenants with Abraham and Israel. Not under it but in connexion with a code of religious ordinances the Aaronic priesthood was instituted, and by that code its service was regulated.

ii. The moral law is "holy, righteous, good" (Rom. 7: 12), but this law of ritual is here described as "weak and unprofitable" (ver. 18).

It is true that neither law could make man perfect, but the reason in each case is different. The moral law was in itself perfect, being the declaration of the will of God to man, but it was "weak *through the flesh*," though not in itself; that is, its requirements being so high, human nature could not render obedience and so the law could only condemn the disobedient, rather than help him. But the law of ritual was weak *in itself*, it was a "carnal" commandment, "fleshly," that is, "it had its expression in flesh (comp. 9: 10, *dikaiōmata sarkos*). All the requirements, for example, to be satisfied by a Levitical priest were literally 'of flesh'; outward descent, outward perfectness, outward purity. No moral qualification was imposed" (Westcott on 7: 16). In consequence, the weakness inherent in human nature was inherent in this "carnal" system:

being imperfect it could make nothing perfect, and was bound sometime to pass away and make room for that which being itself perfect could make perfect the obedient.

iii. The priesthood and its authorizing and controlling law stand and fall together; "for the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law" (ver. 12).

Here arise pertinent and serious reflections for to-day. There exist in Christendom orders of priests claiming to be "Christian," as the Roman, Greek, many Anglicans, and others. In different degrees they adopt and practise various appointments, rites, and ceremonies, such as sacred buildings for worship, with a triple division (porch, church, altar), to which attach different degrees of sanctity, a priestly order, priestly vestments, sacraments, incense, etc.

By what authority do these priestly orders exist and under what law do they officiate? If they plead that they so order religion because God so ordered it of old in Israel, they seal their own condemnation, for

(1) That whole law of ordinances has been "disannulled" by God "because of its weakness and unprofitableness" (ver. 18), and it is wholly blameworthy to perpetuate what God has annulled; it is obviously an offence against Him as much as if magistrates should persist in administrating a law which the king had abrogated.

This galvanizing of a ritualistic corpse, this dressing-up of a moribund system, must needs be even more weak and unprofitable, morally and spiritually, than was the original system while it still lived.

(2) In any case, only men belonging to the family of Aaron were appointed by God to administer that ceremonial law, and it was under penalty of death that any one not of Aaron's family presumed to draw near to act as priest (Num. 3: 10). This penalty was exacted even from Levites, though they were of the same tribe as Aaron but not of his family (Num. 16: 8–11).

But if these priests claim to act under Christ as High Priest, their condemnation is equally swift and sure, for

(3) The Son of God Himself does not, and may not, act under that Levitical law, not being of the family of Aaron, but of the tribe of Judah, "as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests" (vers. 13, 14).

Here again the Writer argues from a *negative*. As Moses did *not* connect priesthood with any tribe but that of Levi, no other tribe can put forth priests under the law of Moses. Well had it been if this rule of action had prevailed among Christians, and nothing had been introduced into their service and worship which is *not* found in the New Testament. And happy is

the individual Christian who excludes from his life what is *not* justified by the Word of God.

Moreover, it is equally and emphatically fatal to their claim to act as priests under Christ that

(4) His priestly service is rendered only *in heaven*, for "if He were *on earth* He would not be a priest at all" (ch. 8: 4), that is, a priest to administer that former ceremonial system.

The effect is, that these priesthoods in question are plainly contrary to the will of God. Those who desire to offer worship fully acceptable to God should abandon such priest-ruled systems.

Thus the whole Levitical system and priesthood is effete and annulled, so that they who seek God are cast back upon that older and living priesthood of which Melchizedek is God's chosen example, and of this priesthood

7. *Christ is the Living and only High Priest.* In Him, and in Him alone, are realized all the requisite conditions and qualifications.

i. As the Son of God He is the original and proper holder of the Royal Priesthood.

ii. As the Son of Man risen, and glorified in heaven, He has been reappointed to that dignity which was His from the beginning of creation; but He is able now as man to understand and to feel with those He represents before God.

iii. This appointment by God the Father is superior to that of Aaron inasmuch as it was confirmed by an oath: "Jehovah sware, and will not change His mind, Thou art priest, etc." (vers. 20, 21, 22; Ps. 110: 4).

iv. This office is exercised in heaven, even as that same Psalm (ver. 1) shows "Jehovah said unto my *Lord*, Sit Thou *at My right hand.*"

v. Christ does not suffer from the transitoriness caused by death, for the sworn appointment is "Thou art priest *for ever.*" He enjoys "The power of an indissoluble life" (ver. 16). His Divine nature is of necessity incapable of dying: His human nature was dissolved in death; the spirit, that element which animates the human body, He dismissed to His Father Who had given it (Luke 23: 46; Eccles. 12: 7); His body rested in the tomb; His soul, Himself, the Ego, went to the world of the dead (Ps. 16: 8–11; Acts 2: 25–28). But by resurrection this dissolution was reversed, and now the Son of God, Christ Jesus, as to His humanity as well as His divinity, lives for evermore in the power of indissoluble life, "death no more hath dominion over Him" (Rom. 6: 9).

vi. Because of this His priesthood does not have to be surrendered by Him and pass to another, but "because He

abideth for ever, He hath His priesthood unchangeable," it resides continuously and everlastingly in His own person.

An Israelite might well have found much comfort by going repeatedly to the same priest, as one who from frequent intercourse had come to know the circumstances, temptations, struggles of the penitent. But there was always the liability that one day he would learn that his friend had died and could no more help him in his approach to the Holy One. The earthly priest could help only partially and for a time; but Christ "is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He *ever liveth* to make intercession for them" (ver. 25).

The expression *"to the uttermost"* is found elsewhere only at Luke 13: 11. The Satan-afflicted woman "was bowed together, and could *in no wise* lift herself up." This scarcely describes the condition with strict accuracy. She could not *"completely"* lift herself up, as the term is given in the Revised margin of Heb. 7: 25. She was not so crippled as to lie on her back all the time, yet could only get about bowed down. What a picture of the devout Israelite under the law, and of too many believers to-day. The face ever downward, minding earthly things; no power to lift oneself up unto God; definitely hampered; Satan-bound. From this incompleteness of spiritual state, alive indeed, yet only half-alive, no human mediator can deliver; but even as Christ instantly made straight that bent back, so now as the Royal Priest He can "save *completely* them that draw near unto God through Him"; and those who seek Him habitually will find that through Him God, having begun in them His good work, "will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1: 6). And thus shall this Priest bring all those who obey Him to that perfect harmony with God which is the goal of creation, but to which Aaron and the law of ceremonies could do no more than point the way, but could not bring us there.

Truly indeed "such a high priest became us"—He is exactly and completely suited to such helpless sinners as us; for He is "holy, guileless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens" (ver. 26). In nature, character, conduct, and position He is all that the holy God requires and all that sinful man needs; He is God's "Son, perfected for evermore" as our Saviour (ver. 28).

8. *What, now, is required on our side* that we should obtain the fullest benefit from this Royal Priest? Are we not shown this by a detail concerning Abraham not noticed above? When did Abraham obtain the blessing of God's priest Melchizedek? It was when he returned from "the slaughter of the

kings." Our Writer notices and quotes this detail (ver. 1) Not that Christians in this age are to slaughter kings or any other men; *now* our warfare is in the spirit realm; we wrestle not against flesh and blood but against wicked spirits (Eph. 6: 12). As Abraham in his day waged war to the death against the then enemies of God and righteousness, so must we contend vigorously against the Devil and his works, no matter what the risk and cost. Then shall we learn the spiritual reality of Melchizedek bringing forth from His heavenly Salem the true bread and wine and pronouncing upon us the blessing which maketh rich and to which no sorrow is added. What this warfare involves will be seen from what the Writer says later.

This condition of inheriting the blessing belongs to the nature of the case. The Son of God was manifested on earth that He might bring to nought the works of the devil (I John 3: 8) and deliver his captives (Heb. 2: 14, 15); therefore one who wishes to experience that blessed deliverance must needs take sides with the Son of God against the Devil and his works, and such the Royal Priest will bless and succour to the full. These shall find that Jesus has truly become for them the mediator of a better covenant than that of the law (ver. 22), which theme the Writer now proceeds to unfold and apply.

PART III. THE BETTER COVENANT
(Ch. 8: 1–11: 40)

CHAPTER X

THE HEAVENLY TENT (Ch. 8)

Ch. VIII. 1. Now in the things which we are saying the chief point *is this*: We have such a high priest, who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; 2. a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man. 3. For every high priest is appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is necessary that this *high priest* also have somewhat to offer. 4. Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, seeing there are those who offer the gifts according to the law; 5. who serve *that which is* a copy and shadow of the heavenly things, even as Moses is warned *of God* when he is about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern that was shewed thee in the mount. 6. But now hath he obtained a ministry the more excellent, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which hath been enacted upon better promises. 7. For if that first *covenant* had been faultless, then would no place have been sought for a second. 8. For finding fault with them, he saith,

> Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; 9. not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them forth out of the land of Egypt; for they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord. 10. For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel, after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and on their heart also will I write them: and I will be to them (*a*) God, and they shall be to me a people: 11. and they shall not teach every man his fellow-citizen, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest of them. 12. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins will I remember no more.

13. In that he saith, A new *covenant*, he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away.

1. RECAPITULATION. Clearly such a high priest as has been described is eminently desirable, but is he available? ◆ He is: "We have such a high priest"; this is the chief point urged. He embodies all the required qualifications as to position, dignity, service, and offerings.

i. As to position: He sat down. The force of this will be shown in ch. 9: 11–14.

ii. As to dignity: (1) He took His seat *at the right hand*; the place of highest honour; (2) of *the throne*: the centre of supreme authority; (3) of *the Majesty*: the centre of Divine glory; (4) in *the heavens*: the primal, dominating region of the creation; for the heavens were created before the earth (Gen. 1: 1; Job 38: 6, 7), and "the heavens do rule" (Dan. 4: 17, 25, 26, 32, 35).

Thus is our High Priest in the position which affords Him decisive influence upon all matters in which He acts, an influence not to be defeated by the utmost that the Accuser of the brethren can do or urge (Rev. 12: 10, 11; Job chs. 1 and 2; Zech. 3: 1, 2). Already when on earth He had thus acted in support of His followers (Luke 22: 31, 32), and now at the throne He prevails on behalf of the lowly of heart (I John 2: 1, 2).

iii. This service to God and man, for the reconciling and maintaining of relations between them, He discharges in "the *true tabernacle*, which the Lord pitched, not man."

(1) It is here that He renders this public and priestly service, and does so at His own expense; all of which ideas are expressed in the word translated "minister" (*leitourgos*). Nor shall any heart but His own ever know the cost it was to Him to provide the gifts and sacrifices which are due to God from men, nought of which they could offer but all of which He supplied on their behalf. And now, as priest, while waiting the time to take up His kingly service, He expends His time, abilities, love, and power for the good of them that entrust to Him their affairs.

The subject of His gifts and sacrifice the Writer will open at length in chs. 9 and 10.

(2) The heavenly regions are vast beyond human conception. It is not in any and every part of them that our High Priest officiates, but in a particular sphere described here as "the true tabernacle [or tent, *skēnē*] which the Lord pitched, not man." Of this tabernacle several details are given which, being seldom noticed, shall be here considered.

(*a*) A tabernacle (or tent) is a *dwelling*, even as we read of Abraham (11: 9) that "he took up his abode in tents" (*en skēnais katoikēsas*). There is, then, in the heavens a "tent" wherein God dwells. As to His infinity and universality God is everywhere, but as the Centre of creation and Object of its

worship He has a place where beings limited in nature and form can approach Him: "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father who is in heaven" (Matt. 18: 10). The scenery of the *Revelation* exhibits this, as 15: 5, where seven angels come out from the inner shrine, "the sanctuary (*naos*) of the tabernacle [tent] of the testimony in heaven"—here literal beings come out of a literal place. Empty the latter of reality and the reality of angels must be denied and the *Revelation* is emptied of meaning. Referring to *Note C* to ch. II (p. 33), it is clear that *this* dwelling place of God cannot be "outside of time and space" for angels cannot be so, and they enter and leave this tabernacle.

This heavenly tent corresponds to the Tent in Israel by being a centre of the glory of God. In that the Shekinah was a display of His glory. When the Lord of that glory "tabernacled" on earth (John 1: 14) men with enlightened eyes saw in Him the moral glory of God, and once, on the holy mount, His outward glory. In this heavenly tent His personal glory is seen, even as Rev. 15: 8: "the sanctuary was filled with smoke from the glory of God."

(*b*) But this dwelling is *temporary*, a second element belonging to a tent. In II Cor. 5: 1 the contrast is emphatic between a tent which can be taken down and a building which is eternal. The tent in heaven is not eternal; it had a beginning, it was "pitched." Before finite beings were created it was not necessary; the Divine Persons enjoyed divine intercourse without need of such a sphere. It exists for the benefit of creatures of time and space, as part of the heavenly portion of the creation.

(*c*) This tent is *movable*. It was thus with its earthly copy, as God said to David: "I have not dwelt in a house since the day that I brought up Israel, unto this day; but have gone from tent to tent and from one tabernacle to another" (I Chron. 17: 4–6). Here is the same contrast between the permanent house and the movable tent.

The tent in heaven (Rev. 15: 5) has been noticed above as the source of wrath just before the period of the millennial glory. In Rev. 7: 15 it is perhaps intimated that the persecuted of that period will, after their removal to the heavens, be sheltered by this tabernacle of God: "He that sitteth upon the throne shall tabernacle over them." And at the close of the Millennium, which is the beginning of the everlasting kingdom, it will be announced that "the tabernacle of God is with men," that is, on earth (Rev. 21: 3).

It is in this dwelling-place of the Most High that the Great Priest now exercises His ministry of mercy, from the throne where causes are *determined*.

(*d*) The tent is set up by *the Lord*. The Israelite could reach only a tent made, indeed, at the direction of God, but made by man, and so having no range beyond man's sphere, this earth, leaving uncertain his standing before heaven and for eternity.

Such religious persons to-day who persist in seeking God along that line of things earthly, visible, material, share the uncertainty and insecurity of that earthly system, for they do not benefit by the priestly ministry of Christ seeing that this is carried on in heaven. Yea, their situation is less secure than that of the devout Israelite of old, for those had at least the benefit of a God-appointed priesthood to help them Godward, but these to-day have only a self-appointed priesthood having neither Divine warrant nor any validity.

But such as approach God through the heavenly Priest are introduced to that divine dwelling of God which is of His own direct construction for the very purpose that His creatures may meet with Him there. A tent made by man, man could destroy, and Israel be deprived of such advantages as attached to it; but the tent pitched by the Lord none can destroy or close.

(*e*) This is the *true* tent-dwelling of God. "True" (*alēthinos*) means the real as contrasted with anything that seems to correspond to it; that which fulfils every purpose. Comp. John 6: 55: "My flesh is true (*alēthēs*) food and my blood is true (*alēthēs*) drink."

In this tent God does really and personally dwell. In only a very limited degree was this known in the Tabernacle of old. Therefore access to this dwelling, through the true High Priest, affords a real relation of reverent intimacy with God Most High not to be found elsewhere. That perfection which the earthly arrangements under the law could never produce is reached here.

2. *The Copy of the Heavenly.*

Of this heavenly original the tabernacle built by Moses was but a *copy* and *shadow* (ver. 5).

i. Even so it was of real value; but who will linger over the copy who can study the original? Who need regret to pass from the twilight of the shadow to possess the bright substance? He who will be so foolish can never enjoy the original, the ideal, the substantial.

ii. But as yet none has come to the original in personal experience. It is our hope to do so; but hope that is seen is not hope. Meanwhile, from the copy much can be learned of the original; the shadow shows the shape and size of the substance; much as to the heavenly tent can be learned from its earthly copy.

iii. This by itself were reason enough why God solemnly

warned Moses that he was to complete (*epitelein*) the copy precisely according to the pattern that had been shown to him in the mount. The pattern was to be followed not merely as to general design but completely, that is, as to the smallest detail. For by these details the Holy Spirit was signifying important truth and teaching lessons in parabolic form (9: 8–10).

A modernist I know said that we could quite well dispense with the book of Leviticus. And I heard a celebrated Nonconformist preacher, who passed as evangelical, say sarcastically that certain brethren "hung a great weight of doctrine on a tabernacle pin." Such slighters of the copy remain blind as to the original; their knowledge of the heavenly places is infantile. Yet we are exhorted by the Spirit to seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God, yea, to "*set* our mind on the things that are above, *not* on the things that are upon the earth" (Col. 3: 1, 2). And he who loves Christ will wish to know as much as possible about the place where Christ is and what He is doing there, in gaining which knowledge the study of the copy helps.

A further reflection. God is now building a spiritual dwelling for Himself, His church (Matt. 16: 18; I Pet. 2: 4, 5; Eph. 2: 19–20). Very many who busy themselves helping, as they suppose, in this work say that God has given us no pattern for *this* house, but that each may, yea must, build as he thinks best. For that earthly sanctuary precise details were given, with a solemn injunction that they were to be followed; for this present house no pattern is given, say these builders. Is it any wonder that, with such an opinion prevailing, Christendom, claiming to be the house of God, presents the appearance of a building of many and incongruous styles and a mass of confused and discordant details?

iv. Moses did not see that actual "tent that the Lord pitched." Probably man, not yet possessed of the powers of the body of resurrection, could not see it or comprehend it if seen. It was a "pattern" (*typos*) of it that was shown to Moses and of that pattern he made an earthly copy. Yet as the copy corresponded to the pattern and the pattern to the original, we, studying the first, can learn about the last. It has been rightly said that the types are as rigid as mathematics.

To this study our Epistle is a call and encouragement, and without it the Epistle cannot be understood. In these four chapters (7–10) there are mentioned perhaps forty details of the earthly tent and its services. Some major matters will be noticed in their places. But even as the pattern was not shown to Moses on the low level of the desert but on the summit of the mount, so must the heart be detached from the

earth and ascend to God if it would comprehend the heavenly. They who "mind earthly things" will not be shown the heavenly things. For the ultimate design of the copy is to attract to the original.

All Israelites dwelt around the Tabernacle. They knew its form, took part in its services, perhaps admired its pure linen, coloured coverings, artistic veils, and golden pillars; but only those whose spirits longed after the God of the mount, the God of heaven, and who by faith and love sought in heart His holy place on high, knew the spiritual value of that earthly copy of the heavenly. It is thus to-day. The essential principle and vital secret of the true Christian life is to know Christ *where He now is*, at the right hand of God.

3. *The Old Covenant.*

It has been already stated that "Jesus has become the surety of a better covenant" (7: 22). This is now expanded.

i. A covenant is a contract in which each party binds himself to the other on certain conditions.

The properly first covenant was an *implied* covenant, that between the Creator and the creature, Adam; God undertaking certain responsibilities toward the being He had seen fit to make, and the creature being under natural responsibility to trust and obey his Creator. The first *expressed* covenant was that made by God with Noah (Gen. 9: 8–17), of which the rainbow is the sign. So long as there shall be rainbows this covenant will stand. The next covenant was that with Abraham reviewed in ch. 6: 13–20. That covenant too stands: it was not annulled by the law promulgated at Sinai 430 years later. This is argued in Gal. 3: 15–22.

It is the covenant made between God and Israel at Sinai that is here called "first" and "old" as is clear from 9: 18, 19. It would perhaps be more exact here to translate *prōtē* by "former" which is the meaning in Matt. 27: 64; John 1: 15, 30, and is its more usual meaning in Hellenistic Greek.

The Jewish mind based all on Moses, Sinai, the law. Few were spiritually minded to discern that the covenant there made was faulty and temporary, and that the true hope of the godly was based on God's promises to Abraham. Far too many do not understand this to-day, and persist in the vain endeavour to be at peace with God by works and ceremonies of the law of Sinai. Being ignorant of God's righteousness they seek to establish their own, not seeing that, their works being morally imperfect, they can never by them become righteous before God (Rom. 10: 3; 3: 20).

ii. But the position is yet more radical. It is a just principle of law that should one party to a covenant wilfully and

persistently disregard his obligations the other party is at liberty to regard it as void and to denounce it. This is how matters stand as regards the covenant of Sinai. After it had lasted some seven hundred years God denounced it, saying through Jeremiah, "Israel did not continue in My covenant and I disregarded them" (ver. 9; Jer. 31: 32). The rebellion of Israel brought about the temporary annulment of the covenant, which has been the situation ever since and will remain so till they are changed in heart toward God and the promised new covenant can be made with them. This can be studied at length in Lev. 26 and Deut. 28.

One item of the covenant was that habitual obedience to the statutes imposed under the covenant would assure permanent possession of Canaan, with material prosperity; whereas persistent disobedience would involve, first, severe chastisement in the land, and at length, removal from it and dispersion in other lands. Already by the time of Jeremiah the northern kingdom had suffered this last penalty, and in the days of that prophet Judah also was scattered.

It is true that after seventy years a portion of the godly, of all tribes, humbled themselves and embraced the opportunity of returning to Judea, but they were a mere minority; the majority continued in banishment and have remained scattered until now. And the descendants of that minority proved as unspiritual as their ancestors (Matt. 23: 29–39; Acts 7: 51–53); they filled up the cup of iniquity by the murder of the Son of God; so that after a comparatively brief occupation of the land (some six centuries; Cyrus to Hadrian), these also were scattered and to this day the Sinaitic covenant remains in abeyance.

It follows that it must needs be futile for any son of Adam, Jew or Gentile, to endeavour to secure under it the favour of God, and especially the Gentile seeing that such have never been parties to it. Some other and better covenant must needs be the basis of fellowship between God and man. Even in the days when our Epistle was written the former covenant had long since been, by implication, declared "old," and was actually becoming old, indeed aged, like a decrepit old man (*gēraskō*), and was nigh unto vanishing away. (ver. 13.)

Incidentally, this (apart from other weighty reasons) forbids absolutely the pretentious theory of Anglo-Israelism. Even if it could be established historically that the Anglo-Saxons and the Americans are the descendants of Judah and the ten tribes (which, however, is unfounded), yet even so they could not, in banishment from Palestine, and therefore being under the curse of Jehovah, be enjoying the vast temporal blessings guaranteed to Israel in that land only, and there

only upon condition of obedience to the covenant of Sinai; for that covenant is not in force.

4. *The New Covenant.*

i. Even while that former covenant lasted no one ever stood in the favour of God on the ground of it, for from its start that law had denounced its curse upon every person that *continued* not to keep *all* its demands (Deut. 27: 26; Gal. 3: 10). Obedience had to be continuous and complete, on which terms no one had qualified for favour or could do so.

From this fact alone the spiritual Jew could have seen that his expectation of the grace of God must rest upon the earlier covenant with Abraham. Now this covenant had not been made with Israel as a nation, for they did not become a nation until their corporate deliverance from Egyptian slavery. It was only then that God promised to regard them as a kingdom and a nation, set apart corporately as His special people. This last privilege was conditional upon national obedience which they unitedly promised to render (Ex. 19: 3–8). From this situation resulted their national apostasy from God and national rejection by God.

But the covenant with Abraham was with himself personally and with his descendants individually. Therefore each of his seed who walked in the steps of that faith of his father Abraham was blessed with the faithful Abraham (Rom. 4: 12; Gal. 3: 9).

By consequence, each Gentile also who thus trusted God, likewise was reckoned by God to be a child of Abraham and within the sphere of the covenant with him. And because Abraham had thus trusted God, and the covenant promises had been granted, *before* he had been circumcised, circumcision could be a sign of the covenant, but was not a condition precedent thereto (Rom. 4: 9–17; Gal. 3: 6–9).

From these considerations it follows that every individual who exercises a personal faith in God becomes a "son of Abraham" (Gal. 3: 7) and a sharer in that righteousness which was reckoned unto Abraham upon his having believed God. And because a true faith of the heart was the only condition required of Abraham, it results that this is the only condition required to make one a spiritual son of Abraham. Thus the covenant afterward made at Sinai is set aside as to the basic blessing of acceptance with God.

ii. But further, the essential feature of God's promise and of Abraham's faith concerned a particular person, indicated thus: "In thy *seed* shall all the nations of the earth be blessed" (Gen. 22: 18). "He [God] saith not, And to seeds, as of many, but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ" (Gal. 3: 16).

Abraham looked forward to Christ, with his expectation fastened on Him for the fulfilment of the promised and covenant blessings: "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day," said the Lord Jesus, "and he saw it and was glad" (John 8: 56).

At the appointed and aforetold time the Seed was born, the Christ appeared; and then and thenceforth the faith required unto righteousness must of necessity be placed in Him as having come, even as in advance it was placed in Him as to come. And forasmuch as the covenanted blessing was to extend through Him to all nations of the earth, the Gentile as much as the Jew can claim the blessing and secure it by faith in Christ.

For thus sharing in the blessing promised to Abraham it is not needful to become a Jew in the national sense. Centuries before the *nation* came into existence at Sinai, Rebecca, Leah, and Rachel had entered the *family* circle of Abraham; and, if they had also his personal faith in God, they secured a share in his portion from God.

That Israel's national life, and membership in it, secured certain rich privileges, is, indeed, true, and remains true, and will prove true in ages to come (Rom. 3: 1, 2; 9: 4, 5). But this does not enter into the question of obtaining a righteous standing with God; for *this* Christ is the end, the annulment of the law (Rom. 10: 4), and so for inheriting the primal, pre-Sinaitic covenant with Abraham.

iii. It is out of this situation there develops that new spiritual society, the church of God, formed from both Jews and Gentiles, but in which there can be neither Jew nor Gentile, nor other merely earthly distinction, and the members of which society, because they belong to Christ, the Seed of Abraham, are themselves "Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise" (Gal. 3: 28, 29).

To such belong all the fabulous riches, heavenly and earthly, included in the new covenant of which Jesus is the surety; for "*all* things" are theirs, since they are Christ's and Christ is God's (I Cor. 3: 21–23). Eternity itself will be too short to exhibit that this covenant is indeed better than the old, enacted upon better promises (ver. 6).

5. *The Differences between the Old Covenant and the New.*

i. At Sinai there was set up a standard and rule of life. It was a perfect standard, sufficient to regulate perfectly the heart and conduct of man in every relationship. But it was external to man and could not enable him to be or to do what it demanded. Being thus "weak through the flesh" it failed of its end. This is so with all legislation. Parliament may

pass excellent laws but it cannot grant to the subject the power or even the disposition to obey.

Before a man trusts another his inner man is locked against that other, but faith, trust, is an act which opens the heart, the inner life, to the person trusted, in this case to God. At once God is free to work *within* the one who trusts Him. This the law could not do, except so far as to frighten and to harden the sinner, which did but oppress and provoke him, and left him both weak and rebellious.

ii. But it is the vital feature of the new covenant that God, by His Spirit, puts this law in the inward parts and writes it upon the heart. The heart open to God receives an inward perception of what God requires, an instinctive sense of what pleases God, and a spiritual acquaintance with God Himself. Such a believer not merely knows about God, as did men who heard this law, but becomes acquainted with God Himself revealed in Christ. "And this is the life eternal, that they should get to know Thee, the alone true God, and Him Whom Thou didst send, Jesus Christ" (John 17: 3).

To know God thus is to love Him; the renewed and instructed heart cannot but love Him Who is Love; and love becomes the energy which both impels and enables a joyful obedience to His law.

"My gracious Lord I own Thy right
To every service I can pay,
And count it my supreme delight
To hear Thy dictates and obey."

Thus faith worketh by love and love fulfils the law. Not by a fraction is the Divine standard lowered, no demand of the moral law is relaxed. On the contrary, the heart perceives now its deeper meaning, its more spiritual sense and claim. It perceives that hatred is murder, lust is adultery, coveting is stealing. But love is glad and able to discharge this higher claim; it longs only to be perfect as God is perfect.

It is to be observed that, by faith and love, spiritual believers in the older days reached by faith this normal and blessed state long before Sinai. Eliphaz described to Job the path by which he might make acquaintance with God and find the Almighty his true treasure and heart's delight (Job 22: 21–30). And a later much afflicted saint could exclaim, "Oh, how I love Thy law! It is my meditation all the day" (Ps. 119: 97). And another had reached such ripeness of character that he was "greatly beloved" in heaven (Dan. 10: 11).

To this large extent did the Spirit work practical righteousness of heart and life in believers in days of old: how much

richer therefore may be and should be the conformity to God of those who share in the new covenant now, subsequent to the fulfilment at Pentecost of the promise that the new heart should be reinforced by a new spirit, for God would put His own Spirit within the believer and so cause him to walk in His statutes, keep His judgments, and do them. (Ezek. 36: 26, 27.)

6. *The Cancelling of Iniquity.*

But what becomes of the penalties incurred by the transgression of the old covenant? It is a fixed law of God's universe that "every transgression and disobedience receives a just recompense of reward" (2: 2). The penalty being death, how shall the transgressor benefit by a new covenant? How can he be a party thereto?

At ch. 9: 15 it will be stated that "a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant." By His own death the Mediator of the new covenant wiped out, cancelled the liability to death of the transgressor of the old covenant. On this ground God can rightly say to such as agree to the terms of the new covenant He proposes that He will be merciful to their iniquities and will remember their sins no more (ver. 12).

i. The word "merciful" (*hileōs*) is notable. It means much more than being merciful, even being *propitiated.* The distinction is important. The tax collector stood before the gate of God's house (Luke 18: 9–14) and therefore before the brazen altar of sacrifice. On that altar burned the innocent creature that had died as his substitute. Understanding sufficiently the principle involved in that victim having died in his stead, he prayed, "God, be propitiated (*hilasthēti*) to me the sinner." By this he meant: "I, not the lamb, am the sinner; for the sake of my substitute that has paid my penalty be propitious to me."

Therefore, to be propitious is to show mercy *on the ground of penalty met* by substitution. One may be merciful and not shoot a dog that bites him, or not exact a debt from the poor. David was merciful to Amnon and Absalom; he did not exact the legal penalty for the incest of the one or the murder by the other. This was mercy at the expense of justice and the results were most disastrous. But God is propitious on the ground, fully adequate in law, that the penalty of the sinner has been met, his liability discharged.

In the tabernacle the golden cover of the ark, sprinkled with blood, was the propitiatory, the spot where the high priest annually made propitiation for the people (2: 17). In the heavenly sanctuary Christ personally is this propitiatory: "He is the propitiation (*autos hilasmos estin*) concerning our sins" (I John 2: 2; 4: 10). As the blood stains on the golden

altar showed that atonement for sin had been made at the altar without, so the wound-marks on the glorified person of our Redeemer are proof in heaven of His atoning death on earth.

ii. The perpetual repetition of the sacrifices in Israel brought perpetually to the fore that sin was ever prevalent: "in those sacrifices there is remembrance made of sins year by year" (10: 3). But the adequate sacrifice of the Son of God enables God to dismiss the question of sin for ever.

The millenniums through God has been bound to keep before Him the iniquity of Israel, if only because, as a people, they persist in their wrong attitude to Him. Even to-day, after all their bitter sorrows, the majority of Israel are enemies of God and His Son. But when their hearts shall have been at last humbled, and they have been renewed in spirit, when the new covenant shall have been established with them, then shall be fulfilled, to the joy of God and the comfort of their own hearts, this gracious promise, "their sins will I remember no more" (ver. 12; and see Isa. 44: 22 and other passages).

iii. The *order* of the promised blessing is significant.

In the evangelical preaching of the gospel in our times the common method has been to offer first the forgiveness of sins upon faith in the atoning work of Christ. The address may or may not go on to add somewhat as to the new life and its possibilities, but quite often the preacher is content to present only the offer of pardon.

This is not the method of teaching by either Jeremiah or our Writer who here quotes him, as taught by the Spirit of truth. The prophet dwelt much upon the wickedness of man in violating his due relations with God and the severity and righteousness of God's inevitable judgments. He stressed the disability of man under the old covenant of law and works, and the glorious proposal of a new covenant on the basis of grace and faith. It was on the supposition that a man repented of his sins, and embraced the proposed new arrangement, with its new nature and practice, that he was then assured of the forgiveness of his sins.

The Lord followed the same order in presenting His message. On a cultured Rabbi He pressed first the necessity of a new birth leading to a new life in a new kingdom, and only later spoke of His own death as the basis of that new life (John 3). To a woman of poor character He first offered the new life of inward satisfaction, and then made her face her sins (John 4). The same method is seen in Peter's address at Pentecost and Stephen's before the Sanhedrin (Acts 2 and 7). It was thus the first preachers taught Gentiles also. In the house of Cornelius Peter enlarged upon the facts of Christ's life, death, and

resurrection, and only then mentioned the forgiveness of sins (Acts 10: 34–43). Paul followed the same plan in the synagogue at Antioch of Pisidia (Acts 13), and when speaking to the cultured heathen at Athens he does not seem to have brought in the matter of pardon at all (Acts 17).

The Divine order in presenting the Divine message will be more sure of the Divine blessing and endorsement.

7. *Israel and Judah.* The lengthy quotation from Jeremiah raises another question and one of vast importance, namely, the status under the new covenant of Israel and Judah as such.

i. Jeremiah 30 and 31, quoted in Heb. 8, form one prophecy. It begins (30: 3) with an assurance from Jehovah that days will come "that I will turn again the captivity of my people Israel and Judah, saith Jehovah: and I will cause them to return to the land that I gave to their fathers, and they shall possess it."

It is surely clear that to Jeremiah and his contemporaries this promise could mean only what it plainly says: that the two sections of his people, the one already removed from the land and the other just about to be, would return to the land and possess it. To those first readers Israel meant Israel, Judah meant Judah, and the land given to their fathers meant Palestine. No other meaning was conceivable. If the terms did not mean this, but something wholly different, then the prophecy would have thoroughly misled its first readers.

ii. If it be suggested that perhaps this restoration took place when that small company (comparatively) returned in the days of Cyrus, one has only to note the details of the promised restoration, and of the times to precede it, to see that this suggestion cannot hold.

(1) That remnant did not then *possess* the land. The Persians were its owners, and Israel were there on sufferance.

(2) The time of Jacob's trouble before the restoration is to be unexampled, "that day is great, so that none is like it" (30: 7; see Dan. 12: 1; Matt. 24: 21). No such days immediately preceded the return under Zerubbabel.

(3) When this return takes place "Jacob shall be quiet and at ease, and none shall make him afraid" (30: 10). The history of that former return, as given in Ezra and Nehemiah, shows a very different picture, one of fear, distress, opposition, uncertainty. And this developed into the horrors of the Maccabean days.

(4) The period in view was to see, under the judgments of God, "a *full end* of *all* the nations whither I have scattered thee" (30: 11). This has never yet taken place.

(5) The multiplied details here given of that happy era can have only a literal meaning or no meaning at all. The names Israel, Judah, Jacob, Ephraim, Zion, Samaria, Rachel, Ramah, Egypt, Hananel, Gareb, Goah, Kidron, the valley of dead bodies and ashes, the horse gate toward the east—all these must mean the persons and places that bore these names or they become without sense and must be virtually expunged from the prophecy. As treatment of the words of God this would border on profanity.

(6) The restoration here promised when effected is to be permanent. The fulfilment is connected with "the latter days" (30: 24) and the "latter end" (31: 17), terms regularly meaning the days to precede the coming again of Jehovah to this earth to establish His kingdom here. It is guaranteed that, as certainly as the ordinances of sun, moon, and stars shall not depart, so certainly shall Israel not "cease from being a *nation* before me *for ever*" (31: 36, 37), and that Zion, having been then built, "shall not be plucked up, nor thrown down, any more *for ever*" (31: 38–40).

Therefore the prophecy still awaits fulfilment and foretells that Israel and Judah as such will together enter into the new covenant with God.

iii. This is the undeviating testimony of the Old Testament. At the beginning of Israel's national existence the song of Moses (Deut. 32) and the blessing of Moses (Deut. 34) taught that God "will make expiation for his land, for his people" (Deut. 32: 43)—the land and the people in conjunction. This is the consensus of all prophecies, and it shines out vividly in ch. 37 of Jeremiah's contemporary, Ezekiel. Two sticks represent Judah and Israel in their then separation. These two sticks were to become one in the prophet's hand to signify that God "will make them one nation," and this, as stated above by Moses, "in the land, upon the mountains of Israel"; and (as declared also by Jeremiah in ch. 30 above, ver. 9) "one king shall be king to them all, and they shall no more be two nations," and "David shall be their king." Through Ezekiel also God emphasized that this restoration will be permanent, saying twice, "my sanctuary shall be in the midst of them *for evermore*" (Ezek. 37: 25–28).

The great prophet of the exile was shown this as to the coming kingdom of God: "it shall never be destroyed . . . it shall stand for ever" (Dan. 2: 44). The post-exilic prophet, Zechariah, speaking to that small portion of the people that had returned to their land, spoke much of another, fuller, final restoration of Judah, Jerusalem, and Ephraim, with Jehovah dwelling in their midst at Zion. And Malachi closes the Old Testament by pointing onward to the same great day, when

all Israel shall have the benefit of a further ministry by Elijah. Christ Himself declared this to be future to His time, saying "Elijah indeed cometh and restoreth all things" (Matt. 17: 11).

The whole Old Testament speaks with one undivided voice, and insistently, to this effect, even that Israel and Judah will dwell permanently in their own land, and no other than a literal meaning can be given to the statements upon this point. For example, what other than a plain literal sense can be gathered from our chapter in Jeremiah (31: 5): "Again shalt thou plant vineyards upon the mountains of Samaria; the planters shall plant and shall enjoy the fruit thereof"? "*Again* shalt thou plant"; as the former planting was unquestionably literal, so must be the latter, or the word "again" is out of place.

iv. That the prophecy should be taken thus is strongly confirmed by its terms being cited unchanged in the New Testament. If Israel is not in days to come to remain a distinct nation, bearing that name, why does our Writer include and repeat the national name? (vers. 8, 10). He could well have paraphrased the paragraph to avoid this. He could have said: "Behold the days come when I will make a new covenant; not according to the covenant which I made when I led Israel out of Egypt, etc. For this is the covenant which I will make, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into men's mind, etc."

v. That Israel is to remain a distinct national entity in the kingdom of God is parallel to the feature that other nations also are to remain such.

In that portion of his book which deals specially with Gentile nations Jeremiah announces the restoration in the latter days of Moab (48: 47), Ammon (49: 6), and Elam (49: 39). This is in contrast to the fact that the restoration at that time of Philistia, Edom, Damascus, Kedar, or Babylon is not announced. The difference implies the literal meaning of both sets of predictions.

Isaiah 19 declares that Egypt shall be smitten but healed (ver. 22); that there shall be through traffic between Egypt and Assyria (ver. 23); and that "in that day shall Israel be a third with Egypt and with Assyria, a blessing in the midst of the earth; for that Jehovah of Hosts hath blessed them, saying Blessed be Egypt my people, and Assyria the work of my hands, and Israel mine inheritance" (Isa. 19: 24, 25). If Israel is to be eliminated from this prophecy, as not having a national future, then who is to be the third with Egypt and Assyria? In the case supposed (rather, asserted by some) Egypt and Assyria also ought to be eliminated, which renders the prophecy wholly meaningless.

Later, Isaiah declared unequivocally that the nations shall

come to the light of Israel and kings to the brightness of Israel's rising, and that the nation and kingdom that will not in that day serve Israel shall perish, yea, be utterly wasted (Isa. 60. And see Zech. 14: 16–19).

vi. So certainly is this the future as foretold by God that in the eternal state these national entities, including Israel, will continue. The notion that all distinctions are to be annulled and all believers to be merged into the heavenly company, the church now being gathered, makes void the whole testimony of the Old Testament and also the final testimony of the New Testament. For, in Rev. 21, when the holy city, the new Jerusalem, descends out of heaven from God, and the tabernacle of God is with men, it is stated distinctly (vers. 2, 3) that "they shall be His peoples," in the plural. And on the gates of that city "are the names of the twelve tribes of the children of Israel," as plainly as the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb are on the foundations of its wall (vers. 12, 14). The apostles must be reduced to nonentities if Israel is to be eliminated. In this final vision of the final conditions, both the bride, the apostles, the nations, and Israel are all present, each distinct from the others in the eternal kingdom.

Much more might be urged, but this must suffice to justify the view that our passage means that the actual Israel and Judah are to share in the blessings of the new covenant of which Jesus is the mediator. A radical defect in those who argue the reverse view is, that they cannot face the first, the plain, the uniform meaning of the vast array of passages concerned from both the Old and New Testaments.

vii. That nations share in the covenanted blessings is not at variance with the feature (mentioned under 4. i. above) that it is *individuals* who enter into this covenant relation with God. It is as individuals that the covenant is entered to-day; but this does not hinder the formation of these individual believers into the spiritual body, the church. Similarly every individual Israelite, or man of another race, will for himself repent, believe, and receive the new nature and spirit; but this will not hinder the existence of national bodies formed of such regenerate individuals.

It was necessarily upon each skeleton separately in Ezekiel's valley of dry bones that the breath moved and the spirit of life acted; but when they stood up they were an *army*, an organized body (Ezek. 37).

At Pentecost the tongue like as of fire "sat upon *each one of them*" separately. "And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit," and so "in one Spirit were all baptized into *one body*" (Acts 2: 3, 4; I Cor. 12: 13).

Thus also at the end of this age: the Spirit will be poured

out upon all flesh (Joel 2: 28), Jew and Gentile alike, incorporating each into his sphere in the kingdom of God, whether in Israel or some other nation.

Thus the present distinction (I Cor. 10: 32) between Jew, Gentile and the church of God is to be permanent. Shortly before that outpouring of the Spirit upon all flesh the church of God will have been completed, and by resurrection and rapture will have been removed from earth to the presence of God in heaven (John 14: 1–3; I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4; etc.), to return with the Lord when He descends to the earth (Col. 3: 4). This alone forbids that persons of Israel and of the nations who believe in Christ and receive the Spirit after that removal are to be merged in that heavenly company. They will remain distinct therefrom. But the members of each company of the saved will alike enter by faith into the blessings of Abraham, the father of us all, and share in the blessings of the new covenant, each in his sphere and measure.

8. *Jesus the Surety and Mediator.* Now since this whole Divine programme could never be served, nor its privileges be gained under the law, how powerful is the argument and appeal of the Writer that believers should advance from that old covenant and embrace and hold fast the new covenant.

For the covenant is "new" in contrast to that of Sinai, which had grown "old" (8: 13), not as respects its relationship to the Abrahamic covenant, for of this it is a re-affirmation.[1] It is even now in force, as Jesus said: "This cup is the new covenant in My Blood" (Luke 22: 20), and as it is said here (8: 6), "which *hath been* enacted." Believers, both Jew and Gentile, as sons of Abraham receive its benefits now: Judah and Israel will enter into it hereafter.

Of this covenant, Jesus, not Aaron or any other person, is the *Surety*, the Guarantor from God's side that all these vast benefits are available to faith (comp. II Cor. 1: 20). He is also their *Mediator*, the only One through Whom they can be obtained.

To Him therefore the sinner must resort continually, reposing confidence in Him alone, and in Him for ever, in all relations with God.

"Stand in Him, in Him alone,
GLORIOUSLY COMPLETE."

[1] This subject is examined more fully in my *Israel's National Future.*

CHAPTER XI

THE SANCTUARIES AND SERVICES OF THE TWO COVENANTS (Ch. 9)

Ch. IX. 1. Now even the first covenant had ordinances of divine service, and its sanctuary, a sanctuary of this world. 2. For there was a tabernacle prepared, the first, wherein *were* the lampstand, and the table, and the shewbread; which is called the Holy place. 3. And after the second veil, the tabernacle which is called the Holy of holies; 4. having a golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was a golden pot holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; 5. and above it cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy-seat; of which things we cannot now speak severally. 6. Now these things having been thus prepared, the priests go in continually into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the services; 7. but into the second the high priest alone, once in the year, not without blood, which he offereth for himself, and for the errors of the people: 8. the Holy Spirit this signifying, that the way into the holy place [Gr. places] hath not yet been made manifest, while as the first tabernacle is yet standing; 9. which is a parable for the time now present; according to which are offered both gifts and sacrifices that cannot, as touching the conscience, make the worshipper perfect; 10. being only (with meats and drinks and divers washings) carnal ordinances, imposed until a time of reformation.

11. But Christ having come (*a*) high priest of the good things to come, through the greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this creation; 12. nor yet through the blood of goats and calves, but through his own blood, entered in once for all into the holy place [Gr. places], having obtained eternal redemption. 13. For if the blood of goats and bulls, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling them that have been defiled, sanctify unto the cleanness of the flesh: 14. how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit [Gr. through spirit eternal] offered himself without blemish unto God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? 15. And for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they that have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. 16. For where a testament is, there must of necessity be the death of him that made it. 17. For

a testament is of force where there hath been death: for doth it ever avail while he that made it liveth? 18 Wherefore even the first *covenant* hath not been dedicated without blood. 19. For when every commandmant had been spoken by Moses unto all the people according to the law, he took the blood of the calves and the goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself, and all the people; 20. saying, This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded to you-ward. 21. Moreover the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry he sprinkled in like manner with the blood. 22. And according to the law, I may almost say, all things are cleansed with blood, and apart from shedding of blood there is no remission.

23. It was necessary therefore that the copies of the things in the heavens should be cleansed with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. 24. For Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into [Gr., the] heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us: 25, nor yet that he should offer himself often; as the high priest entereth into the holy place year by year with blood not his own; 26. else must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once at the end [consummation] of the ages hath he been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. 27. And inasmuch as it is appointed unto [Gr. laid up for] men once to die, and after this *cometh* judgment; 28. so Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for him, unto salvation.

1 RECAPITULATION. Before enlarging upon the excellence and sufficiency of the new covenant, the Writer reviews briefly the external features of the former covenant. This forms a background to throw into bright relief the superior benefits of the new covenant. And although he does not dwell upon several details he mentions, it will not be without profit at least to notice them.

i. They were items *ordained* for the service of God (*dikaiōmata latreias*). As before noted, nothing was left to human skill or preference, not even that of Moses: all was by Divine direction and appointment.

ii. The sanctuary to be constructed was *suitable to this world*, the system of things existing in this material earth (*kosmikon*). It was a copy, but only a copy, of what is suitable to the *spiritual* world, where the spirit transcends the external.

iii. The tent then prepared was divided into two parts, the outer the holy place, the inner the most holy place, the holy of holies. It is not here mentioned, but we know that around the whole building was a courtyard, surrounded by a white linen screen, with a single entrance, to which entrance the

worshippers could approach, and in which courtyard the Levites and priests served.

It is worthy to be noted and investigated by the student that this triple division obtained generally in the ancient world and persists even till now. The visitor to the ruined temples of Egypt can trace it there; a vast outer court, leading to an inner realm, at the rear of which was the sanctuary where stood the image of the god. Sometimes this inner shrine was itself triple, as in the temple near the Sphinx.

I once wandered alone through the vast temple of the goddess Menachi at Madura, South India. One passed through the outer court where worshippers brought sacrifices and where was the tank of water where they washed their persons and clothing, reminiscent of the brazen altar and the laver in the tabernacle. Then came a second region, the outer halls; and last came an inner room, where stood the statues of the great goddess. She had her infant son at her breast, obviously the Hindu example of that most ancient Babylonian cult of the Queen of heaven and her son, the original of the Catholic Madonna and child.

Even in remote regions and uncivilized tribes this triple sanctuary is found. On the Nilgiri hills, south India, are wild tribes, Irulas, Badagas, Todas. The last named have a religious cult which centres around their buffaloes. The chief dairyman of a clan is its chief priest. They have burial huts in solitary places, one of which I investigated. The wattle hut was surrounded by a yard with a rude wall of stone, corresponding to the outer court of the tabernacle. Crawling in through a very low opening one found that the hut was in two sections, divided by a palisade. Into the outer part mourners could bring the corpse, into the inner portion only the chief dairyman was permitted to pass.

The most ancient temples go back prior to Moses and therefore cannot have been derived from Jewish practice or tradition, nor have Todas been influenced by Jewish thought. Must not the persistence of this feature, going back into the earliest days of human life, point to knowledge of Divine realities originally given to man?

Nor does the symbolism seem obscure. In the outer court of the tabernacle stood the altar of sacrifice and the laver of cleansing. These pointed respectively to Calvary and the Lamb of God, and to Pentecost and sanctification by the Holy Spirit. But atonement and sanctification take place on earth, so that this earth is the outer court of the heavenly places. In the outer heavens the angels minister to God and man, and into the true tabernacle on high the High Priest has already entered.

To the tabernacle in Israel belonged three veils; the veil at the entrance gate, beyond which only Levites and priests might pass; the veil to the holy place, beyond which only priests might pass, and the second veil before the holy of holies, beyond which only the high priest might pass, and he only once in the year, and then not without blood of atonement.

By all this the Holy Spirit was signifying a solemn fact, even that the way into the holy places was not thrown open at that time; access to the immediate presence of God was debarred.

Let any who treat lightly or neglect this ancient symbolism reflect upon the fact that in all these details the *Holy Spirit* was declaring aforehand weighty facts and truths, which it is therefore profane and perilous to ignore.

The great and happy fact which our Writer next explains and enforces is, that by the work of our Priest the way into the true holy places is now thrown open, so that the believer who has been to the altar, and who goes regularly to the laver (Exod. 30: 17–21), may now enter with boldness into the very presence of God in the true tabernacle. If he sees this blood-bought liberty he may, in real heart-consciousness, in real experience in his spirit, go where his Priestly Forerunner has gone in body; and if he does in this life thus follow the Forerunner as to spiritual experience, then he may confidently expect to follow Him later in a glorified body like unto that of the Forerunner, and enter actually into the presence of God in the heavenly holy place.

On the other hand, such as cling to the legal, the carnal, the external, the old, seeking in that realm to have dealings with God, must rest assured that their conscience can never enjoy boldness before the Holy One; for those arrangements were only "imposed until a time of reformation" (ver. 10), that is, a certain season, foreseen by God, when all that which was formerly faulty and incomplete should be put right and supplied (*diorthōsis*), which season has been already brought in by the incarnation, death, and ascension of the true High Priest, the Son of God. He who would enjoy the sunshine must leave the shadow.

iv. Some other details are mentioned. In the holy place there were (1) a lampstand and (2) a table with bread. In the life of the spirit to which these point there is (1) heavenly light on all matters, in place of the murky darkness of the human understanding at a distance from God. Christ is the light (John 8: 12). (2) There is also heavenly sustenance to strengthen the heart in service to God. Christ is the bread of life (John 6). Even of old there had been a suggestion that these heavenly realities were to be available to all, not only, as

then, to priests, for David and his men had eaten of the shew-bread without penalty (I Sam. 21; Matt. 12: 3, 4). Then it was exceptional, but the exception pointed to the coming rule.

Further; in the holy of holies there were (1) a golden censer; (2) the golden ark of the covenant; (3) a golden pot with manna (Exod. 16: 32–34); (4) Aaron's rod that budded (Num. 17); (5) the tables of the covenant (Deut. 10: 5; I Kings 8: 9); (6) the cherubim of glory above (7) the propitiatory, both the one and the other of gold.

That five of these seven articles were of gold, the most suitable, precious, and durable metal then known to man, points to the heavenly glory of the realities they represented, which may be inferred from the fact that the vision of the heavenly city represents that city and its street as of pure gold, as was also the heavenly measuring rod of the heavenly being who showed the city to John (Rev. 21: 15, 18, 21).

We pass from the general to the particular.

(1) The incense which made the most holy place fragrant speaks of the sweetness and acceptability of Christ to God (Eph. 5: 2), which merit of Christ must be added to the prayers of even saints if these are to be acceptable to God (Rev. 8: 3, 4).

(2) The ark spoke of the person of Christ as, among other things, the centre of the glory of God (Heb. 1: 3, "the effulgence of His glory"; see ch. I, p. 26, 3; Col. 1: 19).

(3) The pot of manna in that Holiest of places foretold that Christ would be the heavenly food of an overcoming and heavenly people (Rev. 2: 17), as He had been the food of His earthly people (I Cor. 10: 3).

> This bread that feeds us through eternal years
> We ate on earth, oft moistened with our tears.

(4) Aaron's rod that in one night budded and bore fruit in the holy place spoke of the resurrection, vitality, and fruitfulness of Christ in the true tabernacle on high, by which it is settled that He is the true High Priest, even as that budded rod was God's testimony in Israel that Aaron and no other man was His chosen priest at that time. It is the lesson of Rom. 1: 4, that the resurrection "determined" (*horisthentos*), that is, settled the point beyond further discussion, that Christ is the Son of God.

(5) The tables of the covenant (which man had broken) were put into the ark, a symbol of Christ Who could say without reserve "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, thy law is *within my heart*" (Ps. 40: 8).

(6) The cherubim of glory, of one piece with the mercy seat, declare that, finally, a company wholly one with Christ in heavenly glory and nearness, connected indivisibly with His propitiatory work, will with Him be the central point where the glory of God will dwell and shine forth (John 17: 22; II Thess. 1: 12). Hence the heavenly city, by another picture, is the dwelling place of God and radiates the glory of God (Rev. 21: 3, 11, 23, 24).

In far back ages "the anointed cherub that covereth" held a similar station and honour (Ezek. 28: 14); but he fell thence by rebellion. The cherubim that overshadowed the glory in the tabernacle were a prophecy of the eternal ages, when that older office that the cherub lost shall be more than revived in the supernal and eternal glory of Christ and His heavenly people from earth.

(7) The mercy seat, the propitiatory, has been explained above (ch. X, 6, p. 133).

The scientific exegete may think it irregular to comment thus upon details which the Writer merely mentioned and expressly left unexplained; but the practical end of enabling plain readers of to-day to feel the force of these things makes it desirable to explain what the first readers of the Epistle would most probably understand sufficiently. They had had instruction by teachers who laboured to illuminate their converts, an art and practice too little known to-day.

2. *But Christ* (9: 11). The subject now reaches full expansion with the great contrast "BUT CHRIST."

i. Yet there is some further recapitulation, this time as to the Priest Himself. (1) He is Chief Priest. (2) He has now come and has superseded Aaron. (3) The good things promised have also now come. The old are obsolete. (4) The tent where He acts is greater and more complete than that of old. (5) It is not made by hands, but by God, which means it is not part of this transitory lower realm.

ii. *His Sacrifices.* It is before emphasized (5: 1; 8: 3) that the priest must have gifts and sacrifices to offer to God; gifts, because such are due from the creature to the Creator, the subject to the Sovereign; sacrifices, because the offerer is under condemnation for sin, has forfeited the right even to live, and must be redeemed and made acceptable, must acquire anew the right to approach the Most High.

(1) *What Christ offers.*

What then, has this High Priest to offer? He made Himself responsible for the sins of men; He thereby surrendered His own right to draw near to the Majesty on high; how shall He

re-acquire it? The blood of bulls and goats, though they were offered in thousands, could not put away sins (10: 4). What availed it that perhaps fourteen hundreds of times the goat had been banished to the desert with the sins of the people imputed to it (Lev. 16)? The goat had never returned in peace to the camp to show that it had left those sins in the distance, that they were really put away.

BUT CHRIST! Christ has come, the Lamb of God that does actually, legally, effectively, "bear away the sin of the world" (John 1: 29, 36). Now, once, at the point where the ages came to a head (*sunteleia*), hath He been manifested (on earth) really to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (ver. 26). Jehovah made "to light upon Him the iniquity of us all" (Isa. 53: 6). "He Himself bare our sins in His body on the tree" (I Pet. 2: 24), and bare them *away*. He went into the distance and darkness, crying out in the bitterness of His soul, "My God, My God, why hast thou forsaken me?" (Ps. 22: 1; Matt. 27: 46); He went into the desert of death, left behind Him there our sins, and returned in resurrection without them, free to enter the true sanctuary and seat Himself at the right hand of God.

Should one of old have challenged the right of a lately cleansed leper to present himself before God at the gate of the tabernacle, instead of remaining in the place of banishment, he would have pointed to the stains of the atoning blood that had been sprinkled upon his garments and put upon his ear and hand and foot, the proof that he had been healed and cleansed (Lev. 14). Should anyone doubt the right of Jesus to be in the glory of God He could point to the marks on His body of the wounds whence flowed on the cross the blood by which He atoned for sin. It was not *with* His blood (the Greek here would not mean this), but *through*, by virtue of, in the title and power of His own blood that He entered there (ver. 12), where nought that defileth can be tolerated (Rev. 21: 27).

Such as deny the atoning virtue of the precious blood of Christ challenge His right to be in the presence of God. They thus cut themselves off from all benefit of His priestly service as Substitute and High Priest, and deny themselves all right of access to God.

(2) *Christ's entry is permanent.* The high priest of old entered the holiest but had to leave it again, because the sins of the people required his constant service outside and because the blood of bulls and goats could not lastingly guarantee his personal safety or title to be within the veil. But Christ entered on high "once for all" because His perfect sacrifice obtained *eternal* redemption.

iii. The *gift* Christ brought to God.

For the gift which Christ offered unto God was nothing less than *Himself.* Nor was this offered in the energy of His human nature only, though that nature and its devotion to the will of God were perfect. With sincere and unreserved submission He said, "not my will but thine be done" (Luke 22: 42). But He gave Himself up to God "through spirit eternal" (*dia pneumatos aōniou*), that is, His divine nature co-operated wholly with His human nature and energized it for this supreme, infinite, infinitely perfect, eternally effective sacrifice of Himself.

It was not simply a man dying as a martyr or an example; it was the God-man, the Son of God, God manifest in flesh, "offering Himself without blemish unto God."

How just, then, is the conclusion drawn, that if in Israel the blood of animals procured a certain external, ceremonial cleansing, *how much more* shall the blood of Christ cleanse the inner man, the conscience, and set the believer free from the dead drag of the load of sin to serve the living God!

iv. *The benefits obtained.*

Let us seek to measure the vastness of the benefits obtained by Christ and received by the repentant and believing sinner, though in truth they are immeasurable.

(1) *A cleansed conscience.* A seared conscience will let a sinner sin without distress, a most appalling and fatal condition. But how disenabling is a defiled yet still active conscience. The memory of wrongs done is an ever increasing burden. The thought of those wronged becomes a distress, one dreads to meet them, may even come to detest them. The fear of detection and punishment may become paralysing. David owned that while he kept silence, while he would not confess his sin to God, his "bones waxed old through his roaring all the day long." But what sensible relief is indicated in his words, "I acknowledged my sin . . . and Thou forgavest" (Ps. 32: 3–5). This lifting of the burden from the spirit is the joy of him who sees the virtue of the atoning death of Christ and relies upon it as regards his own sins.

And what a dread burden the sinner carries until he sees that Christ bore that burden on the cross. Observe the contrast here (ver. 14) between "*dead* works" and "the *living* God." God does only living work, for all His works partake of the health, purity, beauty, eternity of His divine life. And only God does living work. All that a creature without the life of God does is devoid of life, he is dead, and his every work partakes of the disease, unhealthiness, deformity, and transitoriness of his sin-blighted nature. His works may seem unto men to be fair, yet is it but as the deceitful glow often seen on the face of the death-marked consumptive.

It can be a wretched hour to the complacent sinner when he sees that the whole output of his efforts forms but a load of *dead* works. But how correspondingly blissful is the relief when he repents, denounces and renounces his own works, and humbly accepts the benefit of Christ and His work, relying entirely upon Him as his righteousness before God. The relief obtained when a thorn is removed from the flesh or grit from the eye is slight as compared with the ease of a conscience cleansed from dead works.

(2) The second benefit gained is *the capacity to serve the living God.* Hitherto nothing the man did was service to God or served any permanent end at all. All human schemes and efforts are vain and vanishing; "the world passeth away"—the whole system within the bounds of which unregenerate men strive and toil is passing away and will disappear entirely: only "he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever" (I John 2: 17). How happy indeed is he who has entered the sphere and system where the life of God works out in him the will of God; he knows that his labour is not in vain, being wrought in the energy of the Lord (I Cor. 15: 58).

(3) *The eternal inheritance* (ver. 15). The old covenant offered real but temporal blessings. Violation of its terms involved death. Christ suffered that penalty in order that the defaulter might be forgiven, might receive the gift of eternal life, and the promise of an eternal inheritance. Such as have heard God's call to enter into this new covenant with Him (see Isa. 55: 1–3), and have responded, have the prospect of an eternal "inheritance, incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away, reserved in heaven" until the last time (I Pet. 1: 3–5).

How joyful is that prospect in a world which offers one nothing for the future. Men say that a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush; they seek their portion in this life. Such find no true satisfaction even here, and when this life fails they are without hope or prospect.

> "My days are in the yellow leaf,
> The flowers and fruits of life are gone;
> The worm, the canker, and the grief
> Are mine alone."

But the child of God rejoices in the hope of the glory of God. (Rom. 5: 1, 2).

In Christ we are introduced into the realm of things eternal. The Spirit of that kingdom is eternal, the redemption that the King of that realm obtained for His subjects is eternal, their portion therein is eternal. Let no one say that the adjective

aiōnios does not properly denote the everlasting. In all these three connexions it certainly has this meaning.

3. *The Testament* (ver. 16, 17). The word *diathēkē* hitherto rendered by "covenant" has also the meaning of "testament" or will. It seems necessary to understand this as its meaning in these verses. For

(1) The thought of an inheritance has just been brought in, and ver. 16 is connected with this by the word "For." Now under Roman law (which we may justly assume would be known to our Writer, seeing that it prevailed throughout the Roman empire in which he lived),[1] a child could inherit under the will or testament of the father. There was no *inheriting* by covenant. Property taken under a *covenant* was not, strictly speaking, *inherited.*

(2) It was not necessary that death should take place in order to establish a *covenant.* In the case in question death was necessary because it was necessary to cancel former transgressions before a new covenant could be arranged; the necessity did not lie in the nature of the new covenant itself. As the Writer truly says, no *testament* availed while the testator lived; but on the other hand, covenants did avail while the parties were alive.

(3) The instrument in view in these two verses was one which could be made by one party: "doth it ever avail while *he* that made it liveth?" This was true of a will (testament), but not of a covenant.

For these reasons we take the Writer as turning for a moment from the idea of a covenant to that of a testament, because this serves better the point he wishes to press; which point is that it was necessary that Christ should die in order to effect His heart's desire to bring rebels into such a relation with God that they can become His children, His heirs. The Son of God is, as it were, pictured as having put this bequest in His will; as having died to render His will operative; and now, it may be added, risen from the dead He is executor of His own will. What greater security can heirs have than that the testator should himself carry out his own directions? The law at Sinai could produce no such situation, so eminently satisfactory both to the heirs and the Testator.

4. *The Blood of the Covenant* (ver. 18–22).

i. Men usually ratify covenants by signature and seal, but

[1] In the N.T. there are various references to Roman law. They affect such widely separated regions as Palestine, Galatia, and the city of Rome. John 18: 31; Acts 22: 24–29; 25: 11, 16; Rom. 7: 1 ("men who know 'law'," *i.e.* the law of Rome, in which city they lived); 8: 23 ("adoption," a Roman legal term); Gal. 4: 1, 2.

both the old and the new covenants between God and man have been attested by blood, the former by the blood of calves and goats, the latter by the blood of Christ.

The penalty which the transgressor of the law of God has to discharge is death, he must forfeit his life for his sin; and the covenant between God and man, on the ground of which God shall undertake to bless man, must show that the liability of man to die has been discharged and that this has been done in accordance with the law. This means that the law of God shall have been satisfied in respect of its claim on the life of the sinner. In other words, there must be proof that death, the penalty of sin, has taken place, so that the former and unsatisfactory transactions have been disposed of and cancelled according to law, the law of God.

What now is proof of death? A person may seem to have died, though actually having only swooned. But if a sufficient quantity of his blood be produced death will be taken for granted. For "the life of the flesh is *in* the blood . . . as to the life of all flesh, the blood thereof is *all one with* the life thereof . . . the life of all flesh *is* the blood thereof" (Lev. 17: 10–16).

The passover night in Egypt exhibited this. Death was to enter every house. But if a sufficient quantity of blood had been taken to smear the lintel and sideposts of the door it was certain that death must already have entered that house, and it was deemed that the penalty had been duly paid and could not righteously be exacted again.

> "God will not payment twice demand,
> First at my bleeding Surety's hand
> And then again at mine."

Thus the blood which Moses sprinkled upon the book of the covenant, the tabernacle and its utensils, and the people, attested that the penalty due in respect of the sins of the people had been met by death and discharged.

Similarly, the blood that poured from the pierced side of Christ was the visible proof that He was veritably dead and had discharged the full penalty of the sins He bore on the cross. It was the outward evidence that a full satisfaction had been rendered to the law of God in respect of its just claims against sin, and that so no obstacle remained to the establishing of a new covenant between God and man. The blood of Christ ratifies this covenant as being a legal, righteous transaction.

ii. *Substitution.* On this account there was no remission of sins apart from the shedding of blood (ver. 22), because without death the law had received no satisfaction which would warrant the remission of the penalty. Of course, the law does

not inquire *whose* money, property, or life, as the case may be, satisfies its demands and cancels the debt. If the actual debtor can do this well and good, but to the law it is all one whether it is done by the debtor or his surety. See *Note*, p. 202.

It is thus when life is the forfeit in question. In the very rare event of a miscarriage of justice and of the execution of the wrong party, it would be held in law that the real culprit must escape the death to which he had been sentenced, for the demand of the law had been already met.

But what justice does most strictly require is that the substitutionary act, whether by the surrender of property or life, must be a non-compulsory act by the surety. The miscarriage of justice above supposed is wholly exceptional, though effective for the benefit of the culprit, and in the execution of justice by God is impossible. The rule is that no property or life shall be seized or taken by fraud or force to meet the liability of a defaulter. That were but to multiply crime. The surety or substitute must act of his own free will, that is, without constraint.

This essential requirement Christ fulfilled. In His death on the tree it was most prominent, and is powerfully stressed in Scripture. He "offered Himself unto God" (ver. 14). He *offered*; there was no outward constraint: He offered *Himself*; it was His own person and life that He willingly surrendered. So Paul wrote that "the Son of God loved me and *gave Himself up* for me," that is, surrendered Himself to justice on my account (Gal. 2: 20). Yet more emphatically our Divine Substitute said of Himself: "Therefore doth the Father love me, because *I lay down* my life, that I may take it again. No one taketh it away from me, but *I lay it down of myself*" (John 10: 17, 18).

5. *Added Details* (9: 19).

In connexion with the sprinkling of blood at the attesting of the covenant at Sinai there were added, as the Writer tells us, three articles, (1) water, (2) scarlet wool, and (3) hyssop.

i. *The water* points to the activity of the Holy Spirit in association with the atonement of Christ. John testifies as to the crucifixion that, when the side of Christ was pierced, "straightway there came out blood and water" (John 19: 34). This he stresses heavily in his epistle (I John 5: 6–8).

The conjunction of blood and water is frequent in types and histories. In the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 14), the purifying of one ceremonially defiled (Num. 19), and the consecrating of a priest (Lev. 8), both blood and water were equally indispensable. It emphasizes the indissoluble connexion between justification in Christ and sanctification in the Spirit, imputed

righteousness and practical righteousness, the altar and the laver. Both are indispensable to communion with God, to life among His sanctified people, and to service in the holy place now and hereafter. Study I Pet. 1: 2; Eph. 1: 7 with 13, 14; 5: 25–27; Titus 2: 11–14; 3: 3–8; and indeed the whole Bible. The matter will be considered again at ch. 10: 22, p. 166.

ii. *The scarlet wool* is not so easy to interpret. It is associated with the blood, the water, the hyssop in the cleansing of the leper (Lev. 13: 4–7), and again in the case of one to be cleansed from lesser defilement than leprosy (Num. 14: 6). In the one case it was dipped into the blood-stained water, in the other it was burned in the purging fire. In both cases it is thus associated with the purifying judgment on sin and the consequent restoration to fellowship with God and His people.

Perhaps the most illuminating passage is Isaiah 1: 18, where God calls to His backslidden people and says: "Come now, and let us reason together, saith Jehovah: though your sins be as *scarlet*, they shall be as white as snow; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as *wool*." In this passage scarlet represents the intensity, the glaring offensiveness of sin, and its indelible stain on the character, while wool is parallel to snow as a symbol of the purity that can be produced by the blood and water of cleansing. It would seem to be the whiteness of Palestinian wool that caused it to be chosen as a symbol of a cleansed sinner. Comp. Ps. 147: 16; Ezek. 27: 18; Dan. 7: 9; Rev. 1: 14, for this feature.

iii. *Hyssop* was a plant of which a bunch was used as the instrument for sprinkling the defiled who was being cleansed (Num. 19: 18). Perhaps this lowly plant represents the humility of heart requisite in one who is to benefit by the blood. Hence David's prayer, "Purge me with hyssop and I shall be clean," which means give me the benefit of the blood and water of cleansing. He added: "Wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow" (Ps. 51: 7). The hyssop is connected with the sprinkling of blood, or water stained with blood; the washing connects with the use of water to bathe the person and cleanse the clothing, that is the outer, visible life. The one is the altar, the other the laver.

The Bible knows nothing of the offensive idea of a fountain of blood and of sinners plunging therein.[1] The grosser of heathen religious customs included such a ceremony, the *taurobolium*. But the Divinely appointed ceremonies excluded this. Blood was *sprinkled*, washing was always with water.

[1] The one text which countenanced the idea was Rev. 1: 5: "Unto Him that loved us and *washed* us from our sins by His blood." But the true Greek text is *luō* not *louō* and reads "*loosed* us from our sins in His blood" (see R.V.). It is the liberating power of redemption, not the cleansing virtue.

Pardon could be gained through the blood alone, as in the case of the tax-gatherer (Luke 18): he "went down to *his* house justified," but he could not go up into *God's* house and have the privilege of priestly communion and service; for that the water of the laver was equally as indispensable as the blood of the altar (Exod. 30: 17–21); and only priests and Levites could reach the laver. The cross assures pardon to faith: the daily sanctified walk in the power of the Spirit is necessary to fellowship and service.

iv. *The Tabernacle and vessels sprinkled with blood* (9: 21). This is not mentioned in the account of the erection of the Tabernacle (Exod. 40). Only the anointing with oil is specified. But it could be justly inferred from the feature that in the associated ceremony of the consecrating of Aaron and his sons as priests the blood was applied to them before the oil was applied (Lev. 8: 23, 24, 30). This was the case in the cleansing of the defiled. The blood was applied to the leper, and it is particularly ordered that the oil shall be "put *upon the blood* of the guilt offering" (Lev. 14: 14–17).

It means that the Spirit is given only to such as have first accepted the blood of Christ. Pentecost cannot precede Calvary. The order is invariable. "Repent ye, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ unto the remission of sins; and [and then] ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (Acts 2: 38). "Every one of you"—"each of you" individually (*hekastos humōn*); there is no exception to the rule and the appointed order. And so Eph. 1: 13: "In whom [Christ] having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" First belief in Christ, afterward the sealing with the Spirit.

6. *The Necessity of Sacrifice* (9: 23). "Necessary [strong and emphatic] therefore it was that the copies of the things in the heavens with these should be made pure, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these."

i. The necessity arises from the holiness of God. He is of purer eyes than to behold evil and cannot look on perverseness (Hab. 1: 13). It is impossible that Divine holiness shall sanction its own opposite. God would cease to be God did He tolerate uncleanness and compromise with evil. Whatever persons or regions He is to honour with His presence must be holy, as He is holy. Therefore where evil has defiled purification must be effected by atoning sacrifice.

ii. The temporary copies of the heavenly things could be so purged by temporary sacrifices. But whence arises the necessity that the heavenly things themselves must be made pure? It arises from the defiling of those upper realms by the sin of

Satan and his angels. In very ancient days pious men understood this. "His angels He chargeth with folly [or error]. . . . He putteth no trust in His holy ones; yea, the heavens are not clean in His sight" (Job 4: 18; 15: 15). This defilement commenced in that high realm where the anointed cherub at first walked in honour and it descended with him to the lower realms to which he was cast out (Ezek. 28: 16). It affects also the lower heaven of the stars: "Behold, even the moon hath no brightness, And the stars are not pure in His sight" (Job 25: 5).

How shall these upper regions be purged? By the better sacrifices of the new covenant. The work of the cross has universal virtue. The sacrifice made by Christ extends its cleansing energy throughout the heavens. Truly His sacrifice was better, far, far better than the best which Aaron could offer!

iii. But why is this work spoken of in the plural, "better sacrifices"? No work or sacrifice by any other person can be added to His. Can it be because His one entire work as Mediator involved several distinct acts of sacrifice? He surrendered His original form as God and took the form of a bondservant (Phil. 2: 5–8). He gave up His position and glory as equal with God. He sacrificed His enjoyment of the immediate presence of His Father and came out into this remote earth. He left the worship of holy angels and became one of a race lower than they in power and glory. In manhood He sacrificed comforts, pleasures, rights, even the right to live. And at last He made the supreme sacrifice of Himself on the cross, without which there would have been no atonement and His vast earlier sacrifices would have left heaven and earth still defiled. For these were but preparation for His atoning work; they proved His entire suitability to make atonement; but atonement itself He effected by the death of the cross alone. Yet the virtue of this, as it were, threw its radiance backward over all the preparation, as well as forward into all His intercession on high, and combines His entire priestly activities into one whole service.

But with this explanation of the plural "sacrifices" I do not feel perfectly satisfied. Westcott thought that it is used because "the single sacrifice of Christ fulfilled perfectly the ideas presented by the different forms of the Levitical sacrifices." Perhaps the plural may be one of dignity or emphasis like the plural "deaths" in Isa. 53: 9 (R.V. mgn, and reference to Ezek. 28: 8, 10), as is suggested by Mr. F. F. Bruce.

7. *Summary* (9: 24–28).

i. The reason why those Aaronic sacrifices did not suffice is that they did not affect the true tabernacle where Christ was

to minister. Better sacrifices were needed to cleanse that heavenly sphere whither the High Priest was to enter. Aaron appeared annually before God on behalf of Israel only, and then in a merely typical place and manner. But it is necessary that the saving intercession of Christ for all men should be exercised in the immediate presence of God, for there are reached judgments and decisions affecting all men everywhere and for ever.

ii. Moreover those sacrifices were of only animal blood, failing of adequate moral or legal value, and they had to be presented frequently, by a fallible priest. Such sacrifices offered by such priests could never secure eternal redemption. If Christ were no more than Aaron, and His body and His blood of no richer worth than those of beasts, then would it be incumbent upon Him to have suffered unto death in perpetual recurrence ever since the world began.

iii. But what are the glorious facts? These: (1) that once, not at, or many times since, the foundation of the world, but once, that is, only once; and (2) at the point of time to which all the ages since the world began led up and out of which all succeeding ages develop; (3) the Son of God has been manifested on this earth.

Let us pause and ask, *Why* has this small earth become the pivotal point of eternity? In the depths of the wisdom and counsel of God it was determined that man should become the ruler of the universe (Gen. 1: 26; Ps. 8; see ch. V above, p. 52, ff.). The fallen cherub, who aspired to this sovereignty (Isa. 14: 13, 14), promptly attacked this new heir to the throne on which he himself fain would sit, and thus he attacked also the final purpose of God concerning heaven and earth. By this means the ancient conflict between the Sovereign and the Rebel became concentrated on this earth. Hither therefore the Son of God came to destroy the works of the Devil by putting away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, and hither He will return to finish the fight, as is shown in Rev. 19.

"By the sacrifice of Himself." Again the Writer returns to this most stupendous fact. Oh, what a majestic Person made the sacrifice: oh, what a sacrifice He made! Nothing less were sufficient, nothing more was possible, nothing else is required. He *put away* sin: judicially as before God the Judge of all; progressively in the lives of men of faith; completely when the full outcome has been reached in heaven and earth.

iv. *The Coming Again of Christ.* To this *full development* the Writer now advances. He will open the theme more fully in ch. 12, p. 255, ff.).

(1) "It is laid up for men once to die" (ver. 27). Justice demands it, or anarchy will triumph in endless destruction; mercy requires it, or earth's misery will accumulate beyond

endurance; experience confirms it, "we must needs all die." And then what?

(2) "*After this judgment*" (ver. 27), that is, *krisis*, arraignment, examination before a competent tribunal. What the verdict and outcome will be is not here indicated. Nor is it here stated how long or how soon after death this examination will be. But the judgment seat of God is always in session. The great white throne (Rev. 20) is only its final session, when the *eternal* state of angels and men will be announced.

But in the ordering of His kingdom of righteousness God leaves nothing unarranged, nor are prisoners left to languish long in prison without trial. Luke 16 pictures events shortly after death, for the brothers of Dives are still living on earth. Some competent authority must have determined that Lazarus should go into bliss and Dives into torment. See my *Firstfruits and Harvest*, 67 ff.

(3) "*Of many*" (ver. 28). Man dies once; Christ died once; but there is a great distinction: each man dies for his own sin, but Christ died for the sins of others, yea, many others. This "many" is reminiscent of the words of the Lord as at Matt. 20: 28, and during the last passover; "this is My blood of the covenant which is shed for many unto the remission of sins" (Matt. 26: 28; Mark 14: 24). For how many? Some contend that it was for the elect only and refuse the extension of the atonement to the human race entire. Yet certain passages seem unequivocally to assert this last, as Heb. 2: 15, R.V.; I Tim. 2: 3-6; I John 2: 2.

The parallel with the old covenant will settle the question. That covenant applied to Israel, the new covenant is open to all mankind. When the high priest of Israel entered the holy of holies with the blood he did so on behalf of "all the assembly of Israel" (Lev. 16: 17). No Israelite was excluded. One man acted for many, not only for himself or for a portion of Israel. So with Christ and His sacrifice. He took away the sin of *the world* (John 1: 29), not only of Israel. Yet in the one case and the other, only the repentant and believing actually benefit by the atonement available for all.

This avoids putting on the rack (II Pet. 3: 16 *strebloō*) such passages as those mentioned above. They mean just what they say; "all" means *all*.

(4) (*a*) Even as for man a certain other event follows upon death, so a certain other event follows the death of Christ—He will "*appear the second time*" (ver. 28). Christ Who had been hidden in heaven was manifested (*phaneroō*) to men on earth (ver. 26). He next presented Himself (*emphanizō*) in the presence of God (ver. 24), somewhat as one who returns to the sovereign after discharging some duty abroad. Service

at the throne for our benefit now occupies Him; but at the time appointed by the Father He will be sent forth again and will be seen with the eyes by men on earth (ver. 28, *ophthēsetai*). So it is stated in Rev. 1:7: "Behold, He cometh with the clouds, and every eye [*ophthalmos*] shall see [*opsetai*] Him."

A visible coming of the Lord that can be seen by human sight on earth is the inescapable teaching of Scripture. That will be His *second* appearing on earth, which excludes the possibility of *any* such "coming" between His ascension and that future visible coming.

(*b*) His former coming was that He might deal with sin. He dealt with that matter, said to His Father "I have accomplished the work which thou hast given me to do" (John 17: 4), and announced before men that "It is finished" (John 19: 30). His future coming will be "*apart from sin*" (ver. 28). He will not take up that question again, for He has already solved and settled it.

(*c*) When He appears again it will be "*unto salvation*" (ver. 28), salvation in its largest sense, the sense of Peter's words "salvation ready to be revealed in the last time" (I Pet. 1: 5). At His former coming He *provided* salvation, and by the Spirit the believer has already the earnest and foretaste of this (Eph. 1: 13, 14): when He comes again He will make this fully effective in the spirit, soul, and body of His own, even as Paul writes: "And the God of peace himself sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body without blame in the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ be preserved entire. Faithful is the One calling you, who will also do it" (I Thess. 5: 24). This comprehensive desire will be fulfilled in those who share in the first resurrection or the rapture that are to take place at the coming of Christ (I Cor. 15; I Thess. 4; Rev. 20).

(*d*) "*Them that expect Him.*" No secrecy will mark His parousia (coming); it will be an *apocalypse*, an unveiling of a person now hidden, an *epiphany*, the out-shining of a glory now concealed. The parallel with the day of atonement shows this. Israel's high priest was concealed from men while in the holy place before God; but when he came forth to bless the people all could see him.

Thus will Christ also be seen of all: every eye shall see Him, including those who pierced Him, His enemies (Rev. 1: 7). But for these last His coming will be unto *destruction* (II Thess. 1: 5–12), "all the tribes of the earth shall mourn over Him." As to this prospect has the reader's heart learned to say with John "Even so, Amen"? (Rev. 1: 7).

But to those who "wait for Him," that is, eagerly expect Him, He "will appear unto *salvation*." The worshippers were expecting (*prosdokōn*) Zacharias the priest to appear, and

they wondered that he tarried in the sanctuary (Luke 1: 21). Simeon was expecting (*prosdechomenos*) the consolation of Israel (Luke 2: 25), Anna, and others were expecting (*prosdechomenos*) the redemption of Jerusalem (Luke 2: 38), and Joseph of Arimathea "was expecting the kingdom of God" (*prosdecheto*, Luke 23: 51). These cases illustrate the expression "them that wait for Him," where the cognate word *apekdechomenois* is used. They were expecting the fulfilment of the prophecies which promised the coming of Messiah. They could not tell just when or how He would come, even though Simeon had been specially informed it would be in his lifetime. But the uncertainty did not hinder their hearts from being set upon the coming of Messiah as their hope.

Thus it is in this age. In Preliminary Dissertation 2 of my book on the *Revelation* it has been shown that the apostles did not expect the return of Christ in their days; but that did not hinder their hearts from being set upon His coming as their hope and desire (I Pet. 1: 13). So it has been with godly men ever since, and thus John Labadie, dying in 1573–4, said: "I believe the end is near and the beginning of the reign of God and His Son Jesus Christ, for Whom I have waited, Whom I have known, for Whom I now wait, Whom I now know" (*The Quiet in the Land*, p. 174). His notion that the event was near was mistaken, but the expectant attitude of his heart was right; and to all those who have so waited expectantly, whether they shall have died or have been left alive until His coming, "He shall appear, apart from sin, unto salvation."

CHAPTER XII

THE WILL OF GOD (10: 1–25)

Ch. X. 1. For the law having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things, they can never with the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect them that draw nigh. 2. Else would they not have ceased to be offered, because the worshippers, having been once cleansed, would have had no more conscience of sins? 3. But in those *sacrifices* there is a remembrance made of sins year by year. 4. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. 5. Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith,

> Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body didst thou prepare for me; 6. in whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou hadst no pleasure: 7. then said I, Lo, I am come (in the roll of the book it is written of me) to do thy will, O God.

8. Saying above, Sacrifice and offerings and whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices* for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein (the which are offered according to the law); 9. then hath he said, Lo, I am come to do thy will. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second. 10. By which will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. 11. And every priest indeed standeth day by day ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, the which can never take away sins: 12. but he, when he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God; 13. from henceforth expecting till his enemies be made the footstool of his feet. 14. For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. 15. And the Holy Spirit also beareth witness to us: for after he hath said,

> 16. This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws on their heart, and upon their mind also will I write them;

then he saith,

> 17. And their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

18. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

19. Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place [Gr. places] by the blood of Jesus; 20. by the way which he dedicated for us, a new and living way, through the

veil, that is to say, his flesh; 21. and *having* a great priest over the house of God; 22. let us draw near with a true heart in fulness of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our body washed with pure water: 23. let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for he is faithful that promised: 24. and let us consider one another to provoke unto love and good works; 25. not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as ye see the day drawing nigh.

1 RECAPITULATION (vers. 1–4).

Our Writer seems to have understood what a powerful writer meant when he said that repetition is the only figure of speech worth anything, and why a successful advocate said that the secret of winning a case was to go over your main points as many times as there are jurymen to be convinced.

Again he enforces the vital matter of the inefficiency and therefore inferiority of the law and its ceremonial.

It seems that the Holy Spirit, with His insight into human nature and His foresight into human ways, dealt in advance with man's persistent tendency to maintain a religion with fixed rules, external accompaniments, routine prayers, with priests and sacrifices, a religion of a legal type. Is it not plain that since such a religion, having God Himself as its author and having been tested for fourteen centuries, failed to achieve the end needed, every human imitation of it must needs fail yet more dismally?

It is no wonder at all that Churches by law established are a perpetual hindrance to the progress of the truth and an injury to souls. Whatever true spiritual life is found within them has to be developed and maintained *in spite* of the system and against its downward, oppressing influence. This is true in measure of every sacerdotal, liturgical, ritualistic religion even outside of State churches.

Arguments are now repeated.

i. The law was a shadow, not a full and exact representation of things heavenly and future. The shadow of a man may give a fair idea of his form, but it cannot be the "very image" of his features and complexion, or reproduce the light of his eye. In the British Museum there is a replica of a wooden statue of an ancient Egyptian. The original is in the Cairo Museum. It is so perfect an image of a man that it requires but slight imagination to see him striding towards one, with resolute step and haughty mien. The very eye flashes pride, though but carved in wood. Incidentally it tells the evolutionist that man has not evolved higher in artistic skill, not at least in woodcarving, during four thousands of years.

Such an image of things heavenly the law was not and could not be; it was only a shadow.

ii. Its services and sacrifices, though repeated annually and without intermission, made no one perfect, not even the most diligent and sincere worshipper. If they had done so, if those who sought God through them had attained the bliss of freedom from the consciousness of sin and so of reverent boldness with God, then there would have been no need for them to be superseded by a new covenant and new scheme of communion with God.

iii. What those annual sacrifices did was to produce an annual remembrance that sin still stood between God and man, that sin had not been put away effectually; the reason for this being that the life-blood of a beast has not the moral worth of the life-blood of a man, man being of so much higher dignity as made in the likeness of God. In consequence man, as soon as he thinks seriously, feels and knows that neither a beast, nor money, nor any other of his possessions, can satisfy the demand of the law for his life forfeited by sin. "All that a man hath will he give for his life" (Job 2: 4), for he values his life above all that he hath.

2. *The Will of God* (vers. 5–10).

i. The argument now reaches its height and conclusion with a quotation from Ps. 40: 6–8, which the Writer makes to read as follows:

> Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not,
> But a body didst thou prepare for me;
> In whole burnt offerings and *sacrifices*
> for sin thou hadst no pleasure:
> Then said I, Lo, I am come
> (In the roll of the book it is written of me)
> To do thy will, O God.

In the Psalm the first sentence reads, "Sacrifice and offering thou hast no delight in," which is here, following the Greek translation of the Old Testament, intensified into the positive "thou wouldest not."

The second sentence reads in Hebrew "Ears hast thou digged (or pierced) for me" (R.V. marg.), which is rendered in English, "Mine ears hast thou opened." This the Writer widens to "a body hast thou prepared for me," following again the Greek Old Testament.

The third sentence reads in the Psalm, "Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required," which again is changed to the positive and stronger assertion that in these "thou hast no pleasure."

These changes serve to strengthen the Writer's argument that the sacrifices of the old covenant were obsolete; or rather, that a thousand years before Christ, when David wrote, and after only 400 years since they were instituted, they had been already positively reprobated by God, being things He did not want and in which He had no delight. This being the case it is implied that it could be only a question of time and they would be abolished. Enlightened minds should therefore entertain no thought of returning to those antiquated elementary arrangements. If they did so they could but find the light that was in them becoming darkness.

ii. *The Quotation* (10: 5–7).

Before developing the argument it will be profitable to note some deeply interesting if secondary questions involved.

(1) "When He [the Son of God] cometh into the world He saith." This shows that the control of the prophets by the Spirit was so complete that one could be so directed in speech that his words should be taken up by Messiah a thousand years later as His own. Thus there was fulness of meaning far exceeding what the prophet could appreciate. There could be an immediate sense applicable to the prophet in his day and circumstances, but also, and far more important, a remoter sense foreknown by the Spirit of truth, and into the force of which the prophet might have to search (I Pet. 1: 10–12). But of statements which a man cannot fully comprehend he cannot have been the originator. The inspiring Spirit was this.

(2) This operation upon the mind of a prophet, which makes the Spirit of God to be the primary Author of the utterance, justifies a change which a later inspired prophet may make. For every Author is entitled to vary his own words should he wish to quote them and give a fresh thought or emphasis.

Thus our Writer departs from both the Hebrew and the Greek and makes the last sentence read simply "[I come] to do thy will, O God," instead of "I delight to do thy will, O my God, yea, thy law is within my heart"; because he wished to put emphasis upon the will of God itself not upon Messiah's delight in doing it or the fact that it was cherished in His heart.

(3) Here is a precious insight into the intercourse of the Son with the Father, at the time of and about the fact of His becoming flesh; and it is most noteworthy that, as man, the Son employs the words of His Father's Book in which to speak to the Father. It is an example for all the children of the Father.

(4) For Christ it was vitally important and amply sufficient that something was prescribed for Him in the Scripture; "In the roll of the book it is written of me." The Book had Him as its theme; His work was to carry out all and everything written therein about Him. To the last hour of His life this

governed His actions: "The Scriptures must be fulfilled"; and therefore in the very hour of death "Jesus knowing that all things are now finished, that the scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst" (John 19: 28).

iii. 10: 9. But to return. The priest in Israel might attend with the utmost diligence and most scrupulous care to the God-directed duties of his sacred office, but he could not secure the one all-important result, the doing of the will of God. All the sacrifices he might offer during the thirty years of his service failed to attain that end. The will of God was too high and holy, too exacting and inclusive, for such ceremonial observances to assure fulfilment of its demands. And these ceremonies and sacrifices left the worshipper too weak inwardly to render perfect obedience.

Yet the one true end of our existence, which is also the one essential secret of true happiness, is the doing of the will of God, perfectly and always. This the sinner cannot do and the law cannot help him to do it. What then is to be done? The Son of God gives the answer.

"Lo, I come to do Thy will, O God." I will do what no one else can do. And thus He takes away the first, even that whole system of things which was indeed the best that could be devised apart from Him, that He may establish the second and eternal arrangements of the new covenant. By means of this, God's will shall be done on earth even as it is done by the holy angels in heaven, and so shall earth and heaven become at last one perfect kingdom of God, because ruled everywhere and wholly by the one will of God.

iv. (10:10). *Sanctification.* And the first and most immediate item in that will and purpose of God, for which the Son became man, is that He shall sanctify them that believe on Him through the offering of His own holy body once for all, and thus shall be attained this necessary end which the law and its services could never effect.

This sanctification embodies two distinct yet indissoluble elements. First, that a person or thing is withdrawn from common use and dedicated wholly to the possession and use of God; and then, that with a view to this use to the glory of God, the person or thing must be made actually suitable, by being clean and beautiful and efficient.

In the former sense they who turn to God through Christ are regarded by God as set apart unto Him by virtue of the complete dedication to God of their Representative, their Substitute, their Surety. When He gave Himself up wholly to the will of God they were regarded as involved in this act, seeing that He acted on their behalf. And this being so, it remains for them to carry into daily practical effect this dedication

to God in their Surety by each learning and doing the will of God in daily life. Both aspects are in I Cor. 1: 2, "Sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints," and so in I Cor. 5: 7, "Purge out the old leaven, even as ye are unleavened." Christ on their behalf presented His body unto God a sacrifice in death; therefore let them, each for himself, present his body unto God a living sacrifice (Rom. 12: 1, 2).

v. *The Seated Priest* (10: 11, 14). The incompleteness of the Aaronic ministry was indicated by the fact that those priests never sat down during the period of their daily service. No provision was made for them to sit. There were altar and laver without, table, lamp, and incense altar within, but no seat. Their work was never done. But the heavenly Priest, by one sacrifice, obtained a redemption that is eternal; *therefore,* that sacrifice requires no repetition, indeed admits of none, for its virtue abides for ever; *therefore,* those being sanctified unto God by it are perfected for ever; *therefore,* this Priest's service, as regards the offering of sacrifice, is finished; *therefore,* He has sat down, the sign of the perfectness of that portion of His priestly ministry.

Of course, this does not mean that in fact the Son never moves from His seat on high. A few months after His ascension He was seen by Stephen standing (Acts 7: 56); but sitting is His normal position, in contrast to the standing service of Israel's priests. Let one who is not yet assured of his sanctified relation to God, turn his eye away from his own imperfect state and ponder what it means for himself personally that his Surety is seated at the right hand of God. Let him take to himself the words that lifted Bunyan out of the Slough of Despond: "Sinner, thou thinkest that, because of thy sins and infirmities, I cannot save thy soul; but My Son is by Me, and on Him I look, and not on thee, and shall deal with thee according as I am pleased with Him" (*Grace Abounding,* par. 258).

This position the Priest will retain until He shall arise as King to subdue His enemies.

vi. *The Witness of the Spirit* (ver. 15, 17). There is a witness of the Spirit within the child of God assuring him that this is what he is, a child of God (Rom. 8: 16). But the witness here in view is one given from without through Scripture. The Writer quotes again the prophecy of Jeremiah and stresses the point noted above (ch. X. 6, iii, p. 134), that it is *after* the announcement that the law of God will be written in the heart and on the mind that the Spirit gives to believers the guarantee from God that "their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more."

From this guarantee he draws the just conclusion that there can be no further need for an offering in respect of sins already

and actually remitted. There can be no further question of providing for the payment of debts already paid. This concludes and clinches the proof of the abrogation of the old covenant, for the machinery by which the law provides for the payment of debts, and enforces payment, has no further reason for existing when there are no debts left to be paid.

3. *Exhortations* (10: 19–25).

i. *Let us draw near.* The lengthy argument concerning priesthood and sacrifice being completed, the exhortation in ch. 4: 14–16 is resumed: we are to draw near to the throne of grace, we are to exercise our right and use our privileges.

(1) *Present Boldness* (ver. 19). Both there and here is emphasized the *present possession* of this right. Both exhortations begin with the present participle "having." Seeing that we do now actually hold the right to draw near let us do so. And let us do so with *boldness.* To approach God timidly, as if fearing the consequences, implies a feeble appreciation of the worth of our Priest and of the value of His atoning blood; it is a slight upon Him and His atoning, justifying, sanctifying work.

(2) *The Open Way* (ver. 20). Of old the way was not open. Even the most devout worshipper was debarred access to all the holy places on penalty of death. Now, in virtue of the blood of Jesus, the veils have been torn down and the way thrown open for faith to pass through those holy realms into direct contact with God. Of this freedom the rending of the inner veil at the death of Christ was the visible sign; it was rent by God, as was plain by the fact that the tear commenced at the top; which stood higher than man could reach even had man dared the act (Matt. 27: 51).

(3) *Dedication* (ver. 20). As a landowner at his own expense may cut a road over his private property and dedicate it to the use of the public for ever, and thus deny to all, *even himself,* the right ever to close it, so did Jesus dedicate this way of approach to God. It can never again be shut, not even by God, for He cannot and will not make void the act and deed of His Son.

(4) *New and Living* (ver. 20). This way the Writer describes as *new,* for it had been opened only lately when he was writing. And it is a way which only the spiritually *living* can tread, and which leads to *life* in fulness, not to death, as unwarranted entrance into the ancient tent would have done.

(5) *The Veil, His Flesh* (ver. 20). Having, in grace and love, undertaken to bear in His body our sins, the Redeemer had no other way open by which He might return to God than that His holy body should be rent in death. The death-torn

body of our Saviour was the rending asunder of all that hindered our access to God, even as it became His own right of access. Through Him we who are justified by faith "have had our access into this state of favour wherein we stand" before God in His holy place (Rom. 5: 1, 2).

(6) *The Priest over God's house* (ver. 21). The thought returns to ch. 3: 1–6. God has a "house" and a "household" —a sphere where He dwells and a family and servants. Over this immense establishment Christ is the ruler, as Aaron was the ruler of that earthly and typical establishment in Israel. When the Son makes a slave free, emancipates him, he is free indeed (John 8: 35–36), his status is wholly changed. Since the Father then adopts him as a son he shall abide in the house for ever, with reverent, happy intercourse with the Father and the Son.

(7) *Let US draw near* (ver. 22). All these arrangements for access to God being completed let us avail ourselves of them. Let us pray. Let us give ourselves to prayer. Let us cultivate the holy art of intercourse with God.

> Lord, what a change within us one short hour
> Spent in Thy presence doth avail to make. . . .
> We kneel how weak, we rise how full of power. . . .
> Why therefore should we do ourselves this wrong,
> Or others, that we are not always strong,
> That we are ever overborne with care,
> That we should ever weak and heartless be,
> Anxious or troubled, when with us is prayer,
> And joy and strength and courage are with Thee?
>
> (Trench.)

(8) *Conditions of Drawing Near* (ver. 22).

(*a*) *A true heart.* As the hearts of a husband and wife must be true to each other, inwardly, utterly true, if sweet, intimate fellowship is to be enjoyed, so must our heart be true to God. His heart is true to us, as it is next said: "He is faithful that promised": we must be true to Him. Paul compared his converts to a virgin espoused to Christ, and feared lest Satan should corrupt their thoughts, as a virgin's thoughts may be corrupted by doting upon some other than her lover (II Cor. 11: 2, 3). In such case she will not be happy to meet him. Thus may we destroy our joy in God.

(*b*) *Fulness of Faith* (ver. 22). This will be explained and enforced in ch. 11.

(*c*) *A Sprinkled heart* (ver. 22). This has been considered at ch. 9: 13, 14, p. 147. The Holy Spirit brings home to the believer the virtue of the blood of Christ as meeting the claims of God, and this relieves the conscience of the burden of evil committed.

(*d*) *The Body washed* (ver. 22). Many would give this a literal, material sense by applying it to the rite of baptism in water. The construction does not allow this: "having our hearts sprinkled . . . *and* having our body washed" (*rerantismenoi* . . . *kai lelousmenoi*). If the washing of the body is material (the material body washed with material water) then the sprinkling of the heart must be material (the material heart with the material blood), which cannot be. As the sprinkling is figurative so must be the washing. The one refers to the inner life of the conscience being cleansed, the other to the outer life of practice being cleansed.

As everywhere in this Epistle reference to the types is assumed, by which the meaning is established. The leper returning to fellowship with God had to be sprinkled with blood and had to wash his body in water (Lev. 13). At consecration the priest had to be bathed in water and sprinkled with blood (Lev. 8). In his daily service as priest there was the sprinkling of blood for himself and the frequent washing of hands and feet at the laver (Exod. 30).

But if he was to have *heart* fellowship with God, and not only external relations, then must the leper and the priest know by faith a heart experience corresponding to the sprinkling and attain a practical freedom from sinful ways answering to the washing of the outer man, the body. The sprinkling is faith appropriating Christ on the cross; the washing is faith gaining holiness of daily life by obedience to the word and by consequent present grace of the Holy Spirit. At the Supper the Lord spoke to the apostles of the blood of the covenant and He also washed their feet. The same explanation rules Eph. 5: 25, 26 and Titus 3: 5. Baptism teaches the same truth, but is not the water or laver of these passages.

It is deeply important to ponder that a holy walk is indispensable to fellowship with the Holy God in His holy place. It lies at the basis of the solemn warnings of this Epistle and all Scripture.

ii. *Let us hold fast.* It is blessed to know that God has said: "I Jehovah thy God will hold thy right hand, saying unto thee, Fear not, I will help thee" (Isa. 41: 13). This is God's side. Ours is, "let us hold fast."

J. J. Sims, the evangelist, as a small boy was unduly pressed at a Canadian camp meeting to confess that he had "got religion." An old saint said: "Hold on to it, John; hold on to it." After three weeks of wearisome endeavour the boy said to his mother: "I don't think I can hold on to it any longer." The wise woman answered: "I don't think you've anything to hold on to, John."

What Christians have to hold on to is "*the confession of our*

hope." The Israelite confessed that his hope was in Aaron as the priest to adjust his affairs with God. The Roman Catholic, the Greek Catholic, the Anglo-Catholic, each confesses that he has placed his hope on the priest of his church. The Christian confesses Christ to be his hope, and his only hope Godward. It is this confession of Christ the Christian has to make, to make continually, and to hold on steadfastly in making it.

By this confession it is that the Spirit of God leads others to faith in Christ. Therefore it is this confession that the Spirit of darkness studies to stifle. It is ours to watch against our confession *wavering*. This is the first stage towards ceasing to confess. The sure way to prevent our confession wavering is to confess. It is not enough to believe silently in the heart; it is "with the mouth that confession is made unto salvation" (Rom. 10: 8–10). He who ceases to confess will shortly lose confidence, strength, and joy. It is the constant precursor to backsliding.

Hope is faith applied to the future. For faith the future is covered by the promises of God. Faith, with Abraham, is confident that what God has promised, be it never so impossible, He is able also to perform. It holds that "He is faithful that promised" (ver. 23) and expects the promised benefit. This applies especially to the expectation that the Great Priest, who has gone into the heavenly sanctuary, will "appear a second time unto salvation."

For two centuries or more this return of the Lord was the hope that animated His people; "they looked for Him." Presently, as persecution ceased and a comfortable life on earth increased, the Christians began to waver as to this hope of the Lord's return; they settled down in the world, accepted the subtle deceit that it was their business to associate with the world and "leaven" it, and for the more part of them abandoned the hope. They ceased to be pilgrims on earth and so their testimony was ruined. It was against this surrender of the *hope* of the gospel that Paul warned the Colossian believers, telling them that their highest future privilege, the being "presented" before God, was contingent upon not being "moved away from *the hope* of the gospel" (Col. 1: 22, 23).

Let us at the end of the age learn from that failure at its commencement, and "hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not."

iii. Let us consider one another (ver. 24).

(1) He who would fall let him be self-occupied; he who would stand let him consider others. He who would provoke another to love, let him love him; he who would incite to good works must do them.

This is no easy-going friendliness. "To consider" means to consider diligently and earnestly (*katanoōmen*). "To provoke" is the English word paroxysm, an intense word. This demands an intensity of love which can set others on fire with love.

Thus the exhortation urges to increase of the three cardinal virtues of faith, hope, love. The combination of these in active exercise assures, yea, *is*, the true, full life in Christ.

(2) The fulfilment of this exhortation will of necessity require and secure constant contact with those one wishes to provoke. Such as cease to assemble together will be unable to help one another and will lose desire to do so. The isolated soldier is in imminent peril from the foe. He is already defeated who ceases to stand in the battle with his comrades.

(3) On the reverse side, soldiers in battle cheer one another by cries of encouragement and clarion calls to advance. Let us be ever exhorting and encouraging one another to stand firm, to hold fast, to confess, to suffer, to hope on Christ against all opposition, delay, danger.

(4) One secret of this steadfastness is that we "see the day drawing nigh." We are pilgrims toiling on through the night, helping the weary, exhorting the stragglers, cheering one another by word and song, and so much the more urgently that dawn glimmers on the dark horizon. The day is at hand, the pleasant land of our hope is not far ahead; "let us press on" (6: 1).

Behind my back I fling,
Like an unwanted thing,
  My former self and ways;
And reaching forward far
I seek the things that are
  Beyond time's lagging days.

Oh! may I follow still,
Faith's pilgrimage fulfil,
  With steps both sure and fleet:
The longed-for good I see,
Jesus waits there for me;
  Haste! haste! my weary feet

J. N. Darby (?)

CHAPTER XIII

THE FOURTH WARNING (10: 26–39)

Ch. X. 26. For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more a sacrifice for sins; 27. but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries. 28. A man that hath set at nought Moses' law dieth without compassion on the word of two or three witnesses: 29. of how much sorer punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace? 30. For we know him that said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense. And again, The Lord shall judge his people. 31. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

32. But call to remembrance the former days, in which after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings; 33. partly being made a gazingstock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, becoming partakers with them that were so used. 34. For ye both had compassion on them that were in bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions, knowing that ye yourselves have a better possession and an abiding one. 35. Cast not away therefore your boldness, which hath great recompense of reward. 36. For ye have need of patience, that, having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise.

37. For yet a little while, he that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry. 38. But my righteous one shall live by faith: and if he shrink back, my soul hath no pleasure in him. 39. But we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition; but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul.

THE unregenerate wishes that God would let him alone and not frighten him with threats of judgment. Similarly can the weak heart of the believer wish that he might be left to enjoy a carnal condition and not be disturbed by solemn warnings. But God loves both the one and the other too well to indulge them thus.

Privilege must be balanced by responsibility, and responsibility undischarged must involve penalty. Grace can be abused to the dishonour of God and the injury of man; and therefore

grace itself imposes penalties upon the abuse of itself. Thus everything is of grace, including wrath. Because God is love He warns and chastises, and very severely when necessary, if only so can the ends of love be served. The passage before us is an instance, but because its statements are severe they must be examined with strictness.

The statement assumes that the persons in view can sin in a particular manner, and tells them that if they do so serious consequences will follow.

1. *The Persons addressed.*

i. "*We.*" Who are intended? The Writer uses the pronoun with emphasis several times. Let the following places be considered and it will be seen that the "we" includes the Writer, and must therefore mean the Christian circle of which he was a member: 2: 1; 2: 3; 3: 6; 4: 13; 7: 26; 10: 39; 12: 1; 12: 25; 13: 6. It is impossible to say that each and all of that circle, including the Writer, were mere professors, unregenerate, deceived or deceiving. Therefore the warnings apply to real Christians.

ii. They had received a *knowledge of the truth. Epignōsis* means a personal experimental knowledge. Such a knowledge these had *received*, not merely had had an offer of it, a possibility of acquiring it; they had embraced the offer and had gained this experimental knowledge. "By the very choice of the word the Writer gives us to understand that he means, not merely a superficial, historical knowledge about the truth, but a living perception of the same by faith, which had seized upon it [the truth] and fused it into oneness with itself" (Delitzsch).

This is parallel with 6: 4 above; those there in view had been thoroughly enlightened and had received a real appreciation of the heavenly gift and of the word of God.

iii. ver. 29. They had been sanctified by the blood of the covenant. See ch. XII, 2, iv, p. 165. They had regarded that blood as sacred and themselves as dedicated to God by reason of it. This dedication had wrought out in them its due practical results, and had thus shown its reality, for (ver. 32–35).

iv. They had endured severe persecution, "a great conflict of sufferings." This had involved reproaches, afflictions, fellowship with fellow-saints in the like furnace, and espousing the cause of the imprisoned, so exposing themselves to arrest. Moreover they had enjoyed such a living, invigorating assurance of their heavenly inheritance as to be positively joyful when robbed of their earthly possessions. Both the law and the mobs attacked them but they had faced both with boldness.

Will anything less than an experimental enjoyment of Christ enable such suffering for His sake? Obviously they were such as Peter describes in his first epistle (1: 3–9), who

had been born again, who had a living hope of the heavenly inheritance, who had faith and were therefore being guarded by the power of God, who rejoiced greatly in their as yet unseen Saviour, and were already receiving a real measure of their salvation.

v. ver. 30. But, as if to put the matter beyond dispute, the Writer applies to them the words of Moses to Israel, "The Lord shall judge *His people,*" in which place it is no question of His enemies, avowed or secret, but of His own people, and particularly that remnant of His people who had failed badly, were to be chastised severely, and yet should be saved ultimately (Deut. 32: 35–43).

Indeed, so certainly were those addressed by the Writer really the people of God walking the way of life, that all they needed was endurance, steadfastness, perseverance on that way until the Coming One should come and they should receive the promised inheritance (ver. 36–38).

If this measure of proof was adduced *only* to show that these addressed were regenerate persons within the scope of the new covenant it would be considered ample to establish the point. This is questioned by some only when put in relation to the accompanying warnings. But it is a pernicious way of treating adequate proof to argue around it merely because it may involve problems, difficulties, and a challenge to one's prepossessions or even convictions.

However severe the warnings here given, however difficult it may seem to harmonize them with the eternal security of the believer, however many cherished dispensational opinions may be challenged, there is really only one honest way of dealing with the passage, which is to apply it to real children of God and accept the consequences of doing this.

2. *The Sin.*

i. *It is wilful.* The word (*hekousiōs*) takes strong emphasis "*wilfully* sinning we." It is found elsewhere only at I Pet. 5: 2, where shepherds are exhorted to tend the flock "not of constraint, but *willingly,*" with their whole and free will. Its root *hekousios* comes only at Philemon 14, where Philemon was encouraged to act "not as of necessity, but of *free will.*"

The sin therefore is deliberate, determined, committed with full intention. Thus it is by no means a case of a sudden temptation causing an unintended fall, or even of succumbing often to a tyrannous habit which one loathes and fights, even if unavailingly.

ii. It is *continuous, maintained,* as is shown by the *present* participle, *hamartanontōn.* It is wilfully maintaining a decision made against light, for

iii. This decision is made after having received and enjoyed that experimental knowledge of the truth above considered.

iv. It is thus *comparable to the sin against the law* of Moses described by the word *athetēsas* (ver. 28). This word means to reject (I Tim. 5: 12; Luke 7: 30), to treat as void (Gal. 2: 21; 3: 15), to set aside as useless (I Cor. 1: 19), to spurn a person (Luke 10: 16; John 12: 48); or, as the cognate noun *athetēsis* means in this Epistle (7: 18), to displace one thing and replace it by another, or to dismiss a matter entirely, treat it as not existing (9: 26). Thus a man might "set at nought" the law of Moses. Here also the participle used denotes an act done deliberately and by which the doer stood firm.

There is an instance of such conduct. In plain defiance of the oft-announced law of the sabbath a man gathered firing on that day (Num. 15: 32–36). A special inquiry was made of God as to His mind and will, and by special instruction from God the offender was stoned to death.

This solemn example is appended to and illustrates the immediately preceding regulations which directed that if a person, or even the whole congregation, sinned by error unwittingly, the priest should make atonement and the error would be forgiven; but if the sin was deliberate death must follow, provided adequate evidence established guilt (Num. 15: 22–31).

Later, the sin of Achan included these elements and involved this penalty; and presumably because his family could not but have been privy to his act, seeing that he hid the articles in the ground in their common tent, they all shared his judgment; and their possessions also became involved, on the same principle that Adam's sin brought desolation over the realm he ruled (Josh. 7).

The severity of such penalties is because of the enormity of the sin Godward. After providing for the pardon of unrecognized sin the direction said: "But the soul that doeth ought with a high hand, whether he be homeborn or a foreigner, the same *blasphemeth Jehovah*; and that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Because he hath *despised the word of Jehovah*, and hath broken his commandment, that soul shall be utterly cut off, his iniquity shall be upon him," that is, it shall not be transferred to a substitute, a victim on the altar (Num. 15: 30, 31).

This refusal by God of the benefit of atoning sacrifice, when sin was deliberate, persistent, continued against light and remonstrance, was declared by Jehovah Himself in His words to Samuel: "And therefore I have sworn unto the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli's house shall not be expiated with sacrifice nor offering for ever" (I Sam. 3: 14).

The word *despised* has two important Old Testament illustrations: "He is despised and rejected of men" (Isa. 53: 3), and "Esau despised his birthright" (Gen. 25: 34). Deliberate disobedience to a known command of God is equal to such wickedness as the rejection of His Son and of His gifts. To a high priest himself (Eli), because he had tolerated evil conduct that he ought to have punished, the sentence was given that his family should lose their priestly position, "for they that despise me [the same word] shall be lightly esteemed" (I Sam. 2: 30).

v. *The Sin defined.* The sin in question is now specified and includes three particulars.

(1) It is a *treading under foot the Son of God.*

This word *tread down* (*katapateō*) is used of men treading into the dust or mire salt that has been thrown away (Matt. 5: 13); of swine trampling on pearls, articles precious to men but useless to swine (Matt. 7: 6); of seed trodden down on the roadside (Luke 8: 5); and of unfortunate persons trampled upon by a surging crowd (Luke 12: 1). In the Greek Old Testament it is used of men crushing serpents with their feet (Ps. 91: 13), and of a wild beast treading down a thistle or an egg in its way (II Chron. 25: 18; Job 39: 15).

These instances combine the notions of an action being intentional (as when a man grinds down a viper), contemptuous, violent, and destructive. The sin now in question treats thus the Son of God. Such conduct is evidently like that blaspheming and despising of God condemned under the law, and is therefore liable to the same penalty.

(2) But it is clearly impossible to take up such an antagonistic attitude to the Son of God and not thereby to reject His atoning death; for one who values His blood will honour His person, while he who despises Him will despise His sacrifice. Thus the sin in question involves a repudiation of redemption and sanctification by the blood of Christ.

This offender had acknowledged that the blood had redeemed him and had set him apart unto God. It was therefore sacred blood. Now he denies this and says that the blood of Christ was only common (*koinon*) blood, like that of any other man. This implies that Jesus was not the Son of God but only a man. It is the Unitarian position, whether taken by such as perversely claim to be Christian, or by deists, Jews, or Moslems. Such a person of necessity puts himself outside of the new covenant, for this is attested, "sealed," by the blood of Christ, and would have no validity apart therefrom.

(3) Such conduct involves an equal outrage upon the Holy Spirit, because He witnesses to Christ as the Son of God (John 14: 26; 15: 26, 27; 16: 14), and it is He Who makes operative

and peacegiving the blood of Christ, Whose power indeed it was that energized the Redeemer to shed that atoning blood (ch. 9: 14; 10: 22; I John 5: 6–8).

That the sin in question is deeper, intenser than the "grieving" of the Spirit against which every Christian needs to watch is shown by the further strong term employed (*enubrizō*), to do "despite" to the Spirit. Its root *hubris* means to damage severely, as a tempest a ship (Acts 27: 10, 21). It is therefore employed by Paul to indicate the "injuries" he received by the violence of persecutors (II Cor. 12: 10). In Rom. 1: 30 its noun *hubristēs* follows "hateful to God" as meaning "*insolent*" men, of whom Paul himself was a prominent example (I Tim. 1: 13). Here he joins the word with blaspheming and persecuting, showing the kind of conduct meant. This is further shown by the use of the verb *hubrizō* to describe the insulting and murderous treatment by the wicked husbandmen of the servants of the owner of the vineyard. Christ used it of the outrageous conduct with which the Romans would treat Himself (Luke 18: 32), and it is used of the similar treatment planned against Paul and Barnabas at Iconium (Acts 14: 5), and which Paul did actually receive at Philippi (I Thess. 2: 2). The one other use of the word shows how strongly the lawyers resented the sword-thrusts of Christ: "Teacher, saying these things thou dost insult us also" (Luke 11: 45). The persons here in view despise the Word of God incarnate as their ancestors had despised His word through Moses (Num. 15: 31).

Thus this sin is more and worse than even a prolonged lapse into worldly and evil ways, sad and dangerous as this is. It is directed knowingly, deliberately, wantonly, fiercely against the Son of God, the blood of God incarnate, the Spirit of God, and the word of God.

(4) If it be now asked whether it is conceivable that one who has been born again, has been really and knowingly sanctified by the blood of Christ, and has enjoyed some true benefit under the new covenant can lapse so utterly as thus to act, the answer is that it is not only conceivable but it has taken place in known and modern instances.

A case known to me personally has been mentioned above when dealing with the warning of ch. 6. Whether Edmund Gosse was really regenerate as a youth is hard to say, but he took that stand, and *Father and Son*, is proof how utterly and bitterly he later rejected evangelical truth. But a quite indisputable instance in the last century was F. W. Newman, the brilliant scholar, brother of the Cardinal. In early manhood he was accepted as a sincere believer by men well-qualified to judge, the first leaders of the Brethren. Such men

as J. N. Darby, J. G. Bellett, Lord Congleton, and A. N. Groves were not likely to be unitedly misled. Yet Newman utterly apostatized from the faith. Readers of his *Phases of Faith* will have seen a painful fulfilment of the description we have studied. In particular the attack on Christ Himself was calculated, determined, and blasphemous. But at the close of his long life, of which perhaps half was spent in opposing the truth and deluding men, he crept back at last to the shelter of the blood he had slighted; for, as before mentioned (p. 102), by his own request it was stated over his grave that he died trusting for salvation to the precious blood of Christ.

It is as certain that a Christian can so apostatize as that the sun can suffer eclipse, and the question is as to the situation that arises in such a case as that of Newman.

As touching the opinion of his fellow-men he had nothing to gain or to lose by what might be said over his grave, so it must be assumed that his change of mind was sincere. This they must have believed who stated it publicly, and this charity requires us to accept, especially as there is other evidence in support. His repentance, then, being sincere and his recovered faith real, though so belated, can it be otherwise than that it was accepted by God? Has He not promised, "Return unto me, saith Jehovah of hosts, and I will return unto you, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Zech. 1: 3), and is it not written in both Testaments that "whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved"? (Joel 2: 32; Rom. 10: 13). Is it conceivable that God shall deny the saving shelter of the blood of His Son to even the deepest dyed sinner that seeks it? We are bound to presume the eternal deliverance from hell of every such repentant sinner, because of the value of Christ to the Father. The Son Himself said that blasphemy against Himself is forgivable (Matt. 12: 31, 32; Mark 3: 28; Luke 12: 10). See *Note A*, p. 196.

3. *The Penalty Denounced.* But what now becomes of the penalty of such sin? and what *is* the penalty? If it is not eternal what is it, and when and where is it exacted?

i. *The Penalty is inescapable,* because as regards such conduct "there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins" (ver. 26). The histories illuminate this.

David, a man after God's heart, lapsed into adultery and murder. For either of these crimes the penalty was death; under the law of Moses there remained no sacrifice that could be accepted (Deut. 22: 22; Exod. 21: 12–14). This explains why David, speaking of that occasion, said, "Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit; a broken and a contrite heart, O God, thou wilt not despise" (Ps. 51: 16, 17). But upon his repentance and public confession

the word came: "The Lord also hath *put away* thy sin; thou shalt not die"—the capital sentence is remitted (II Sam. 12: 13). Of course, his sin had been put away on the ground of what Christ was to do for David. It is an instance of the "passing over of sins done aforetime" (Rom. 3: 25).

But, continues the prophet: "thou shalt not die. *Howbeit,* because by this deed thou hast given great occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme" punishment was to follow David to the end of his life. The next eight chapters detail the exacting of these penalties, which were truly severe.

This extended history of the sin of a man of God and its consequences establishes the principle that the remitting of the full and extreme penalty of sin does not cancel the inflicting of severe temporal penalties. To discern this is of vast importance for understanding the effect of the redemption wrought by Christ at the cross. That redemption cancels the penalty of eternal death for every true believer, but it does not deliver him from present and temporal consequences of sin. Richard Weaver, the renowned evangelist, never lost the headaches caused by the batterings received when he was a prizefighter. The cross of Christ does not guarantee that a Christian shall not go to prison should he steal.

On the contrary, God the more resolutely chastises His children *because* they are His children: "You only have I known of all the families of the earth: *therefore* I will visit upon you all your iniquities" (Amos 3: 2); "if we discerned ourselves we should not be judged. But when we are judged we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with [at the same time as] the world" (I Cor. 11: 31, 32). For the explanation given by Peter of the fiery trials of saints is that "the time is come for judgment to begin at the house of God" (I Pet. 4: 17), which term is taken from Ezek. 9: 5, 6. Such parental chastisement is not eternal but temporal, but it is not to be escaped: the Father "scourgeth *every son* whom he receiveth," only not for his destruction but for his sanctification (Heb. 12: 6, 10).

ii. *The Penalty is severe.* The punishment must fit the crime or there will be a failure of justice. It is a *just* recompense that must be inflicted on each and every case (2: 2). "He scourgeth every son." Scourging is very painful. It is *punishment* against which the Writer warns us. The word *timōria* comes here only, but Paul twice used its verb to describe the hard penalties he inflicted upon Christians for what he considered their crime in being Christians (Acts 22: 5; 26: 11). See *Note B* at end of this chapter, p. 201.

Atoning sacrifice having been rejected and so not being

available, what remains? What is to be expected?—only a strict trial as to the offence (*krisis*) and the consequent punishment. This is described as "fearful," something to be feared greatly, for it is a "fierceness of fire, which shall devour the adversaries" (ver. 27).

This word "adversary" is to be noted. *Hupenantios* comes again only at Col. 2: 14, where it describes the law as setting itself against the transgressors. So have those here in question set themselves against the Son of God, they are antagonistic to Him. The Greek Old Testament uses similar phrases and words at Isa. 26: 11: "fire shall devour thine adversaries," and see Isa. 64: 2.

Again the histories illuminate the matter.

(1) Lev. 10. Two sons of Aaron, consecrated to be priests, on the very day of their consecration violated a most solemn requirement of God, even that the fire upon which incense was to be burned unto Jehovah should be taken from the altar of burnt offering; which meant that that fire was connected with atonement for sin and therefore was "holy" fire. These two priests used other fire, and thus presumed to offer worship and intercession apart from sacrifice and atoning blood, "and there came forth fire from before Jehovah and devoured them, and they died before Jehovah" (Lev. 10: 2). Those to-day who justify innovations in the church, the house of God, on the ground that these are *not* forbidden in Scripture should ponder the fact that Nadab and Abihu died because they did something which the Lord "had *not* commanded them."

(2) Num. 16: 35. Again, Korah and his associates, being only Levites, presumed to act as priests, in defiance of God's appointment that it was the latter only who should present incense before Him (Num. 16: 40; I Sam. 2: 28; II Chron. 13: 10, 11); and "fire came forth from before Jehovah and devoured" them.

(3) Num. 11: 1. Once more: "the people were as murmurers, which was evil in the ears of Jehovah: and when Jehovah heard it, his anger was kindled; and the fire of Jehovah burnt among them, and devoured."

In the Greek Old Testament the word translated in these places "devour" *katesthiō* comes from the word *esthiō* used by our Writer in "devour the adversaries."

The severity of the judgment is further indicated by the figure "a *fierceness* of fire," which corresponds to the instances given from Leviticus and Numbers. And this is to be expected, for the persons in question by rejecting grace have necessarily exposed themselves to the rigours of the law, and that extreme rigour which excludes mercy.

iii. *New Testament instances.*

(1) Acts 5. At the beginning of the old covenant period two priests fell dead in the house of God because of sin committed in that house (Lev. 10). At the beginning of the new covenant period two Christians fell dead in the house of God, because of sin committed in that house. The punishment was as severe in the latter case as the former.

(2) I Cor. 5: 1–6. Because of fornication a Christian in the Corinthian church was handed over to Satan for the destruction of his bodily life. That he was a child of God is certain from the fact that this devouring judgment would be only temporal, and was part of the process by which his spirit would be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus. Notice the "that" in ver. 5 (*hina* with the subjunctive) in order that, etc. Here is definite proof that bodily death under the judgment of God, inflicted by Satan, does not necessarily involve eternal death. Therefore "fierceness of fire" does not of necessity mean *eternal* fire.

That Christians can so sin is clear from the warning that *all* in that church might become corrupted even as "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump."

(3) I Cor. 11: 29–32. And in fact others of that church were already leavened—they were so polluting the table of the Lord that heavy judgment was being inflicted, by bodily weakness, actual illness, and even premature death.

(4) James 5: 19, 20. "My brethren [such are the persons in view], if any among you [not one of the world outside] do err from the truth [therefore he had hitherto walked the way of truth, or he could not turn from it], and one turn him back [into the true way]; let him know that the one turning back a sinner [*hamartōlos*, strictly, one who has missed the way] from the error of his way shall save the life of him [*psuchēn autou*] out of death [from dying], and shall cover a multitude of sins"; for when a backslider repents and returns his sins are covered by the blood of Christ. Plainly such a one, unless he turn back, is in danger of reaching the extreme of backsliding and his life being cut off.

(5) I John 5: 16, 17. And this is contemplated by the solemn statement that "there is sin unto death; not concerning this do I say that he should make request." The Great Priest can have compassion on the ignorant and the erring (Heb. 5: 2), but not upon those who sin with a high hand. Of such it is written: "Be not merciful to any *wicked* transgressors" (Ps. 59: 5), which persons answer to the sinning wilfully of our passage.

This consensus of Scripture shows that the passage before us is in harmony with the regular administration of the laws

of the kingdom of God, to which administration of justice the children of the Sovereign are amenable. It would be truly disastrous if the royal family were suffered to defy the law with impunity. In the kingdom of God this is unthinkable. He it is Who has declared of Himself, "Vengeance belongeth unto Me, I will recompense," that is, It is My special business, to which I attend personally, particularly as regards My people: "The Lord shall judge His people."

iv. *Sorer Punishment* (ver. 29).

(1) To a normally sensitive soul a death by stoning must have been a painful scene. The first stone might kill, or it might take many; and at the end there lay a poor battered corpse. Death by fire was startling and terrifying. It left a charred, disfigured body as a warning against sin. "Of *how much sorer* punishment, think ye, shall he be judged worthy" who has sinned against both the Son and the Spirit of God?

The question is asked but not answered. The reader is challenged to think it over. Few, it is to be feared, do this or are willing to do it.

The question brings to mind solemn words of the Lord: "Whoso shall cause one of these little ones that believe on me to stumble *it is profitable* for him [Mark 9: 42, "it were *better* for him"] that a great millstone [*i.e.*, a millstone so great as not to be turned by hand but requiring an ass] should be hanged about his neck, and that he should be sunk in the depth of the sea" (Matt. 18: 6).

In the thoughtful mind such questions start a deeper question. What punishment conceivable as to this present life can be thought of as more severe than premature death by stoning, drowning, or fire? Yet evidently something more severe is possible or a violent death were not to be preferred, were not better than it. But if it is something more dreadful than such a death must it not be after death?

An answer is not difficult for those who say that a child of God may lose salvation and be cast into the lake of fire for ever. That were certainly a more severe punishment than the worst this earth-life can bring.

But what answer can we give who assert that no child of God can be lost eternally? The many give no answer at all, but ignore such passages and problems; while such as at all face the question treat such scriptures but superficially, avoid their plain terms and force, and say the persons in question were never regenerated by faith in Christ.

If the attitude of such must be stated plainly and firmly it amounts to this: that backsliders may be calmly consigned to everlasting damnation, but theories as to the nature of the

Divine grace, opinions as to the membership and future of the church of God, dispensational schemes, and popular notions as to the state after death, these must on no account be challenged or revised. If any reader is of this mind he naturally will not further pursue our present inquiries, even if he has read so far.

(2) What effect did our Lord design to produce by these following words from Luke 12: 1–12? He is talking firstly to His own disciples (ver. 1). Crowds of others are listening, but "first of all," that is, very especially, it is to disciples to whom the teaching is directed. He warns them against hypocrisy, the leaven of the Pharisees. Followers of Him must be utterly sincere, as He was. He stresses that nothing that is ever said or done is really secret. All is known by that invisible world that is all around us, and they will duly make it known, to our praise or confusion. To live with such sincerity, simplicity, transparency (Phil. 1: 10, *eilikrinēs* translucent) will provoke the hatred of the Prince of darkness and his sons, and will involve the sons of light in conflicts and dangers. Therefore the Lord continues:

"I say to you, my friends [my personal friends, *philoi*], Be not afraid of them who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will make clear to you (*hypodeiknumi*) whom ye shall fear: Fear him, who after he hath killed hath authority to cast into Gehenna; yea, I say unto you, fear him." Matt. 10: 28 is parallel to this place in Luke, but has the enlargement that men may kill the body, but the soul they are not able to kill, but that God "is able to destroy both soul and body in Gehenna."

As said above, we must interpret strictly.

The Lord did *not* say that God *would* cast into Gehenna any friends of His Son, but He does warn them to hold in due respect One Who is able to do this. Obviously such an One, not puny man, is the proper Person to fear, and in Whose fear to order one's life. But what Christ's words do make clear is that there *is* such a thing as punishment beyond this life on earth: "after he hath killed," God can do more.

As to Gehenna, it is to be observed that the term is twice used figuratively. In Jas. 3: 6 an evil tongue is said to be "set on fire by Gehenna." Here all the expressions are figurative. By the "tongue" is meant the thoughts which the tongue is used to express. By "fire" is meant the scorching hurtful influence of bitter thoughts. By Gehenna is intended the, as we say, "hellish" spirit that inspires and inflames such speech. In Matt. 23: 15 are words of the Lord as to the Pharisees and their converts from the heathen: "Ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte; and when he is become so, ye make him

two-fold more a son of Gehenna than yourselves"; that is, in all that is hateful to God, in spirit and influence, he, with the intensity of a pervert, becomes twice as "hellish" as his instructor.

Matt. 5: 21, 22 are possibly in the background of the words of James above, for the Lord was then speaking of the evil use of the tongue in uttering reviling words, such as *Raca*, an expression of strong contempt, or *Mōre*, a term of stern condemnation and scorn. One who went to this length rendered himself liable to Gehenna. In ver. 29, 30 of this chaper the Lord said that if eye or hand was an occasion of stumbling it were better to destroy those members "and not thy whole body go into Gehenna."

In Mark 9: 41–50, this teaching is reported as given by the Lord on another occasion, which repetition suggests that He thought it important to impress it upon His followers. Yet most have neglected it. On this second occasion the Lord enlarged His remarks by a contrast: "it is better for thee to go into life maimed, rather than having thy two hands to go into Gehenna, into the unquenchable fire . . . [or] halt, rather than having thy two feet to be cast into Gehenna, . . . [or] it is good for thee to enter into the kingdom of God with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into Gehenna, where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched."

On a still later occasion Christ pressed on the scribes and Pharisees the fearful challenge, "Ye serpents, ye offspring of vipers, how shall ye escape the judgment of Gehenna?" (Matt. 23: 33).

The above twelve passages are all where the word is found in the New Testament. What lies behind the teaching is well known. Among the Jews ordinary offences were dealt with in local courts; more serious cases were taken before a Council, or High Court, where sentence of death could be passed; and where for the most flagrant crimes the punishment could be aggravated by the refusal of burial and the corpse of the offender being flung, with the offal of the city, into the ever-burning fires maintained for the purpose in Gehenna, the valley of Hinnom outside the city.

(3) We shall not inquire into the varying notions floating at the time in the minds of men as to the realm of the dead, but shall seek here to learn only from Scripture. This at least is clear, that Christ intended more than the casting of the corpse into the fires of Hinnom, for (*a*) He speaks of what God can do to a man after his death, not what the Council could do; (*b*) that in the Gehenna intended the soul can be destroyed, which of course could not take place at Hinnom; and (*c*) if the latter were meant then the warning has never applied generally, nor at all since those fires died out.

There is therefore something possible after death, something to be feared because fearful, of which they who cause young believers to stumble ought to be afraid, and which they who apostatize from Christ ought to expect (Heb. 10: 27). They are to *expect* it. How contrary is this to the easy-going complacency which our vain hearts love and which some views popular among Christians encourage.

And is not this outlook just what a sound judgment *would* expect from the inflexible justice of our God? For "if ye call on Him as Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to each man's work, pass the time of your sojourning in fear" (I Pet. 1: 13–22). For your Father is also judge, and the former relationship does not suspend or weaken the latter office. Your standard of heart and life is to be nothing lower than His holiness, and the redemption by which you benefit is in order that you may purify your souls and walk in that love which stumbles no one but builds up all. This Judge knows no respect of persons and does not indulge His own family in sin.

The case of F. W. Newman has been cited. Him personally we cannot judge, but he is typical of others. He spent perhaps forty years using a splendid intellect, vast learning, wide opportunities in Universities and otherwise, in poisoning many minds against Christ. His sadly belated, almost death-bed acknowledgment of Christ was known to but very few and could not and did not undo the desperate harm done to very many in this life and, it is to be feared, for eternity.

Granted, as we are thoroughly persuaded, that the death of Christ secures exemption from the *eternal* doom deserved, does it, ought it, to exempt such an one from temporal punishment? It did not so exempt David from penalties for his evil example; but he endured them in this life. If such penalties were deserved by David when are they to be endured by Newman? He lived in comfort, respected by the world, and died in quietness. We repeat that we use him purely as typical of a class of men, and to give point to our reflections. What his actual experiences have been or may be is not here the point. Of this of course we know nothing. Our inquiry is whether such an apostate ought not to have *expected* a fierceness of fire that should deal with him as an adversary of the Son of God, and whether such an expectation might have effectually prevented him from apostatizing? For this is a design of such warnings.

v. *Gehenna and the Reality.*

(1) What can we learn as to the reality which our Lord had in mind as answering to the valley of Hinnom? It seems very little; much is left indefinite. Some able and devout students

identify Gehenna and the lake of fire of Rev. 20, and have regarded the latter as the place of temporary punishment after death for evil-living Christians. Yet Scripture does not plainly identify them, and in so solemn a matter we decline inferences and assumptions. As to both places the Scripture leaves some unresolved problems, as if to debar positive assertions.

For example. Gehenna is not the valley of Hinnom, for the soul cannot be destroyed in the latter. Yet into what region of the realm of spirit can the human *body* be cast after death? for it too can be destroyed there; and it would seem to be the same body which men can kill which God can destroy in Gehenna: "fear not them that kill the body . . . but Him Who can destroy soul and body in Gehenna."

(2) *Dives and Lazarus.* Nor can it be stated positively that Luke 16 describes Gehenna. It might well do so, but the Lord did not say that "in Gehenna" Dives "lifted up his eyes," but in *Hades.* This is a wider word than Gehenna, and the greater could include the lesser; but here again it is not for us to be definite where strict proof is lacking.

Yet some salient features of Luke 16 may be noted.

(*a*) The scene is directly after death, for the five brothers of Dives are still alive in the family residence. Hades therefore is not the place of final punishment after resurrection. Two words of Abraham are important: "now . . . here." They stand in contrast to Dives' former time and place on earth; but they also deny right to us to extend the dread scene into eternity and another place than Hades.

(*b*) There is no strict proof that Dives will be lost for ever. It is a common assumption, and it may prove true, but here also we refuse inference. This may be noted: that nothing is laid to his charge than a callous heart and a self-indulgent life. Christians can sink to this. Some in the Corinthian church sat in their love-feasts, in connexion with which the Supper was solemnized, and ate and drank to excess while others of the Christian family sat there hungry. It was such Dives-like selfishness that the God Who is love was punishing even unto the death of some of them (I Cor. 11: 20–30).

(*c*) Dives was not utterly hardened. He had been so far stirred as to long that his brothers might not have to share his lot.

We are therefore no more able to pronounce judgment upon him than on any other individual.

(*d*) Abraham and Lazarus also were in Hades, in that region termed by the Jews "the bosom of Abraham," and later by Christ named "Paradise" (Luke 23: 43), and so Dives can see and speak with Abraham. Therefore the godly were within the earth, where Hades is, as all Scripture locates it. Comp.

Ps. 16: 8-11; Acts 2: 25–28; Eph. 4: 8–10. The theory that since Christ's ascension all believers go to the heavenly world is wholly devoid of warrant from the Word of God, and was held by very few (if any) for above five hundred years after Christ. See the quotation near the end of the next chapter from Pearson, *The Creed*, Art. 5, (p. 230).

Were the godly already glorified they could not need resurrection. Our Epistle will tell us shortly (11: 40) that saints of old "apart from us" cannot "be made perfect"; now the dead are not made perfect save by resurrection; therefore neither saints of pre-Christian times nor of this age are perfected and in glory. They await this glad consummation where Christ and the thief went at death, Paradise, Abraham's bosom.[1]

It may be said that the result of this inquiry is to leave this subject of retribution after death rather vague, which is true. The fact seems established, the details are not clear. This is in harmony with a small word in the *Hebrews* passage not yet noted. Ver. 27 speaks of "a *certain* [*tis*] fearful expectation of judgment."

This word *tis* does not mean that the event is sure to come to pass. It is the Greek indefinite particle, as in the expressions "a certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho," "a certain poor widow cast in two mites." Thus while the Writer employs strong terms as to the judgment to be expected, by this particle he leaves some indefiniteness as to what that fierceness of fire will prove to be.

This element characterizes the subject of future judgments as set forth in Scripture. Thus such terms as "great white throne," "lake of fire," "books were opened," refer to solemn realities, the purport being clear, but the realities themselves being obscure. Perhaps this indefiniteness adds to the deterrent power of the warnings. The unknown is more terrible than the known. Prison is less deterrent to the hardened criminal than to the first offender. The Book of God shows His divine wisdom in its appeals and warnings to our human nature. In the same way the indefiniteness of the terms "bride," "city," "tree of life" and others, prompt curiosity and inquiry as to the glories awaiting the godly.

vi. It will be objected that this prospect of punishment after death for some who are ultimately to be saved savours of the Roman doctrine of purgatory. Stalwart Protestants will rush to the battle with the heaviest armaments they can command. But let the searcher for truth alone be calm.

(1) Every instructed Christian believes in purgatory in

[1] See my *Firstfruits and Harvest*, 45–82,

principle. The fire purges the gold that it may be fit for the king's table. Heb. 12: 10; I Pet. 1: 6, 7, indeed the whole Bible teaches this, nor is it questioned as to the ways of God our Father with His children *in this life.*

It is therefore simply a question of whether God by His Word does or does not extend the application of this process to the life after death. No new principle as to His ways is introduced. And who shall complain, or even wonder, should He thus vindicate His justice before men and angels? It is not fully exhibited in this life, even in the case of His children. The godly do not get a full reward of virtue, nor the carnal believer the due reward of his deeds. The former rightly look beyond death for their recompense; it is but consistent that the latter should then receive theirs.

Col. 3: 25 reads "For he that doeth wrong shall receive again the wrong that he hath done [margin]; and there is no respect of persons." On the strength of this two eminently conservative Bible students expressed positively their united conviction that the fulfilment of this warning lies beyond death. "The attempt to alleviate the text of some of its weight by suggesting that the law operates only in this life, fails, for there is nothing in the text or context to lead the reader to think other than that while the sowing is here the reaping is hereafter" (Hogg and Vine, *Touching the Coming of the Lord*, pp. 84, 85, ed. I. For further comments on this see my *First-fruits and Harvest*, pp. 76, 77).

(2) If it be that in the period between death and resurrection the redeemed are more perfectly prepared for the latter and for the attendant prospects in the kingdom of God, ought not this to be matter for rejoicing on their behalf and of thanksgiving to the God of all grace?

(3) This differs *radically* from the Romish doctrine of purgatory, for that dogma makes suffering after death for such as go to purgatory necessary to their purification and final salvation. It is taught that beatified saints go at death direct to heaven; but these are the few; the majority must pass through purgatory on the way thither. Thus "according to the Romanists the departed have to make an atonement *themselves*, in the purgatorial state, for the sins they have committed when in this life" (Walter Hook, in Dr. W. F. Hook's *Church Dictionary*, 629). See also Newman's *Development of Christian Doctrine*, ch. ix, para. 1 to 7, and Griffith Thomas, *The Principles of Theology*, 301–303. The view argued above makes this to depend first and last, only, entirely, and eternally upon the justifying work of Christ on the cross, imputed to the believer once and for ever when he truly repents and trusts on Christ as Saviour.

As to *standing* before God

"I stand upon *His* merit,
I know *no* other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

(4) It is worth deep and full inquiry whether it be not the case that the whole system of Roman theology, and each dogma separately, has some element of truth at its heart, truth perverted and corrupted, but there. It is to be doubted whether any one of those dogmas is undiluted error. That Church has been pre-eminently the woman that hid the leaven of error in the meal of truth; but the meal is there (Matt. 13: 33).

If this is so, it is to be expected that in even their doctrine of purgatory there is an element of truth. In the fierceness of Reformation controversy it too largely happened that almost everything Roman was rejected *in toto*, instead of discrimination being employed to rescue the wheat from the chaff. The chief exception was the retention of the fatal doctrine of regeneration by baptism. Here more discrimination ought to have been used to reject the error while yet retaining the New Testament teaching and practice. But it would have been a mistake to have rejected baptism as completely and summarily as purgatory was rejected, for both have a basis of truth overlaid by deadly error.

vii. *A Living God* (ver. 31).

The Thessalonians turned from idols, the unreal and dead gods they had formerly feared, to serve "a God living and true" (I Thess. 1: 9). The Christian has had his conscience cleansed from dead works, to serve a living God (Heb. 9: 14). He has already been warned (3: 12) to take heed that an evil heart of unbelief does not induce him to turn away from the living God, because if he does so he will depart from the fountain of life and find himself in a waterless waste. And now he is still more solemnly reminded and warned that "it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of a living God." The readers are *reminded* that this is so, because knowing the Old Testament (see p. 15) they would remember the terrible occasion on which this phrase was used (II Sam. 24: 14).

David, as king, had stirred his God to anger. He acknowledged his sin, but God knew that it must be punished publicly, being a public offence. The king was allowed to choose one of three punishments. Seven years of famine; three months of defeat in war by his national foes; or three days

of pestilence, a penalty to be inflicted by heavenly powers. David knew God and chose wisely and reverently, saying: "I am in a great strait: let us now fall into the hand of Jehovah; for his mercies are great: and let me not fall into the hand of man."

Even so it proved a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God, even though His mercies are great, for seventy thousands of the king's subjects died in those brief days, and David's heart was torn and bowed, for he was a true shepherd of God's flock.

4. *Encouragement* (10: 32–39).

When tempted to turn away from Christ to your former association with Moses let your memory work—"call to remembrance." Think upon what you gained in Christ and reflect what you must lose apart from Him. You gained

i. *Light.* "Ye were enlightened." You were before ignorant upon all that is most important; you walked in darkness not knowing whither you were going. But Christ justified His word that He is the light of the world, and your heart was enlightened, so that you saw, learned, knew the things of God (Eph. 5: 7–14).

ii. *Endurance.* Your spirit became strong. Instead of being beaten down in the battles of life, you became victors. The Lord directed your hearts into the love of God and into the endurance of Christ (II Thess. 3: 5), so that conflict, sufferings, reproaches, afflictions left you undaunted. You carried easily burdens before insupportable.

iii. *Sympathy.* With the inflowing of the love of God in Christ your hearts were cured of selfishness and you became sympathetic, tender, thoughtful, and found grace to share gladly the burdens and trials of others, though this cost you a high price.

iv. *Heavenly Realities* became your soul's real possessions. You knew positively that you were now owners of things permanent, treasures far, far better than the best you had held before. The higher world where Christ is, at the right hand of God, became your satisfying portion, of which none can rob you, without your consent.

v. *Freedom from Bondage to the Earth.* In consequence it mattered little to you that you were robbed of things earthly. They were rightly your own, but they were not necessary to your happiness. You could now do without them.

vi. *Joy.* Nor were you inwardly grieved at the loss, nor were you embittered against the thieves; rather you rejoiced greatly with a joy simply inexpressible. You were already

sharing in the coming glory[1] and thus in large measure receiving already your salvation.

These entirely new and heavenly experiences were glorious, and effected a real experimental deliverance of your life from being wasted. You now lived to purpose, unto God. But all this came to you upon faith in Christ as the Son of God, appointed by God to be your all. Therefore on no account incur the heavy, irreparable loss of all this spiritual wealth by turning back to the weak and beggarly things of former days. It is in Christ alone that heavenly treasure is found; surrender Him and you lose all.

You need continual boldness in confession. Do not throw this away by ceasing to confess His name. It is sure of "great recompense of reward" (ver. 35), for such as shall at last have completed the doing[2] of the will of God shall receive what He has promised.

vii. *The Promise.* And what has God promised?

(1) ver. 37. He has promised us His Son as *the Coming One*! The world at large has no pleasing prospects; it is *without God and without hope* (Eph. 2: 12). But the believer has a good hope through grace. Of this hope faith has taken hold (6: 18): let not this grip be relaxed.

From the time when the first promise of a Deliverer was given in the Garden (Gen. 3: 15) men of faith fastened their hope on that Coming One. At last Jesus came, full of grace and truth, and a much tried heart put to Him the urgent question, "Art thou the Coming One?" (*ho erchomenos*, as in our passage).

After a brief sojourn among men He was driven away and He departed. But when going hence He left the promise "I will come again" (John 14: 3), and ever since then men of faith, like those of old, have fastened on that promise, and His return has been their true, their only hope for themselves, the church, for Israel, for the world at large. Truly and sweetly did Ter Steegen sing,

A homeless stranger among us came
To this land of death and mourning;
He walked in a path of sorrow and shame,
Through insult and hate and scorning;

A man of sorrows, of toil and tears,
An outcast Man and a lonely:
But He looked on me, and through endless years
Him must I love, Him only.

[1] I Pet. 1: 8. Notice the perfect participle *dedoxasmenō*, "having been glorified."

[2] *Poiēsantes*, aorist participle.

And to the heart that has thus been captured by His love, and abides in it by obedience, He is henceforth the Coming One, and life becomes a pilgrimage through a desert to meet Him Whom the soul loveth and without Whom the heart cannot be content.

The title expresses the attitude of the Lord's own heart. He sits at the right hand of God in constant expectation of the day when the Father will send Him to earth again to subdue all foes and establish here the rule of God. He knows Himself to be the Coming One.

(2) ver. 37. This promise is sure of fulfilment: "the Coming One will come." Therefore "let us follow on to know the Lord; His going forth is as sure as the morning; and He shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter rain that watereth the earth" (Hos. 6: 3).

(3) ver. 37. "And He will not tarry." Yet how often do we hear the expression, We will do this or that *if the Lord tarry!* The familiarizing of the mind with an unscriptural expression is hurtful, for it obscures truth. What Scripture teaches is that the Coming One will not tarry, *not* that He may come "at any moment." This idea is wholly *contrary* to Scripture, being beyond possibility. It never has been, it never can be possible for the Coming One to come until the precise moment when the Father shall send Him and which moment He has reserved within His own authority (Acts 1: 7). And that hour is definitely and repeatedly connected with the crisis when at last God's foes can be subdued under His feet.

Until that crisis has developed the Coming One cannot come, for it would not be the will of the Father; but the blessed assurance is this, that directly the hour has arrived the Lord will come and will on no account be late. There is no "tarrying" for the hour has not come; there will be no delay when the hour shall have struck: for

> "God never is before His time,
> And never is behind."

In the vast war of the ages the timing of concerted movements is vital.

(4) This intervening period is declared to be very brief: "For yet a little, how very little" is the interval before the Coming One shall come. But the movements of each section of an army must be regulated by the calculations at Headquarters, not by those of the man in the trench. "God speaks from His own standpoint and outlook, and measures distance by His own standards, not by man's. It is for us reverently

to habituate our thinking to His, not to reduce His conceptions to our measures."[1] And to Him a thousand years is but a day, and so Moses (Deut. 32: 29–35) had sung of Israel's "latter end" being "at hand" though it was three and a half millenniums distant. But God Who gave that song could have said that, from His own standpoint, the time would be three and a half days.

Love shortens time. To Jacob's infatuated heart the seven years he served for Rachel "seemed but a few days, for the love he had to her" (Gen. 29: 20). Prophets and apostles, loving their Lord's appearing, thought the interval very short whatever length it might prove to be.

(5) Yet human nature is impatient and is ready to cry with Sisera's mother, "Why is his chariot so long in coming? Why tarry the wheels of his chariots?" (Judges 5: 28). The betrothed sighs, How can I endure till his return? The pilgrim says, Will my strength suffice to toil on through the long night? And the God of hope answers:

"My righteous one shall live by faith" (ver. 38).

Not—the one who by faith is righteous shall live; *but*—the one who is righteous shall live by faith. One who is living unrighteously cannot live by faith; for faith brings God into matters, and He, the Righteous One, cannot be brought into unrighteousness. Now to turn the back upon God's Son is the chief of all unrighteousness, and he who does this cannot walk by faith. But to set one's hope on Christ, as the One who came to put away sin and as the Coming One, is to act rightly, for it is to accept the promise of God, which is to walk by faith; and therefore when the Coming One shall come His coming shall be fulness of life, shall be salvation, to the one thus waiting for Him, whereas it shall be a day of darkness and death to the unbeliever, His adversary.

How faith carries the pilgrim through the night will be illustrated by the Writer in ch. XI.

5. *The Peril of the man of faith* (ver. 38).

i. "But if he shrink back." Who is this? Plainly "my righteous one," for no one else has been mentioned. It is the man who did walk by faith turning back to walk by sight. It is the faithful slave degenerating into the evil slave, because he thinks his lord tarries (Matt. 24: 45–51). It is the forgiven slave refusing to forgive his fellow-slave (Matt. 18: 32–35). It is the man of faith returning to works, so abandoning grace for law as the ground of dealing with God, giving up Christ to follow Moses, forsaking the heavenly and substantial for the earthly, the shadowy.

[1] See my *Revelation of Jesus Christ*, 36, 37, for a fuller discussion.

But what can possibly induce such folly and guilt? It is fear: "if he shrink back." There are giants in Canaan: "let us make us a captain and return into Egypt" (Num. 14: 1–4). Why face the rigours of the desert? In Egypt there are leeks, onions, garlic, and all luxuries! As for the Coming One, "as for this Moses, we know not what has become of him" (Exod. 32: 1); he went up into the mount, perchance he will never come back; let us institute a visible religion of our own, and try to enjoy the present. To be sure we will have priest, altar, sacrifices, a god of shining gold, a sensuous religion, and at the same time it shall be all done in the name of Jehovah; but we will have therewith carnal enjoyments instead of simplicity and austerity; and as for yonder Promised Land—let us turn the desert into this!

ii. But God says—"if he shrink back, *My soul hath no pleasure in him.*" And of those of old, redeemed and baptized, and who fed for a while on spiritual food, we Christians are told that "with most of them *God was not well-pleased,*" the token of this being that "they were overthrown in the wilderness," they lost their life, instead of keeping it to enjoy Canaan (I Cor. 10: 5).

6. *The Conclusion* (ver. 39). This brings the argument to a close with a combined encouragement and warning, "we are not of them that shrink back unto perdition, but of them that have faith unto the saving of the soul."

i. "*We are of them that have faith.*" This is what characterizes us; this is the mark of the company of which we are members. Thus does the Writer again make plain to what type of person he addresses his encouragements and warnings: they are men of faith; only such can profit by the promises; it is such who need the warnings.

Again the terms employed need careful consideration free from the beclouding influence of prepossessions; for it must be admitted that the renderings "perdition" and "the saving of the soul" suit well the doctrine that the truly saved can be finally lost; nor can those of the opposite belief counter this save by the plainly unfounded assertion that saved persons are not in view. The terms employed, however, admit of more exact renderings requiring neither of these views.

ii. *Saving the soul.* The noun *peripoiēsis* (saving) and its verb *peripoiēō* mean to cause something to remain over and above, and so to preserve it, reserve it for oneself, acquire it for one's own. Thus deacons can serve the church so well as *to acquire* for themselves a good degree (I Tim. 3: 13); and thus Christ *acquired* the church at the price of His own blood (Acts 20: 28), thus *preserving* its members from the coming

destruction and reserving them as a *private possession* (I Pet. 2: 9). To this end He has sealed them, with a view to the day when He will *take open possession* (Eph. 1: 14). Therefore God has not appointed these unto wrath but to be *preserved* unto salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ (I Thess. 5: 9), for He has called us unto *the obtaining* of the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ (II Thess. 2: 14).

Except for our present passage (Heb. 10: 39) the only other place in the New Testament is Luke 17: 33, which is of special importance in our inquiry because it has both of the words *peripoiēō* and *psuchē* even as Heb. 10: 39 has *peripoiēsis* and *psuchē*. Also the one has *apōleia* and Luke 17: 33 has *apollumi*.

This Greek word *psuchē* has the meaning of both "soul" and "life" according to the context in each place. The meaning in Luke is plainly "life," for it follows directly a reference to Lot's wife losing her life by a sudden judgment. She shrank back from the empty prospect suddenly set before Lot and herself and turned back in heart to Sodom, though she knew it was under the wrath of God. The words of the Lord therefore declare that, if any one seeks *to reserve* his life for himself he shall lose it, but if any one loses it for Christ's sake he shall bring it forth alive (the proper force of *zōogoneō*) out of any and every danger and loss, even as Lot preserved his life, though he lost everything but his life.

Obviously this agrees exactly with the warnings already considered that believers may be cut short by premature death and thus lose their life. It will therefore harmonize with the Lord's words should our passage be rendered, "we are of them who have faith unto the *keeping safe of life.*"

Such teaching by our Lord is too generally neglected by Christians though He laid heavy emphasis upon it. He had before declared that "the one finding his life shall lose (*apolesei*) it, and the one losing (*apolesas*) his life on my account shall find it" (Matt. 10: 39). And later He emphasized and enlarged this instruction by assuring the apostles that "whoever may wish (*thelō*) to save his life shall *lose* it; but whoever may *lose* his life on My account shall find it. For what shall it profit a man if he should gain the whole world and forfeit his life? or what shall a man give in exchange for his life?" (Matt. 16: 25, 26). Then follows the instruction that this profit and loss account will be closed when the Son of Man shall return in glory and "render to every man according to his doing." This makes clear that it is children of God to whom this teaching is given, for it is only such who will be rewarded at the time when Christ comes in glory. The unregenerate who will have died will not be judged until after the Millennial age, at the great white throne.

It is evident that *psuchē* in this passage must mean "life," if for no other reason than that no man can exchange his *soul* for something else; because the soul is the person, the ego, and no one can give up his personality, himself, in exchange for another object. It is impossible. But a man *can* spend the powers, means, opportunities, time which make up *life*, upon unworthy and unprofitable objects. He can exchange his life for pleasure, vice, wealth, power, and can thus gain the world, to find at the end of life that he gained nought but lost all.

A renowned Lord Chancellor did not turn to God until about eighty years of age. When someone felicitated him upon the salvation of his soul he made the acute and searching reply, "Yes, my soul is saved, but my *life* is lost." Not one hour of the long past could he recover to spend it for Christ and eternity. Likewise may one converted young decline the cross, live for the world, and so waste his life and lose it.

This use of *peripoiēō* by Christ gives its dominant sense, as is shown by its usage in the Greek Old Testament, as in these places:

(1) Gen. 12: 12. Abraham said to Sarah: "they will kill me, and *save thee alive.*"

(2) Num. 22: 33. The angel said to Balaam about the ass, "unless she had turned aside from me, surely now I had even slain thee, and *saved her alive.*"

(3) I Sam. 15: 9. "Saul and the people *spared* Agag, and the best of the sheep, etc.," but everything else they utterly destroyed; that is, Agag was left alive.

(4) I Kings 18: 5. Ahab said to Obadiah: "peradventure we may find grass and *save* the horses and mules *alive*, that we lose not all the beasts."

(5) Ps. 79: 11. Thus also the prayer: "*preserve* thou those that are appointed to death"—that is, keep them alive.

(6) Isa. 31: 5. So of Zion in the day of the Lord, God has promised: "As birds flying so will Jehovah of hosts protect Jerusalem and will rescue and *preserve* and save."

By taking our passage according to this major use of the word *peripoiēsis* no question arises of final salvation or damnation, but the former warning against wasting one's life is enforced, with the consequent possible punishment of one's life being cut short in judgment and what further temporary penalty may follow upon this.

iii. *Perdition.* The noun *apōleia* is found eighteen times in the New Testament and certainly in several of these refers to eternal destruction. Judas is a "son of perdition" (John 17: 12), as also the Antichrist (II Thess. 2: 3), who at his end "goeth into perdition" (Rev. 17: 8, 11). Rev. 20: 10 says

that his torment is to be "for ever and ever," which shows that perdition for him is to be endless.

In II Peter the word is used five times (2: 1 twice; 2: 3; 3: 7, 16), and points to the final destruction of the ungodly when the heavens and the earth are destroyed by fire. In Rom. 9: 22; Phil 1: 28; 3: 19; I Tim. 6: 9 the same meaning may be accepted.

But Peter's words to Simon (Acts 8: 20) translated "Thy money *perish* with thee" seem not so definitely to declare Simon's eternal ruin as the English suggests to most readers. The Greek perhaps goes no further than a warning to Simon of what the final outcome may be unless he repents and gains forgiveness.

The student will ponder the use of the optative *eiē* with the accusative *eis*, which suggests rather a movement which may end in destruction than a certainty of this. If the latter had been the meaning there could have been no question of repentance and pardon. The common force of the optative to express a wish creates difficulty here, for would an apostle wish a man to perish seeing that God wishes that all should be saved? (I Tim. 2: 4; II Pet. 3: 9).

A friend writes: "Peter does not say, 'May you go to destruction with your money,' which certainly would imply a desire for Simon's destruction. He says, 'May your money go to destruction with you'—meaning, I suggest, 'May your money go to destruction (lit. 'be unto destruction') as you yourself are now going.' Indeed, the suggestion may be, that if Simon's money did go to destruction, he himself on the other hand, might be rescued from this course along the broad road that leads to destruction." On Peter's words the *Speaker*'s *Commentary* says: "understood by the fathers generally as conveying a prediction, not an imprecation—Simon was urged to repentance and prayer." (See Zahn *in loco* for a sober discussion.)

It is evident that such words as life, death, loss, destruction, and the like do not in themselves indicate the duration of the states they describe. This must be shown by some added word or by the context or another passage. Thus the Lord spoke of a "broad way that leads to *destruction*," in contrast to a "narrow way that leads to life" (Matt. 7: 13, 14). The ultimate end of that broad way, for those who pursue it to the end must be final perdition. Yet the Lord did not here say this, though in this same Gospel He is reported as having twice spoken of eternal fire (Matt. 18: 8; 25: 41) and once of eternal punishment and once of eternal life (25: 46). Here He omits "eternal": Why?

Was not David on the broad way, which the many follow,

during the months when he walked in deliberate sin and refused to repent? One does not so act on the narrow way. But since it is the case that a regenerate man cannot finally be lost there must be some lesser sense in which such an one can experience "destruction." Nor is this sense far to seek, for the word *apōleia* has also the definite meaning of a thing being lost and wasted: "to what purpose was this *waste*" of the ointment? asked Judas (Matt. 26: 8; Mark 14: 4).

Perhaps this would be enough force to give to Peter's words to Simon seeing that he left open the possibility of repentance and so did not denounce against him irretrievable ruin, though the awful possibility lay in the background. And if this restricted sense be given to the words of the Lord quoted they would cover such a case as that of David, where there is obvious risk of life being wasted in the sense and to the degree above shown.

This is indeed the primary sense of the word *apōleia* and it is quite frequent in the case of the verb *apollumi* from which the noun is derived. It is used of *lost* sheep (Luke 15: 4, etc.), *lost* money (Luke 15: 8), *lost* reward (Matt. 10: 42), etc. We read of the *perishing* of wisdom, garments, flowers, wineskins, and members of the body. Out of nearly ninety places it is used only eleven times where final perdition seems clearly meant.[1] But it is used some thirty-three times (about one-third of all places) of the death of the body, and ten times of the loss of the *life* in the sense above considered.

It is this last sense that best suits our present passage (Heb. 10: 39) if the keeping safe of the *life* is the true meaning. For the way to do this is to use life well and worthily, and therefore the opposite will be to waste and lose it, as they do who shrink back from the path of faith, the narrow way which few find, and not all who find follow to the end of their earthly course.

Let every Christian so walk as to show that he is indeed of that company who can truly say, "we are not of them who shrink back . . . but of them who have faith," who walk not by self-efforts to be justified by the law, but by faith, faith which is placed in the Son of God, Who loved us and gave Himself up for us (Gal. 2: 19, 20).

Note A (pp. 15, 73, 176). ETERNAL SECURITY.

The strength of the case for the doctrine of the eternal security of the believer is not always realized, and some of its grounds are not understood by all.

[1] Mat. 18: 14; John 3: 16; 17: 12; 18: 9; Rom. 2: 12; I Cor. 1: 18; II Cor. 2: 15; II Thes. 2: 10; Jas. 4: 12; II Pet. 3: 9; and most emphatically I Cor. 15: 18, that, if there be no resurrection, the dead are *perished*.

1. *Justification.* This security is involved in the nature of the justifying act of God. To justify is the act of a judge when he declares that, having examined the charge brought against the accused, he finds him not guilty before the law. The ground upon which God declares righteous the sinner who puts faith in Christ is that Christ as his Surety satisfied the demands of the law against the sinner. The atoning death of Christ which satisfied the demands of the law is imputed to, or put to the credit of, the sinner who puts his reliance upon the Surety as having suffered on his behalf the highest penalty imposed by the law. The actual offender is reckoned in Divine law to have expiated his offences by having died for them, because his Substitute died for them. "I through the law died unto [out of reach of] the law. . . . I have been crucified with Christ" (Gal. 2: 19). See *Note* at end.

The question, therefore, as it concerns the sinner, is, for *how many* of his sins did Christ by His death accept responsibility and render satisfaction therefor? If it was for those sins only which he had committed up to the time when he first placed his faith on Christ and was justified by that faith, then, as to his future from that hour, one of two features must characterize it, namely, either he must never sin again, or, if he sin even once, then he must suffer eternal death, since, in the case supposed, Christ did not bear these post-conversion sins and no atonement can ever avail in respect thereof, for Christ will not die again (Rom. 6: 9, 10; Heb. 7: 16).

In other words: in the case now postulated, sin after conversion must inevitably cancel salvation for most believers.[1] For all these Christ might as well not have died for their pre-conversion sins because they will be eternally lost for their post-conversion sins.

As regards men who died before Christ died, and who had looked forward by faith to the coming Redeemer, *all* their sins of their whole life were past when he died for them. As regards men who were alive when Christ died, some of their sins were past and some were future. As regards those born since He died, and who have believed on Him, *all* their sins of their whole life were future when He died. By what process or to what purpose could a division have been made by Divine counsel and the Surety have been made responsible for a part only of their sins? In all of these cases if He did not accept and discharge the full legal penalty for *all* their sins then He did not provide salvation for any one: the whole stupendous transaction would be void and valueless. But inasmuch as He did in fact satisfy the law of God in respect of the sins of the whole life of the one who relies on Him, therefore the acquittal by the Judge of all the earth, that is to say, His declaration that the accused is not guilty before the law, sets him free from the eternal penalty due to the sins of his whole life.

Further, it is deeply important that (according, *e.g.* to the law of England) when a person has been tried for a crime and acquitted he cannot be again tried for the same offence or offences. Fifty years ago there was a barrister famed for his success in defending criminals. He relates that on one occasion he secured the acquittal of a man charged with murder, and afterwards did not cease to be sorry, for the culprit boasted, that, though his lawyer got him off, his was the hand that did the crime. Yet the man was secure from the law as regards that offence because he had been tried and (wrongly) declared not guilty.

In like manner Christ declared that the one who believes God's message of salvation "cometh not into judgment, but hath passed

[1] An exception may be supposed possible in a case where death occurs immediately after conversion.

out of death into life" (John 5: 24). For him the door of the condemned cell has been opened and he has stepped out into life and liberty. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8: 1). Who shall impeach again God's chosen ones, seeing that God Himself has declared them to be righteous in law? (Rom. 8: 33). So long as the work of the cross retains its virtue before God, so long will the righteousness imputed to the believer stand, that is, both are eternal.

2. *Temporal Penalties for the Justified.* Here enters the vast importance of the truth before urged, that the work of the cross delivers the believer from the *eternal* penalty of sin but not from any *temporal* punishments which may attach under the disciplinary government of the universe by God. And these may prove severe and prolonged, though not eternal in the case of the justified. Various scriptures present this serious and balancing aspect. For example:

(1) There is the private realm of the *father* and his *family*, wherein the children are chastised by the father. This will be considered when we reach ch. xii of our Epistle. It is a manifestly different case from that of a criminal before a Court on trial for his life.

(2) There is the case of a *king* and *his own household.* It is set forth in our Lord's parables in Luke 19: 11–27 and Matt. 25: 14–30. The unfaithful servant was deprived of further service and prospects and was cast out of the house into the darkness of the night during the temporary festivities connected with the king's return. He might even be severely scourged (Luke 12: 41–48). But these penalties were not the capital punishment inflicted upon the king's *enemies.* That is stated in immediate contrast: "Howbeit these mine *enemies,* who would not that I should reign over them, bring hither, and *slay them* before me" (Luke 19: 27).

(3) There is the parallel instance in Matt. 18: 21–35 of the servant who refused mercy to his fellow-servant though himself had received mercy from their lord. In this case the master revoked his mercy and the remission of the debt, and commanded that the latter be exacted. If this be applied to the unregenerate and eternity it will mean that the sinner can ultimately "pay all that is due" by his own sufferings; a way of salvation repugnant to Scripture and which would render needless the sufferings of the Redeemer. But it is evident that this measure taken by the lord operated within the same restricted sphere of his personal household. The teaching was an answer to the inquiry as to how often a *brother* ought to forgive a *brother* (ver. 21), and the application which Christ made of the instruction carries the same limit of the father and the family: "So shall also My heavenly *Father* do unto you, if ye forgive not every one his *brother* from your hearts" (ver. 35).

None of such cases raises the matter of the legal status of the children or the family servants before the *criminal courts.* This status remained unaffected by the disciplinary dealings of the father or the retributive measures of the master. Christ gave no challenge to His own statement that the believer passes out of death into life and will not come into judgment as to *that* question (John 5: 24). None of these servants lost his life by his carnality.

3. *Types and Histories.* These truths were made clear in the Old Testament by types and histories.

(1) The bringing of the appointed sin offering secured forgiveness: "and they [or he] shall be forgiven" (Lev. 4: 20, 26, 31, 35). He who came repentant to the altar, where was offered the atoning lamb, "went down to his house justified" (Luke 18: 14). From chs. ix and

x of our Epistle we have seen that that older justification was a foretaste of the perfect and eternal justification secured by Christ's eternal redemption.

(2) But more. The bringing of a burnt offering in due form secured more than bare forgiveness, even the *acceptance* of the *offerer himself*: "that *he* may be *accepted* before Jehovah" (Lev. 1: 3). His *status* was assured in the presence of God, "before Jehovah." Granted that this was imperfect under the old covenant, yet it was *real* as far as it went, and it was typical of the perfect and eternal status acquired in Christ, "through Whom also we have had our access into this grace [this state of favour] wherein we stand" (Rom. 5: 2).

(3) From I Cor. 5: 7, "For our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ," it is plain that the passover in Egypt was typical of Christ and His atoning blood. In Egypt the Israelites, equally with the Egyptians, were under the sentence of death against sin. The sprinkled blood delivered from that status as men condemned all who sheltered there-under, and set them free, through their baptism in the Red Sea into union with Moses (I Cor. 10: 1, 2), to escape from the land of doom itself and to enter in the desert the pathway of faith in God. There they were constituted a people, the people of Jehovah, a new status effected by redemption and faith.

Yet the more part of them did not live in conformity with this new standing and relationship and were overthrown in the desert. Their faith broke down, and so "the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not" (Jude 5). They forfeited bodily life and lost their prospects in the promised land, but God took care that *not a single one of them got back to Egypt*, not even though they set their faces to return there (Num. 14: 3, 4). They died in the wilderness (Num. 14: 32; I Cor. 10: 5). If even one of them had reached Egypt the type would have allowed that a redeemed person may get back to his original lost status; but the type inflexibly disallows this. To this same effect is the Divine review of that period given in Isa. 63, especially verses 9–14. They are described as His people, loved and redeemed, even though on account of their sins He had to fight against them.

(4) On the other hand, the types and histories show how severe may be the penalties of unbelief and disobedience, short of a resumption of the original alienation and unrelieved condemnation of men before God. This has been sufficiently illustrated in the present treatise.

4. *Eternal Life.* The same conclusion is involved in the fact that the life infused into the believer by the new birth is *eternal* life; that is, it is not a created life, having beginning and capable of having end, but it is a sharing in the uncreated life of God Himself, the Eternal: "for God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth on Him should *not perish* but have *eternal* life" (John 3: 16). Thus the giving of this life secures that the recipient shall not perish, even as Christ said later of His sheep, "they shall never perish" (John 10: 28).

For even if the sheep wander from the fold, and must suffer much distress in the desert, yet the Good Shepherd will "go after that which is lost *until He find it*" (Luke 15: 4). The ultimate restoration of the backslidden believer is certain, even though his penalties be not suffered or his recovery be not accomplished in this life; for can it be doubted that many backslidden believers die without having been healed of their backsliding? Such must, therefore, either be eternally lost (in

which case the doctrine we are controverting must after all prove true), or their recovery must be effected after death, which implies that the Father's disciplinary dealings for their recovery are applied after death.

The chief statement on the subject needs, and will bear, strict examination. Christ said (John 10: 27–30):

> (1) My sheep hear My voice, and (2) I know them, and (3) they follow Me: and (4) I give unto them eternal life; and (5) they shall never perish, and (6) no one shall snatch them out of My hand. My Father (7) Who hath given them unto Me, (8) is greater than all, and (9) no one is able to snatch them out of the Father's hand. (10) I and My Father are one.

It is difficult to conceive of any words more capable of creating the impression that the sheep of Christ are eternally secure from perishing. They create the impression that the Speaker deliberately designed to create that impression, that it was indeed His precise intention. But it may be urged that this is true only of the true sheep of Christ, and that one mark of these is that they know and hearken to the voice of the Shepherd and follow Him. What if one of them ceases to hearken and to follow? Does he not thereby cease to be one of Christ's sheep? and must not then his security from perishing lapse?

Let this be tested in a case that can be seen too often. A sinner turns in faith unto Christ, and manifests the true tokens of being one of His sheep, by continuing for, say, twenty years to hearken and to follow. Then, alas, he wanders from the fold and the Shepherd, and so ceases to exhibit the characteristics of Christ's sheep. So now (if the argument in question is right) he does *not* possess the eternal life and *shall* perish. It thus becomes evident that the life which he had during those twenty years was not in fact eternal, for it has ended so far as he is concerned, nor was he ever secure from perishing, for at last he is to perish. In his case the magnificent assurances given by Christ were without value, nor had this person at any time any real right to comfort himself by them, seeing that ultimately they will be unfulfilled in his case. So that during those twenty years *he had* eternal life, for Christ stated this of His sheep: yet his perishing at last will show that the life he then had was *not* eternal. He was a sheep of Christ, because for long years he exhibited the true characteristics of a sheep: yet he was *not* a sheep of Christ, because finally he shall perish. This *reductio ad absurdum* shows that the reasoning examined is false.

But let the Good Shepherd Himself solve this problem by the parable before quoted from Luke 15: 3–7. It states the exact case above supposed. A man has a hundred sheep. One of them wanders. Does it thereby cease to be a sheep? or cease to be the property of the Owner? Nay, rather; when the Owner has recovered it does He not cry with joy "I have found *My sheep* which was lost"? Even while it was lost it was still a *sheep* and it was still *His*, and He secured its restoration and safety.

It is to be noted that the teaching in Luke 15 applies properly to backsliders, not to the unregenerate, however suitably its lessons may be extended to such. The sheep had been in the fold; the coin had been in the possession of the woman; the prodigal was the son of the father; and each was *restored* to its proper status, not set there for the first time.

5. *Freely.* One further consideration will suffice to establish our conclusion. Of justification it is stated that the believer is "justified *freely* (*dōrean*) by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ

Jesus" (Rom. 3: 24); and of eternal life it is said that, while the "wages of sin is death . . . the *free gift* (*charisma*) of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. 6: 23). The righteousness and justification granted to the believer in Christ are likewise described by the same word: "the free gift (*charisma*) came of many offences unto justification" (Rom. 5: 16, 17).

Now every gift carries at least one condition precedent to its taking effect, namely, that it must be accepted; but having been accepted a free gift is necessarily free of conditions subsequent (such as, for example, the conduct of the receiver after reception of the gift), or it would be a conditional gift, not a free gift. This is not said of any other gift of God save justification and eternal life. The righteousness of this arises from the entire and eternal sufficiency of the redemption price which provides these gifts. Therefore the minimum indispensable to salvation, even justification and eternal life, is granted to the receiver absolutely, whereas gifts to the saved are conditional upon conduct. Because the unregenerate *cannot* work his urgent need is met by a free gift at the expense of the Giver: because, by the grace of the Spirit, the regenerate *can* do good works he is required to do them as the condition of further benefits. This is demanded by both the Divine love and the Divine morality. The free gift is unforfeitable, and cannot be withdrawn by the Giver; later gifts are forfeitable and must be "made sure" by diligence (II Pet. 1: 10).

It was Rom. 3: 24, "being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus," which helped much to lift Bunyan out of the Slough of Despond, to set his feet upon the rock Assurance, and to put a new song into his mouth, even praise unto our God. Of that text he says sweetly the words quoted before (p. 164):

> Now was I as one awaked out of some troublesome sleep and dream, and listening to this heavenly sentence, I was as if I heard it thus expounded to me: Sinner, thou thinkest that because of thy Sins and Infirmities I cannot save thy soul; but behold my Son is by me, and upon him I look, and not on thee, and deal with thee according as I am pleased with him. (*Grace Abounding*, para. 258.)

Noble and arresting is his account of an earlier experience:

> But one day, as I was passing in the field, and that too with some dashes on my conscience, fearing lest yet all was not right, suddenly this sentence fell upon my soul, *Thy righteousness is in heaven*; and methought withal, I saw, with the Eyes of my Soul, Jesus Christ at God's right hand. There, I say, was my righteousness; so that wherever I was, or whatever I was a-doing, God could not say of me, He wants [*i.e.* lacks] Righteousness, for that was just before him. I also saw, moreover, that it was not my good frame of heart that made my righteousness better, nor yet my bad frame that made my righteousness worse; for my Righteousness was Jesus Christ himself, *the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever*. (*Ibid*, para. 229.)

Happy indeed is he who, as touching his status as righteous before God, sees Christ to be his *all*, for thus will he be assured that his judicial acceptance by God is necessarily as eternal as the righteousness of his Surety.

Note B (p. 177). The word *timōria* has principally the sense of *penal* infliction, as by sentence of a judge, as distinct from *paideia, parental* discipline, as in ch. 12: 5–11. The former looks more to the vindication

of righteousness by law, whether the offender be reclaimed or not; the latter has the moral profit of the child as its more prominent thought. In this point *paideia* is nearer to *kolasis* than to *timōria*. But even as in later Greek the distinction between these latter words was fading (see, *e.g.* Chrysostom in Alford's second quotation on II Thess. 2: 2), so in Biblical Greek *timōria* included the thought of the reclamation of the offender. It is so used in the Septuagint at Jer. 38: 21 (31: 21 in Eng. Ver.), where Sion is bidden to execute *vengeance* in connexion with her repentance and return to God. Still more distinctly at Ezek. 5: 17 and 14: 15 *timōria* is used of the fierceness of the wrath of God upon Israel and its land as executed by Nebuchadnezzar. Yet it is clear from Lev. 26: 40–45 that all of God's inflictions upon that people are designed for their humbling, repentance, and ultimate restoration; which end was served of old by the Babylonian captivity, for such of Israel as returned to the land did so cured of idolatry and so far purified by the terrible *timōria*. This end will be fully served by the yet fiercer and closing wrath upon Israel, to be executed by Antichrist at the end of this age, as the passage in Leviticus foretells.

Therefore the thought of ultimate moral benefit is not to be excluded from *timōria* in Heb. 10: 29. It can include this as well as the vindicating of the law of God in the punishing of His people who apostatize.

Note C. On ancient Roman Law.

In his *Introduction to Roman Law* (p. 143 of the 1921 edition by A. F. Murison) W. A. Hunter wrote on Extinction of Contracts as follows:—

> i. *Solutio.* Every obligation may be discharged by the giving of what is due, or, if the creditor consents, of something else in its place. It matters not who discharges it, whether the debtor or someone else for him; for he is freed even if someone else discharges it, and that whether the debtor knew it or not, and even if it was done against his will.

This statement of Roman Law, which ruled in the world in New Testament times, is worthy of detailed comparison or contrast with the Divine Law declared in the Word of God.

CHAPTER XIV

FAITH

Ch. XI. 1. Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the proving of things not seen. 2. For therein the elders had witness borne to them. 3. By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that what is seen hath not been made out of things which do appear. 4. By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he had witness borne to him that he was righteous, God bearing witness in respect of his gifts: and through it he being dead yet speaketh. 5. By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God translated him: for before his translation he hath had witness borne to him that he had been well-pleasing unto God: 6. and without faith it is impossible to be well-pleasing *unto him*: for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and *that* he is a rewarder of them that seek him. 7. By faith Noah, being warned *of God* concerning things not seen as yet, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; through which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith. 8. By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing whither he went. 9. By faith he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a *land* not his own, dwelling in tents, with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: 10. for he looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11. By faith even Sarah herself received power to conceive seed when she was past age, since she counted him faithful who had promised: 12. wherefore also there sprang of one, and him as good as dead, *so many* as the stars of heaven in multitude, and as the sand, which is by the sea shore, innumerable.

13. These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them and greeted them from afar, and having confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth; 14. For they that say such things make it manifest that they are seeking after a country of their own. 15. And if indeed they had been mindful of that *country* from which they went out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16. But now they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly: wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God: for he hath prepared for them a city.

17. By faith Abraham, being tried, offered up Isaac: yea, he that had gladly received the promises was offering up his only begotten *son*; 18. *even* he to whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed be called: 19. accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead: from whence he did also in a parable receive him back. 20. By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau, even concerning things to come. 21. By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, *leaning* upon the top of his staff. 22. By faith Joseph, when his end was nigh, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel; and gave commandment concerning his bones. 23. By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents, because they saw that he was a goodly child; and they were not afraid of the king's commandment. 24. By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; 25. choosing rather to be evil entreated with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; 26. accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt: for he looked unto the recompense of reward. 27. By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible. 28. By faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of the blood, that the destroyer of the firstborn should not touch them. 29. By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land: which the Egyptians assaying to do were swallowed up. 30. By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they had been compassed about for seven days. 31. By faith Rahab the harlot perished not with them that were disobedient, having received the spies with peace. 32. And what shall I more say? for the time will fail me if I tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah; of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33. who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions; 34. quenched the power of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, from weakness were made strong, waxed mighty in war, turned to flight armies of aliens. 35. Women received their dead by a resurrection: and others were tortured, not accepting their deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36. and others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37. they were stoned, they were sawn asunder, they were tempted, they were slain with the sword: they went about in sheepskins, in goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, evil entreated; 38. (of whom the world was not worthy), wandering in deserts and mountains and caves, and the holes of the earth. 39. And these all, having had witness borne to them through their faith, received not the promise; 40. God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

1. FAITH DEFINED (ver. 1). Faith therefore is that activity of the heart which secures salvation, whether it be the deliverance of the man himself from eternal ruin or the preserving of his life from being wasted. What then *is* this power which can work such wonders?

Faith is here defined as being "assurance of things hoped for, the proving of things not seen" (R.V.); or, taking the R.V. margin, "the giving substance to things hoped for, the putting to the proof of things not seen"; or A.V. "the substance of things hoped for," or, as the margin, "the ground or confidence of things hoped for"; or, as a scholarly German version, the Elberfeld (by J. N. Darby), renders, "Faith is a realization of that which one hopes, a conviction concerning things which one does not see." On the basis of later papyri the Editors of *The Vocabulary of the Greek New Testament* say: "in all cases there is the same central idea of something that *underlies* visible conditions and guaranteeing a future possession. As this is the essential idea in Heb. 11: 1, we venture to suggest the translation 'Faith is the *title deed* of things hoped for'." This seems inaccurate, for our *title* to every blessing is Christ, not our faith. Faith may fail and so hope die, and possession come into jeopardy; but the *title* is not impaired.

Such variety of renderings prompts inquiry as to whether a stricter sense can be reached.

i. *Faith and Hope.* Faith is viewed here as related to hope. A Christian is a person who is saved by hope (Rom. 8: 24, 25); but his hope is not like that of the non-Christian, for there is not in it that element of uncertainty which inheres in every merely human hope. This uncertainty is rightly stated by the Persian poet, Omar Khayyam:

> The worldly hope men set their hearts upon
> Turns ashes, or it prospers; and anon,
> Like snow upon the desert's dusty face
> Lighting a little hour or two, is gone.

In contrast, the Christian hope is "both sure and stedfast," and it enters "into that which is within the veil," as an anchor takes hold of the firm ground out of sight (ch. 6: 18–20).

As is said in the passage cited (Rom. 8: 24, 25), hope has necessarily to do with things unseen and future, for "hope that is seen is not hope; for who hopeth for that which he seeth?" Hope thus reinforces the present by the prospect of the future. A woman is supported in solitude and adversity by the hope that her absent husband will return: a youth struggles bravely against early poverty in the hope that the fortune of a relative

will one day be his. Similarly the Christian is saved from despair and apostasy by hope.

For what that is unseen and future does he hope? For the Coming One and all that is to take place at His coming! One moonlit evening, under the palms at Chagallu, South India, I explained this hope to a company of educated Hindus—that Christ is to return from heaven; that a multitude of His dead followers will instantly leave their graves to meet Him in the air, accompanied by a smaller number who will be alive at that moment; that they will be transformed into the glory that He bears, will be presented thus before the throne of God, will return with Christ to this earth and be seen by men with Him in His glory—this and other details were set forth. Suddenly I asked the hearers what they were thinking about this programme, and an elderly Brahmin blurted out the emphatic word, "Impossible!"

And impossible it is, to all human energy and effort. What, then, justifies the Christian in indulging his hope of things so unprecedented? It is faith.

ii. *Faith the Basis of Hope.* It has been stated at 1: 3 that the Son of God is the "*charaktēr* of the *hupostasis*" of God. The lines cut in a seal form the visible representation (the *charaktēr*) of a coat of arms not seen at the moment. Some facts as to God are discernible in the creation, such as His everlasting power and divinity (Rom. 1: 20). Other facts as to God are not thus discoverable; they are deeper, basic elements in the Godhead: such as that God is both Father and Son, that He has in His nature a principle of grace, by which He can pardon His enemies; and other features. This underlying element is in this verse 3 of ch. 1 described as the *hupostasis* of God, from words meaning that which stands under, and so supports that which is above. Of this deeper, underlying, substratum, or essence of the Godhead the Son is the visible, indelible, permanent expression, the *charaktēr*.

Similarly, in the verse before us (11: 1) faith is said to be the *hupostasis* of hope, that which forms the basis and support of hope. He who has no faith set on Christ as the Coming One has no justifiable hope for the future of heaven, earth, or himself; for all human schemes and efforts prove elusive and illusory; we know not what a day may bring forth, and so men, being without God, are without hope (Eph. 2: 12). We hope because we believe. Hope vanishes if faith ceases.

iii. *Promise the Basis of Faith.* But this raises a further question. Faith is the basis of hope, but what is the basis of faith? What warrant have we for believing what we believe? Fifty years ago, in a large meeting of young men in the city of London, an elderly Christian gave an address. At the close

a young fellow put this pertinent question: "How do you know that what you have been saying is true?"

What is the basis of faith? It is the promise of some person considered dependable. A poor youth has no prospect of developing a business; but some rich person promises adequate financial backing and the young man starts trading hopefully. A manufacturer needs a machine, costing £1,000. Being without present reserves he sees no hope of purchasing it. But a friend hands him a Bank of England note for £1000, and faith in the Bank creates immediately an assured expectation that he can buy the machine. In like manner faith in the Bank enables the vendor to part with the machine in exchange for the piece of paper on which the promise of the Bank is printed, for he has a conviction, a sure hope, that the money will be paid on demand.

Thus hope depends on faith and faith on the promise; and if one's faith in the Promiser is absolute then faith creates a *conviction* as to the things not yet seen but guaranteed by the promise. But should one question the ability or the fidelity of the Bank, or if there be a doubt as to the genuineness of a bank note held, then faith will not arise nor hope be born. The assertion of the modern critic that his tampering with the text of the Bible does not touch anything material is false; it is precisely as material as questioning whether the promise of the Bank is genuine and reliable—it forbids faith and destroys hope of the promise being fulfilled.

As to the promises of God, one said to Dr. A. T. Pierson that he thought there may be as many as three thousand in the Word of God. That great Bible student replied that he knew by counting that there are more than that number in the Psalms alone, and that he thought there may be thirty thousand in the whole Book. Faith looks at these promises and at the God Who promises, and is fully assured that what He has promised He is able and ready to perform (Rom. 4: 20, 21). The Guarantor of this is Christ, the Son of God: faith looks at Christ and says Amen to the promise of God, that is, *It shall be so!* (II Cor. 1: 20). Thus David said: "it hath pleased Thee to bless the house of Thy servant. . . . Thou, O Jehovah, hast blessed and *it is blessed* for ever" (I Chron. 17: 26, 27). Thus did David's faith impart conviction and create an assured hope as to the far distant future.

2. *Faith Illustrated.* It was such a hope as to the distant future, a hope set on Christ as the Coming One, that the first readers of this Letter needed to have rekindled in their hearts, so as thus to be saved from turning to the past and its imperfect arrangements and losing thereby their noblest future prospects.

To this end their faith needed to be re-established, and for this purpose the Writer now recounts selected examples of what faith had already enabled men of like passions to do or to bear.

i. ver. 2, *The Elders.* And first he makes a wide statement concerning men of ancient times, "the elders" (comp. Matt. 15: 2). These had had "witness borne to them." By whom? Clearly by God. In ver. 4 this is stated distinctly concerning Abel, and in ver. 5 it is implied as to Enoch. Before whom did God give this testimony? In the case of Abel certainly before Cain, as the history shows (Gen. 4: 6 ff.). As to Enoch we are not informed who heard God's testimony, borne to him while he was yet on earth; but it is to be remembered that at all times the angels are witnesses of what is done and said by man and God. It was to Satan and other heavenly beings that God bore witness to the character of Job, one of these "elders" (Job 1: 8; 2: 3).

In ver. 16 of our chapter it is stated concerning these elders that God has made clear His approval of them by preparing for them a city, that is, the heavenly city (ver. 10). This work of preparation must needs be known to the hosts of heaven. As to yet another of these elders, Daniel, an angel knew God's estimate of him, for he told him that he was greatly beloved in heaven (Dan. 10: 11, 19). This was no small comfort to one who had known what it was to be greatly hated by men, and to have learned that even human esteem, honestly won, may prove useless in a day of trial (Dan. 6: 14–17).

Clearly it is every way better to be among those that the Lord will confess as His faithful followers, owning them publicly before God, angels, and men, rather than by forsaking Him, to be renounced by Him in that great day of His glory (Matt. 10: 32, 33; Mark 8: 38; Luke 9: 26).

ii. ver. 3. *Faith and Understanding.* From the earliest period of which there is secular record men have speculated as to the origin of the universe. This could scarcely have been so before the Flood, because for 930 years of that period Adam lived and could recount his original intercourse with God and what he had thus learned (Gen. 5: 5). Then, too, Methuselah was contemporary with Adam and could perpetuate until the year of the Flood, when he died, that authentic account of Adam. Noah and Shem were contemporary with Methuselah, and brought that information down to 502 years after the Flood, when Shem died (Gen. 11: 10, 11).

About then set in that deliberate renunciation of God laid in Rom. 1 to the charge of that succeeding generation. Light refused involves darkness; the race lost that early account of creation, retaining only such crude, debased ideas of it as can be traced in the early Sumerian myths.

But the earliest Biblical history of that post-diluvian period shows a striking exception, a survival of much of that true knowledge of early creation affairs. The book of Job records conversation between five men and reveals what extensive knowledge some still had. And some time later, Moses wrote the sublime yet brief and distinct account of creation given in the first two chapters of Genesis.

Outside the spheres where such men had influence there reigned total darkness as to the origin of the universe. Philosophers, of notable mental ability, speculated, contradicted one another, proposed mutually exclusive theories, and remained in confused uncertainty and actual ignorance. Three and a half thousand years have passed since Moses gave his account of creation, and still those who choose to ignore his account speculate as did the ancients, review, revise, restate their ancient theories, add nothing thereto, and remain as ignorant as they.

How then did such as Job, Eliphaz, Elihu, or Moses arrive at a consistent, intelligible account of how creation came to be? What differentiated them from their blind contemporaries? It was not superior intellect, great as that of Moses evidently was; for such later inquirers as Aristotle, Plato, or Zoroaster were endowed with first-class minds.

No, the differentiating factor was FAITH. It still is so. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God; so that what is seen hath not been made out of things visible" to the senses. The singular number (*to blepomenon* "what is seen") regards the whole visible creation as one entity. Thus the statement has universal application, is true of the whole creation. It was all called into existence by the word of God; no part of it is eternal, or was self-caused.

Those older sages, though men of brains, could *believe*: the philosophers could not, and cannot. No one can get to know of what is beyond his personal knowledge save by believing the testimony of someone who has that personal knowledge. No one can learn the facts and features of a land he has never seen except by believing the account of someone who has been there. No one but the Creator can tell how creation was effected for no one else was present. He must give an account of it or it cannot be known; we must believe that account or we cannot know.

As the book of Job shows, those men believed what had been told by still earlier men concerning the very ancient times (Job 8: 8–10; 15: 17, 18). But also, pious men were still receiving instruction from God and *believing it* (Job 4: 12–17; 33: 12–24; chs. 38–42), and, as 38: 4–7 in particular

shows, this Divine instruction included the subject of the creation.

Someone has expressed the opinion that during the seven centuries or so after Plato no such intellect as his was known until Augustine. This intellectual giant said something like this: Understand my word that you may believe it, but believe God's word that you may understand it! And because God speaks of matters necessarily indiscoverable by man, for He alone knows them, there is, of equal necessity, no other way of understanding those matters but by believing what God says upon them.

But faith is not credulity. Rightly did Augustine warn men against believing his word before they understood it, for man is fallible and may err in opinion; but God is not only inscrutable but infallible, and therefore it is essentially safe and right to accept His words and act upon them without knowing their whole content or effect. Indeed, if God is, no other attitude to Him and His words is tolerable. Not to trust GOD is utter impiety, utter ruin: to believe Him is to gain understanding. That "the fear of Jehovah is the beginning of wisdom" was the conviction of the wisest man that ever pondered human life; and he added that it is the foolish who despise wisdom and instruction (Prov. 1: 7).

iii. ver. 4. *Abel.* These fundamental features are now illuminated by striking instances. The Writer begins at the beginning of human history with the first two men born to our first parents, Cain and Abel.

These were brothers, reared in the same home, benefiting by the same instruction, possessing equal privileges and opportunities. What distinguished them before God? FAITH! Abel believed and obeyed God, Cain did not.

They both reverenced God outwardly, for both brought to Him an offering. Abel brought a firstling from his flock, that is, something he had reared. Cain brought the fruit of the ground, something he had reared. Why then was Abel's sacrifice "better" than that of Cain? Wherein lay its superiority?

It could lie only in the FAITH of Abel's heart as he offered. He must have believed something that God must have made known of His mind, and he acted upon it. It is clear that such a sacrifice implied, yea, was an acknowledgment of his own desert of death, and a confession that he believed that the death of an innocent substitute would be accepted by God for his own deliverance from the judgment of his sin.

Throughout human history this has been the great divide and still is so. Abel and Cain proved to be two heads of two spiritually divergent and opposed sections of mankind. I John

3: 12; Jude 11; Matt. 23: 34, 35. The followers of Cain have been innumerable, those of Abel the minority. But God "had respect unto Abel and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect" (Gen. 4: 4, 5). Just how this was indicated is not stated, though it is shown as to some later occasions, as Gen. 15: 17; Judges 6: 21; 13: 19, 20; I Kings 18: 38; II Chron. 7: 1.

We are told however that God expressed His mind plainly to Cain (Gen. 4: 6, 7). But one who has rejected atoning sacrifice can readily reject remonstrance and harden himself to commit any crime. So Cain went on to murder his brother, because the latter's works were righteous, whereas his own were evil. And the Scripture traces further back the ground of this radical difference by the remark that "Cain was of the evil one" (I John 3: 12). He had faith in God's Enemy and followed him, whereas Abel had faith in God Himself and obeyed Him. The statement that "Cain was *out of* (*ek*) the Evil One" is intensely solemn. As to his merely natural make-up, by being begotten of his father and born of his mother, he inherited from them that bias to sin which is native to us all. But in addition he had drawn in an aggravated impetus to evil derived out of Satan. This he must have done in spite of the warning found in the experience of his parents in Eden. John is here applying to Cain something he had heard Christ say to certain liars and murderers: "Ye are *out of* your father the devil" (John 8: 44). You derive your ideas and spirit from him. So had Cain done, and quickly murdered his brother and then lied to God about it. As the Spirit of God can make men supernaturally holy so Satan can make men supernaturally wicked.

In what Power, in what Person is the reader trusting?

iv. vers. 5 and 6. *Enoch.* There pass five or six hundred years of which God has recorded nothing but a frightful development of wickedness (Gen. 6: 5). Then in the thick darkness a bright line shines out, there arises a man of FAITH: Enoch trusted God, and walked with Him, while others walked with the Evil One.

From Jude (vers. 14, 15) we learn that Enoch's faith was engaged pre-eminently with the Coming One. Transported in spirit into the day of the Lord, seeing its mighty drama pass before his inward vision as if then present, he described what he saw as if it were a past event and cried "Behold, the Lord came with His holy myriads to execute judgment." With that awesome expectation he passed his time cultivating fellowship with God. The future controlled the present, which is to live by FAITH.

While yet he lived among the godless God bore witness

that he had been well-pleasing to Him; and later, while he was yet in what for that age was but early manhood, God signally confirmed this His testimony to His faithful servant by suddenly removing him alive to the world above.

It has practical bearing for us to observe that rapture was God's response to godly living. It was of grace, for removal to the heavens can never be claimed of right; yet it was grace rewarding faith, and the godly life that faith produces; it was *not* of grace irrespective of piety and fidelity; "for *before* his translation he *hath had* witness borne to him that he *had been* well-pleasing to God."

Using a poet's licence, Montgomery, in a stirring scene in his poem *The World before the Flood*, pictures Enoch as having been seized and brought before the impious monarch of the day. There he utters his prophecy as to the Lord coming to punish the ungodly. Greatly enraged, the monarch rushes upon him to strike him dead, but—Enoch is not there! "He was not found, for God translated him."

Thus among other wonders which faith can effect is this notable wonder: it can produce such living as pleases God well and qualifies for rapture to the world above. And without such faith it is simply impossible to be well-pleasing to God. Given a man who denies the existence of God, and therefore has no expectation that he will be rewarded should he seek unto God, obviously such a man must be as displeasing to God as a subject who should choose to ignore his sovereign and disregard the laws of the land. He that draweth near to God must believe that He exists, as well as that He becomes a rewarder to those who seek after Him. Thus these activities Godward are an exercise of FAITH.

> Such faith in us, O God, implant,
> And to our prayers Thy favour grant
> In Jesus Christ, Thy saving Son,
> Who is our fount of health alone. (P. Herbert.)

v. ver. 7. *Noah.* In like manner the faith of Noah led him to anticipate confidently a future for which there was no precedent and to act accordingly. He was warned by God that there was coming a catastrophic judgment such as had not been known by mankind. He believed God and took the steps necessary to the saving of himself and his family. Thus his FAITH had a twofold aspect.

(1) It condemned the men around, who disbelieved God and therefore disregarded the warning.

(2) It assured to Noah the righteousness which is of faith. For when a man did really believe God, with such a faith as

governed his conduct, God then and there imputed to that man the justifying work that the Son of God would later do on behalf of that man by dying for his sins. Historically, from the point of view of time, that justification did not become his before the justifying work had been wrought on the cross; but in the reckoning of God, Who is above time, it was reckoned to be his when he exercised faith, and thereupon he became "*heir*" to it, that is, one whose title was secure though possession was deferred.

The case of Noah, treated so succinctly by our Writer, has other deeply important instruction.

His exemption from the *temporary* judgment of the Flood was on the ground of his *personal* righteousness in contrast to the godlessness around. "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for *thee* have I seen righteous before me in this generation" (Gen. 7: 1). This was not the imputed righteousness, but his own personal right practice. God would not destroy the righteous with the wicked (Gen. 18: 25).

But so to act, so to walk with God, against universal opposition, was proof of FAITH, faith further displayed by building the ark; to this faith God *imputed* that righteous work of Another which secures from *eternal* wrath.

The *typical* teaching of Noah and the ark is not always rightly understood. Usually the ark is taken as the type of Christ. Surely the strict position is this: (*a*) That righteous Noah is a type of the Righteous One, the Saviour; (*b*) The ark made by Noah represents the work wrought by Christ for salvation; (*c*) Noah's family were granted salvation from death solely for Noah's sake, not because of any righteousness of their own: "Come thou and all thy house into the ark; for *thee* [not you all] have I seen righteous before me." So it is now: "your sins are forgiven you for *His* name's sake" (I John 2: 12). (*d*) Yet each of them had to accept deliverance personally, by association with Noah, and by entering the ark. This act proclaimed the individual faith of each, so that they also were saved by faith.

Further. The Lord declared unequivocally that the state of the world at the time for His return to it will be "as were the days of Noah" (Matt. 24: 37–39; Luke 17: 26, 27). There will be utter absorption in things earthly and present, utter disregard of the foretold wrath, so that as "the Flood came and took them all away" so shall men be cozening themselves with talk of "peace and safety" when "sudden destruction cometh upon them" at the coming of Christ, "and they shall in no wise escape" (I Thess. 5: 3). This is the solemn and uniform testimony of the Word of God.

Yet teachers beyond number have befooled themselves and

their hearers by asserting the exact contrary of this, even that the gospel shall go on prospering until all men will have accepted its message, the kingdom of God have thus been established on earth, and *then* will the Lord come. For the last days of this age to be like this would require that in the days of Noah men gradually and universally were persuaded to give up their wicked ways; and so the Flood never came at all.

Such misunderstanding results from a want of FAITH in what God says plainly upon this subject. How vital is simple faith, the faith of the little child (Matt. 18: 3). No one who thus simply *believes* what Christ said on this subject can mistake His meaning.

vi. vers. 8–10. *Abraham.* Some centuries passed between the Flood and the call of Abraham. In that period nothing requiring to be recorded in God's history occurred, except the portentous rebellion at Babel, with the Divine judgment in the confounding of human speech and the consequent dispersion of mankind.

But that rebellion indicated how deep-seated was the opposition of man's heart to God and His will, how quickly and thoroughly that opposition could blaze forth, how steadily and rapidly degeneracy could develop, how speedily the warning of the Food was ignored. The grounds and the course of this alienation from God are given in Rom. 1. God was holy, men loved evil, and so they resolved to break His bands asunder and cast away from them His cords. Gen. 11 tells the beginning, Ps. 2 foretells the end; the long connecting period is consistent with the beginning and the end: "the mind of the flesh is enmity against God" (Rom. 8: 7).

That was a very dark period, the gloom being relieved, as far as is shown, by the testimony of Melchizedek alone, and he living far from the first world centre. In Mesopotamia men had multiplied, races had developed, civilization had progressed, wealth, art, culture had advanced. But knowledge of God had died, idolatry had triumphed, morals had degenerated, vice and cruelty flourished with luxury and splendour. It seemed that when Melchizedek should die the true God would lose any place or honour on earth.

But He leaves not Himself without witness. "Brethren and fathers, hearken. The God of glory appeared unto our father Abraham" (Acts 7: 2). He was a heathen, an idolator (Josh. 24: 2, 15). He dwelt in a grand and royal city. But the sight of that superior glory dispelled his darkness as to God, blotted out the brightness of Ur of the Chaldees, turned its glory to ashes, shattered for him its prospects and ambitions

and made him a liberated devotee of the true and only God. Henceforth he walked by FAITH, as had Enoch and Noah before him, and became the spiritual father of all since his day who have so walked (Rom. 4: 16).

For the encouragement of his readers, and us, our Writer points out that Abraham's call by God was answered by a faith in God which displayed its strength and genuineness, as all genuine faith does, by (1) *Obedience*: "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed." He who trusts another will do what he suggests.

(2) *Separation*: He "obeyed *to go out.*" He abandoned country, business, prospects, politics, society, war, even his family, and walked after God. The separation was a *sine qua non* to such a walk with such a God; it was utterly indispensable. For that world entire, of which he had been a native, was "lying in the Evil One," was his sphere of influence, where his spirit worked and ruled in the sons of disobedience, where God was denied (I John 5: 19; Eph. 2: 2).

It has always been thus, it still is so: "Ye adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? Whosoever therefore is minded to be a friend of the world constitutes himself an enemy of God" (Jas. 4: 4). The alternative is inexorable. The world and the kingdom of God are separate spheres of moral existence; they nowhere intersect, overlap; so that it is impossible to stand in both at once. So Abraham "went out," physically in his case, for such was the call of God for him; but all his children must likewise "go out" as to heart affection, interests, and moral associations, or there can be no walk with God.

But this demands a living, active FAITH. Only faith can carry obedience so far.

(3) *Promises as to the Future.* His faith was shown by accepting God's promise as to the unseen and the future: "he was to receive a place for an inheritance," and believing this he set forth to go to that place.

(4) *Walking in the Dark.* He did not know "whither he went," but he went! The philosopher lifted his eyebrows and said, Quixotic! The man of affairs shrugged his shoulders and said, A wild goose chase! The prudent said, He'll come back sadder and wiser! But he went! and to-day his children sing:

One step I see before me;
'Tis all I need to see:
The light of heaven more brightly shines
When earth's illusions flee;
And sweetly through the silence comes
His loving "Follow Me."

So on I go—not knowing,
I would not if I might;
I'd rather walk in the dark with God
Than go alone in the light;
I'd rather walk by faith with Him
Than go alone by sight. (M. G. Brainerd).

(5) *Sojourning.* A sojourner is properly one who stays in a place just from day to day (*jour*, a day). The Greek word it translates *paroikeō* pictures an alien dwelling for a while alongside the citizens of a land but himself a foreigner in it, as the Israelites in Egypt (Acts 7: 6; 13: 17; Ps. 105: 23, LXX). Thus did Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob *feel* themselves to be aliens amidst the inhabitants of Canaan, thus did they deport themselves. The land was theirs by God-given title, but possession was deferred. Others held it, and they were as aliens in it (Ps. 105: 12, LXX).

Thus still do Abraham's true children *feel* at heart in relation to the whole earth. It is theirs by Divinely granted title, for "the meek shall inherit the earth" (Ps. 37: 11; Matt. 5: 5; I Cor. 3: 21–23); but as yet the godless hold it by permission of God, and men of faith heed the exhortation, which they feel and know to be appropriate to their situation, "Beloved, I beseech you, as sojourners and pilgrims, to abstain," to be marked by abstinence, holiness, and seemly behaviour among men (I Pet. 2: 11; where the word *parepidemos*, rendered "pilgrim," pictures one staying for a time in a foreign land and so without citizen status or rights).

Such an aloof life among abominable, cruel, and violent idolaters, as were the races of Canaan, involved for Abraham and his family problems, perplexities, and perils, which the histories fully illustrate. Even a thousand years later, in the earliest Roman period, any citizen could enslave the person and seize the property of any chance alien and there was no redress. But FAITH brought into these trials the guidance, protection, and sufficiency of the living GOD, and, in spite of failures during his education in faith, Abraham so lived among those peoples that on an occasion when he described himself to them as but "a stranger and sojourner" with no rights, they at once replied, "my lord: thou art a prince of God among us" (Gen. 23: 3–6). Thus did faith secure dignity; he who humbled himself was exalted, and he who never compromised with the godless approved himself to their conscience and brought acknowledgment and glory to his God.

(6) Of the sojourner the tent is the outward sign. The resident builds a house. The pilgrim expects to move on, as God may guide. He disencumbers himself as far as possible.

He is content in heart with *the least* that is necessary; indeed, if he grows to the stature of a Paul, he learns "to take pleasure in necessities" (II Cor. 12: 10).

In early Bible history we hear Jacob respond to the promises of God and say: "If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat and a garment to put on, so that I come again to my father's house in peace, then shall Jehovah be my God" (Gen. 28: 20, 21). The company and guidance of God, till the father's house be reached; and by the way bare necessities to suffice! Surely here is the true pilgrim, the spirit of the true Christian.

And at the end of Bible history we hear Paul saying to a younger fellow-pilgrim: "Godliness with contentment is great gain . . . having food and coverings we shall be therewith content," adding that they that are determined to have more than these necessities pierce themselves through with many sorrows (I Tim. 6: 6–10).

Oh bliss to leave behind us
The fetters of the slave;
To leave ourselves behind us,
The grave-clothes and the grave!
To speed, unburdened pilgrims,
Glad, empty-handed, free;
To cross the trackless deserts
And walk upon the sea. (Ter Steegen.)

(7) ver. 16. Such abandoning of the past and abstaining in the present is possible only to the one to whom the future is bright and secure. Those ancient believers "looked for the city which hath the foundations, whose architect and builder is [none less than] God." Now it is FAITH alone that can make that prospect real and powerful to the heart. This verse intimates how rich and clear was the information as to the future and the heavenly granted in those early times. Abraham was given a foreview of the day of Christ and it greatly gladdened him (John 8: 56). That glorious future drew him on, and reduced the present to its due proportion of being but a preparatory stage of life, a journey to a grand goal. That prospect has continually enabled men of faith to "reckon that the sufferings of this present period are insignificant in comparison with the glory which shall be revealed with regard to us." (Rom. 8: 18, Alford.)

vii. vers. 11, 12. *Sarah.* But not only can FAITH make a man to become a prince, it can make a woman a princess (Gen. 17: 15: Sarah = princess).

The sceptic says that miracles are contrary to the universal unvarying course of things, to the law of Nature; *therefore* they are impossible; *therefore* they never have happened; *therefore* the Book that recounts them is unbelievable! Q.E.D. The afore-determined goal has been reached: the Bible has been discredited. And this all the evidence to the contrary notwithstanding! We do wisely to ignore the sceptic even as the sceptic ignores the evidence.

Sarah at first argued as does the sceptic. When it was stated by God that she should bear a son although this had become by age a sheer physical impossibility, she just laughed at the idea. It was contrary to the laws of Nature and to uniform universal experience; it never had been, it never could be! Yet it came to pass. How?

On the part of God by the exercise of His creative power. Could not an *almighty* Creator, had He seen fit, have caused that every child should be born of a mother only? Why, then, should He not do once (in the case of Jesus) what He could have done always? Could not such a Creator have ordained that every woman should be capable of bearing children throughout her life, however prolonged? Why, then, should He not effect this in special instances, such as those of Sarah and Elizabeth? (Luke 1: 7, 18). Prejudice makes the sceptic foolish.

But on Sarah's part the event required FAITH. "By faith Sarah herself received strength." So by faith we acquire understanding and by faith we receive strength. The honest doubter can test this. Let him but *really* believe something that God says, believing in the sense of taking what God says into his own inner soul with the determination to trust it and therefore to obey it—let him thus have FAITH and he will find his mind enlightened and his inward nature strengthened.

Such faith is fruitful. Without Sarah's faith Abraham's faith would have been inoperative. It was because (*dio*) she too, the wife, had faith that he, the husband, by her believing co-operation received the fulfilment of the Divine promise and became the ancestor of a vast posterity, a posterity to be yet vaster, by man uncountable. No one but God can foresee the possible outcome of a single act of faith by a single believer. One seed can yield an hundredfold the first year, and these ten thousandfold the next year. It is a mighty thing to have faith in God, for then nothing is impossible that God has promised.

viii. vers. 13–16. *Strangers and Pilgrims.* Where there is the heart of the alien and pilgrim faith produces striking effects.

(1) *Faith's Endurance.* These of old held their course undeviatingly, throughout long lives, even unto death: "these all died according to (*kata*) faith," consistently with the principle of faith and by its sustaining energy. They did not receive what was promised. The promise they did receive, the benefits promised they did not receive; but nevertheless they expected these and waited in confident expectation. They knew that possession of Canaan was a distant matter, for God had told Abraham of the lengthy sojourn in another land, under oppression, and that it would be only after four hundred years that the fourth generation of his descendants would secure the land (Gen. 15: 13–16). But faith saved them from hope deferred making the heart sick; the righteous held on his way (Pro. 13: 12; Job 17: 9). Similarly, when leaving His followers the Lord told them that His absence would be lengthy. He was going to a far country and only "after a long time" would He return (Luke 19: 12; Matt. 25: 19). But this did not hinder them from greeting from afar His coming as their steadfast hope.

(2) *Faith's Vision.* Thus faith is longsighted: they greeted the distant future and, indeed, a far more remote future and country than the land of Canaan. They walked in that land, yet knew it was not their best or final country. They were seeking a still better country, a heavenly, that land of which "the city that hath the foundations" is the centre and glory. They had received the call to inherit the heavenly, as well as the earthly, and faith looked beyond the latter to the former and anticipated it as their goal and portion.

That there was not revealed in their time the *whole* purpose of God concerning that heavenly prospect, that the full development of the counsels of grace was not opened up, nor the steps by which the Father's house would be filled, did not lessen the fact that the heavenly world was set forth as their prospect, that they confessed this as their goal and hope, and lived as not of the present in the midst of the men of the world whose portion was entirely in this life and who sought no other.

It is still thus. The natural man "minds earthly things." He is Bunyan's Man with the muck-rake, indifferent to the shining crown above his head. But still the man of faith forgoes the present to secure the future. He takes nothing for granted, but presses "on toward the goal, the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 3: 14). His title is secure and he means to secure possession.

Abraham might have written some lines of one of his German children which may be translated as follows:

To gain that prize I towards that goal will struggle
Which God has set before;
To gain that prize 'gainst sin and death I'll battle
And with the world make war;
And if it brings me here but shame and troubles
And scorn, if pain life fills,
Yet seek I nothing of earth's empty baubles;
My God alone my longing fills.

To gain that prize, to reach that crown I'm pressing
Which Christ doth ready hold;
I mean His great reward to be possessing,
His booty for the bold.
I will not rest, no weariness shall stay me,
To hasten home is best,
Where I some day in peace and joy shall lay me
Upon my Saviour's heart and rest.

(3) *Faith's Perseverance.* Those saints of old could have returned to Chaldea: God would not have hindered it by force; they were free agents. The Christian can return to the world as his sphere of life. But Canaan is forfeited if the called return to Chaldea or the redeemed to Egypt.

(4) *Faith's Reward.* The supreme reward of faith is to be approved and acknowledged by God. The Lord Jesus assured His disciples that if anyone should be ashamed of Him in this age He will be ashamed of that man and will deny him before God and angels in His coming day (Matt. 10: 32, 33; Luke 12: 8, 9). Paul applies this to us of this age (II Tim. 2: 10–13). It is here applied retrospectively to those ancient pilgrims. They had confessed the true God among peoples who rejected Him: He had not been ashamed to confess them as His servants.

He did so at the time, as the Psalmist remembered: "He suffered no man to do them wrong; yea, He reproved kings for their sake; Saying, Touch not mine anointed, And do my prophets no harm" (Ps. 105: 14, 15. See Gen. 20: 3–7; 31: 29).

But there must be a nobler Divine acknowledgment intended here, a confession before the angels, as Christ said; for it says that God "hath prepared for them a city." Therefore that heavenly city was prepared already in their time, and the hosts on high know whose heavenly abode Jerusalem above is, the mother city of all pilgrims of all ages (Gal. 4: 26).[1]

With what supreme interest must they therefore watch

[1] This being so, how strange is the "dispensational" notion that saints of early times who had been offered by God a heavenly portion and had embraced it, suffered for it, walked in the light of it, pressed toward it, shall nevertheless not reach or share it.

the earthly course of God's pilgrims since they know the glorious goal to which their faith aspires and God will conduct them. It is easy to understand their readiness to serve the high interests of the heirs of this great salvation (ch. 1: 14). It is easy to feel why Paul was equally ready, with a more than angelic concern, to toil, suffer, even to die that God's chosen might "obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus, *with eternal glory*" (II Tim. 2: 10). Each of the pilgrim heart likewise labours gladly, unweariedly, to further the steps of his fellow-pilgrims, so that none shall stumble, fall, or wander. It is a mark of the genuine pilgrim.

ix. vers. 17–19. *Abraham's Sacrifice.* Faith can sacrifice its all, at the demand of God. Faith can seal its own doom, as Jesus did by acknowledging before the Council that He was the Son of God (Matt. 26: 63–66). Thus Abraham gave back to God the most precious of all the gifts God had first given to him, even Isaac. It was not only that he was called to a terrible and heart-desolating deed, even to kill his own son; nor that he must descend to one of the most ghastly practices of the devil-driven heathen around him (Deut. 12: 31); but with that surrender he seemed also to deprive himself of all prospect of the great future which God had covenanted to confer; for it was all to be granted through Isaac. But more and worse was involved. If God's promise and oath failed who could any more trust Him? Then were all hope dead throughout the universe; Satan's triumph were complete and the reign of sin and death eternal.

But faith is strong where reason fails. This dire prospect was impossible. God's covenant being absolutely certain of accomplishment it followed that, though Isaac must then and there die, yet must he then and there come again to life; and the man of faith says to his servants, "I *and the lad* will go yonder; and we will bow down [in worship], and *come again* to you" (Gen. 22: 5).

Here is faith's glory and triumph; it can *bow down* before God and His good will. "He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to *bow down* to walk with thy God" (Mic. 6: 8).

Faith expects resurrection. It lives in the realm beyond death. Had the prospect of resurrection been already shown to Abraham? Was it part of the original deposit of truth given to men in those earliest ages? Or was it a pure induction by which faith sanctified reason, that as Isaac *must* be the one to beget descendants, so that God's promise shall be fulfilled, *therefore* he *must* return to life at that time and in natural human condition?

In the fact Abraham was not required to make the sacrifice, but he did make it in the intention and act of his heart; and having thus, as it were, received him back from the dead he and his son trod together their path of life as on resurrection ground, beyond the power of death.

To such depth of devotion, to such height of communion can faith attain. No believer can conceivably be required to go further in sacrifice. The father of the whole family says to each of his children, "If ye have FAITH . . . nothing shall be impossible unto you" (Matt. 17: 20).

x. vers. 20, 21, 22. *Isaac, Jacob, Joseph.* It is happy when faith passes to the fourth generation, as here.

From the lives of these three the Writer emphasizes again the great lesson that faith in God gives assurance as to the future.

As faith depends on the goodness it finds in God it is not daunted by the evil it finds in man. *Isaac's* faith pierced beyond the carnality of Esau and the crookedness of Jacob and he blessed them both. He knew the thoughts of God for each and was bold to bless them in spite of themselves. We shall learn later an important lesson from the fact that Esau was *blessed.* Paul, as a shepherd of souls, was not daunted by the evils he met in the Christians at Corinth, and his faith was rewarded in their recovery. Monica cried long to God for her profligate son Augustine and her faith was recompensed by his conversion.

Jacob blessed the sons of Joseph though, like Abraham, he knew his descendants must remain long in Egypt and suffer affliction (Gen. 15: 13). But FAITH looked on to the promised deliverance and return to the land of promise.

Joseph counted upon that same event and directed that his bones should share in the restoration. Was this mere sentiment? or did he look on to the resurrection in the land of his people's glory?

Thus faith triumphs over darkness, distance, and even death itself.

xi. vers. 23–29. *Moses.* The affliction of Israel set in; oppression intensified; their racial extermination was plotted and ordered. It was a bitter period, and the bitterest fact of it all was that the people of God gave way to the pressure and sank to the level of their oppressors. They worshipped the degrading gods of Egypt (Jos. 24: 14; Ezek. 20: 8); and the legislation by Moses is proof that they had become depraved morally. Slavery always debases. But this gloomy epoch produced notable examples of FAITH, of which the Writer cites five.

(1) ver. 23. *Moses' parents* defied the royal order that boy

children were to be killed. "They were not afraid of the king's commandment." They well might have been, and it was only faith in the superior power of God that kept their hearts free from that fear. For the kings of Egypt were ferocious wild beasts, as their own monuments show. The visitor to Karnak still sees pictures on their palace walls showing one monarch grasping the long hair of several hapless captives and smashing their heads with a mace, and another king throwing miserable men to the crocodiles in the Nile.

As their faith nerved Moses' parents to brave such fury, why should those here addressed fail in the storms and dangers? Or why should we?

(2) vers. 24–26. *Moses' Choice.* The world lay at his feet. Its wealth, glory, power, prospects were in his grasp. He was a prince of the royal house. But he deliberately renounced it all. He chose by preference the evil lot of the people of God. For the pleasures of the world were sinful, and withal transitory. He had been granted a vision of the Messiah (*tou Christou*), and of the reward of righteousness to be gained in Christ's kingdom and day. This he gladly embraced as far, far richer than all the treasures of Egypt.

Let the visitor to the Museum at Cairo tarry in the Jewel Room and ponder awhile. He sees around him priceless jewellery, with golden ornaments and furniture from the palaces of Egypt of those very centuries. Yet all are merely recovered fragments of those days of fabulous riches.

But FAITH calculates otherwise than does sight. To it the reproach of Christ is of higher value than the riches of the world. But if His *reproach* is of such inestimable worth, what shall His reward be?

Observe the word *recompense.* It translates a word (*misthapodosia*) allied to a word (*antapodosis*) found at Col. 3: 24, where the oppressed slaves of the Roman world were encouraged to godly behaviour by the assurance that, if in their hard lot they would serve the Lord Christ, of that Lord they should "receive the *recompense* of the inheritance."

The word is a good rendering of the Greek words, for it means to give back an *equivalent,* as a fair day's wage for a fair day's work, to make the scales even. FAITH is sure that Christ will do this and it acts accordingly, whether it be Moses the prince or a hapless slave.

It is an obvious reproach to a king that any of his subjects should be captured by his enemy and enslaved. In the ancient days that reproach attached also to the god of that king and people, for it was evident that he could not protect his worshippers. Thus the enslavement of Israel was a reproach to

Jehovah, their deity. This reproach Moses accepted by stooping to espouse Israel as his people.

How sweet is the thought that then and now Christ has shared the sorrows of His people. He might have said to Pharaoh what He long after said to Saul of Tarsus, "Why persecutest thou ME?" For, as Isaiah said of that earlier time in Egypt, "In all their affliction HE was afflicted" (Isa. 63: 9).

It is thus made plain that Jehovah and Christ are the same God. Let then the people of Christ take comfort and strength in Him; let them follow Him into the desert as Israel did Jehovah, for continuing thus to the end they shall secure the heavenly recompense which He has promised and faith expects.

(3) ver. 27. *Moses' Renunciation.* "By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured, as seeing Him Who is invisible." This can scarcely refer to his flight from Egypt after he had killed the Egyptian who was smiting the Hebrew, for of that it is said that "Moses feared . . . and fled from the face of Pharaoh" (Exod. 2: 14, 15). Here it is said that he did *not* fear the king.

The verse has been thought to refer to that earlier incident because it is mentioned *before* the passover which follows next. The explanation may be found in the change of tense which introduces the mention of the passover. Both before and after it the events are described by the past tense (the aorist); he refused, he chose, he accounted, he looked for, he forsook, he endured, and (ver. 29) they passed through; and so forth. But in ver. 28, the tense is the perfect: "By faith *he hath* instituted the passover," that is, hath already done it (yet recently—perfect, not preterite) before the last preceding action.

This means that the forsaking Egypt covers and includes the whole period from the night of the passover to the passage of the Sea. At his final interview with Pharaoh Moses had told the king of the impending slaughter of the firstborn and that thereupon he and all Israel would depart. It was one whole action which by faith in his God he declared in advance, without the slightest fear of any preventive or retaliatory measures that cruel tyrant might attempt, and, in the issue, did attempt.

Moses knew his man, and could well imagine the diabolical fury that would be incited in him by the death of all the firstborn children, including his own, and the massacre of Israel he would attempt. But Moses had his eye on El Shaddai, the almighty God of Abraham; "he endured as seeing Him Who is invisible," Jehovah, the Covenant Keeper; and without

any fear of the fury of Pharaoh he went ahead with the preparations for abandoning Egypt entirely, finally, of which the passover was the first step.

It is Moses' faith that is mentioned, but he was exercising it on behalf of all his people; as a mother left with a family will trust in God for help for them all.

It is thus still for FAITH. "Our passover also hath been sacrificed, even Christ; wherefore let us keep festival" (I Cor. 5: 7, 8); and an essential feature of this feast is that "*thus* shall ye eat it; with your loins girded, and your staff in your hand: and ye shall eat it in haste," eager for the march out of Egypt (Exod. 12: 11).

For to the Christian "Egypt" is the "world," the lamb is Christ, the fire that roasts the Lamb, and renders it food for faith, is the cross; and he who by faith appropriates that cross as his own death, his own true life, feels henceforth, and says, "Far be it from me to glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world hath been crucified unto me, and I unto the world" (Gal. 6: 14). He is a pilgrim.

And when Moses or Paul says "I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord," and can add, "for whom I suffered the loss of all things," he does not plume himself on having done something noteworthy for God, but he further adds, "I count them but refuse," like to that which we refuse to keep at hand because it is unseemly and offensive (Phil. 3: 7, 8). When Egypt has been wholly renounced the heart says:

> "Poor is our sacrifice whose eyes
> Are lighted from above;
> We offer what we cannot keep,
> What we have ceased to love."

(4) ver. 28. *Moses and the Passover.* The instituting of the Passover was the act of Moses; therefore it is said "*He* kept the passover." What a mighty step of faith it was. He believed in the reality and power of "The Destroyer" (*ho olothreuōn*). Who was this? He was that terrible executioner of the wrath of God who was well known to the ancient world. Concerning the subordinate demons he controls for the execution of widespread judgments we read: "They have over them as king the Angel of the abyss [the underworld of the dead and of imprisoned spirits], his name in Hebrew is Abaddon, and in the Greek tongue he hath the name Apollyōn" (Rev. 9: 11). Both names mean the Destroyer.

Upon this dread fallen angel-prince, and his dreadful work, the reader may consult my *Revelation of Jesus Christ* (159, 160).

At p. 351 it is said: "In various places where this Destroyer is shown acting it is as the executor of signal Divine wrath on special sinners. For example, Exod. 12: 23; II Sam. 24: 15, 16; II Kings 19: 35; Ezek. 9: 1–7; Rev. 6: 8; 9: 1–11."

The sceptic may scoff, the Christian may forget; but Moses believed, and therefore took the step necessary and adequate for protection, "the sprinkling of the blood." This has been explained above (ch. xi, 4). That great Destroyer is still active, and there is still only the one protection, "the precious blood of Christ."

(5) ver. 29. *The Red Sea.* What a step of faith was this! To descend from the shore above the level of the water to the depths beneath it, with shimmering walls of water towering on either side, ready to rush down into their normal place—how perilous a path! Yet Israel passed through in safety, while the enemies of God perished there. Why the difference? FAITH, only faith! Of themselves Israel could no more have kept up those walls than could the Egyptians; but trust in God brought into activity the power that creates and controls all things.

Faith can safely take a path of peril when God commands, but not otherwise. Nor can unbelief follow safely. It has been wisely said: "never run before your faith, and never lag behind your conscience." A minister saw from the New Testament that it is not the mind of the Lord that preachers of His message should have a stated salary. In faith he abandoned the plan to depend on God his Father for support. Asked by other ministers whether he would have them all do the same he answered, "Which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned." But many men of faith have taken this step with great enrichment to themselves and their hearers.

xii. ver. 30. *Jericho.* The forty years in the desert yielded the poisoned berries of unbelief, rather than the pleasant fruit of FAITH. This period is here passed over. The years that the locust of unbelief eats yield nought that helps others.

The desert discipline having wrought its good work Israel entered the pleasant land to fight for possession of what was already their own. At once a mighty obstacle confronted them; a city walled up to heaven and stoutly manned.

It is ever thus. Each that will enjoy his heavenly portion in Christ (Eph. 2) must wrestle against "the world rulers of this darkness, against the spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6: 12). These are not to be dispossessed by ordinary measures. The victory that overcomes the world-system and its spirit rulers is our FAITH; for "who is the one

conquering the world but the one believing [that hath faith] that Jesus is the Son of God" (I John 5: 4, 5).

God's ways are not our ways. Our ways are directed to serving our own glory; God's ways are such as give the glory to Him (Jud. 7: 2). To march in silence round an embattled city is folly to the military scientist. To shout is all very well, but senseless if you do not shout *and* strike. Nor will anything but FAITH take such clearly useless steps. But faith takes them, and the walls collapse.

xiii. ver. 31. *Rahab, the Harlot.* Since all the inhabitants of Jericho are doomed to die, why should one woman be spared, and her relations for her sake? Was she morally better than the rest? Nay, rather the reverse. Then what secured for her the exemption denied to the rest? Her FAITH! She believed what she had heard of the purposes of the God of Israel and acted accordingly. At grave risk of death at the hands of the king, paying the penalty of being a traitor, she put her trust in Jehovah by protecting His messengers. It was her faith alone that distinguished her from the rest and to which God responded. There is no clearer proof that salvation is by faith; only it must be the faith that displays itself by works. But they are works produced by faith; not works that are dead by lacking the vitalizing property of faith.

This is the test to be applied to men alive on earth when the King returns—Did they or did they not succour His servants when persecuted? Had they faith to do this, or had they not? (Matt. 25: 31–46). Divine principles are alike in all days. "According to your faith" is one of these.

xiv. vers. 32–34. *Faith's Variety.* "And what shall I more say." What indeed! Nothing more is needful to illustrate and justify FAITH. Not but that there are many other illustrious illustrations: "Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, Samuel, and the prophets." What dangers they defied; what difficulties they defeated; what obstacles they overcame; what victories they won; what possessions they secured.

And what different types of men they were, in social position, morals, physique, culture. Yet had each and all the one unifying, dominating, conquering quality—FAITH in God, and so they did and saw wonders.

xv. vers. 35–38. *Faith's Testings.* Nor was it only strong men that triumphed by faith. Women also were renowned in heaven's annals. At Zarephath, a heathen town, in a prolonged famine a destitute widow had faith to trust the word of the God of Israel that He would support her if she supported His servant. The perpetual recompense was a perpetual supply of food; the special reward was that Elijah restored to life her

dead boy. And the pious Shunamite received the like gracious reward through Elisha (I Kings 17: II Kings 4).

But there were greater triumphs of faith. The tortured were offered release and honour if they would renounce the true God, but they did not accept their deliverance but died under frightful torments. The fourth book of Maccabees narrates such instances of fidelity and fortitude. Our Writer tells what infused such vigour of soul. They suffered the extremes of torture "that they might obtain a better resurrection" (ver. 35): that is, a nobler resurrection than those the mothers secured for their dead boys. These were brought back to face the trials and sorrows of this earthly life; but there is to be a resurrection unto heavenly life, life free from the troubles and miseries of this present age. These heroes knew that to suffer now according to the will of God, even unto death, was the way to assure a part in that better resurrection. It was their FAITH as to that future of glory that sustained them.

As the Writer details the almost incredible woes that the faithful had endured he passes the striking comment, "of whom the world was not worthy" (ver. 38). The world had thought them not worthy a place in its circle. A sound judgment knows that a wicked world is not worthy to be honoured and blessed by the presence of the holy. Faith reckons that it is far better to be ostracized by the world than to be excluded from the communion of saints and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

xvi. vers. 39, 40. *Faith's Perfecting.* Even in this life such faith secures endorsement and testimony from God and man. Yet all those men and women who trusted God died without having received that heavenly and eternal bliss promised. They had lived by faith, they died in hope, and still by faith they wait in hope.

To what purpose is this extended delay before they are granted their full reward? It lies in the purpose of God to sum up all things in Christ (Eph. 1: 10), that is, to bring all things together under one Head at one and the same time. And that time is not yet, for beyond the purpose that concerned those saints of pre-Christian ages there lay the further purpose to gather out from all races a new company, the church of God. Those before cited were almost all Hebrews, Abel, Enoch, Noah, and Rahab being the four exceptions named.

These were indeed enough instances to show that the plan of God included the blessing of all the families of earth, according to the covenant with Abraham (Gen. 12: 3). When our Epistle was written that plan was being expanded and the body of Christ was being gathered from all nations, and included

the Writer and his readers. It was not possible that "*they* apart from *us*" should be made perfect. And still this out-gathering goes on, and will do so until the day of Christ; and therefore still the godly dead must wait for their perfecting until all is ready for Christ to be all in all.

What, in the sense of this passage, is it to be perfected? The Son of God shall tell us. Walking as a man in humiliation on earth He bade some to tell a wicked king, "Behold I cast out demons and perform cures to-day and to-morrow, and the third day I am perfected." Here is the same word, and it referred to His death, for He added: "Howbeit, I must go on my way to-day and to-morrow and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet perish out of Jerusalem" (Luke 13: 32, 33). So that the third "day" was that of His crucifixion.

But the two earlier "days" were each of some period, not of twenty-four hours, so that the third also will be the same. Nor was His shameful death a perfecting. The death state is an imperfect condition, because the soul, the ego, is destitute of both spirit and body. Perfection consists in the rejoining of soul and spirit in a heavenly house, a body of resurrection glory. It was the restoration to Him of His original divine glory that was Christ's perfecting, and this took place by resurrection and ascension to the Father.

It is thus, and only thus, that the people of Christ can be perfected. In the death state they too are imperfect, unclothed, a soul without a body, a state Paul did not desire (II Cor. 5: 4). For himself and his fellow-believers he longed for that house, that body of glory, which is from God, from heaven; and that is granted only by resurrection, or by rapture, and these await the descent of the Lord from heaven in His day (I Cor. 15: 23; I Thess. 4: 13–18). Therefore Paul prayed thus: "And the God of peace sanctify you wholly; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire, without blame in the parousia of our Lord Jesus Christ" (I Thess. 5: 23). The dead are not entire, but incomplete, and must remain so until the coming of the Lord.

Our passage was written long after the ascension of Christ. It tells us that the saints of former days were still not perfect. They were disembodied, without that resurrection form and nature which alone empowers a human being to leave the world of the dead and present itself in the presence of the glory of God. Without that body of glory man could not endure that Divine light, nor could a naked soul be permitted in that perfect realm and glory. Either resurrection or rapture is imperative.

If the notion were fact that Christ at His resurrection and ascension removed from Hades the godly dead and took them

to heaven,[1] then one of two things must have happened: either they were perfected, by the gift of the body of glory, in which case for them "resurrection is past already," which Paul regarded as serious error, overthrowing faith (II Tim. 2: 18); or else these were taken to heaven imperfect, which is impossible.

Now our passage denies explicitly that they had been perfected at the ascension of Christ, for it asserts that "apart from us" they cannot be made perfect, and we shall not be so until the day of Christ. This is confirmed by the fact that one of the men of faith named by the Writer, David, had not ascended to heaven by the day of Pentecost, though Christ had already done so (Acts 2: 34). And that believers now are not perfected at death is clear from Paul's statement that "He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1: 6); a plain hint that, so far is the believer from being perfected at death, that the work of perfecting is carried on until the day of the Lord.

It was but natural that when the idea was made prevalent that Christians go to heaven at death, then the resurrection and the coming of the Lord ceased to be felt as urgent and indispensable; for in that case the departed had attained at death all that is possible.

But for the godly of old and the godly of to-day resurrection *is* indispensable, and is the first element in "the favour that is being brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ" (I Pet. 1: 13). It is upon *that* that they of earlier times set their hope; it is upon it that we are exhorted to set our hope undividedly. The sphere and the measure of that glory will differ between one and another. In that house of the one heavenly Father there are *many* abiding places, many regions (John 14: 2), and "one star differeth from another star in glory" (I Cor. 15: 41). But for them and for us the mighty prospect and promise holds good, that, to them that expect Him Christ shall appear a second time unto salvation (ch. 9: 28), salvation perfect and perfecting, complete, heavenly, eternal.

It is not to be doubted that, by the mercy of God and on the ground of the redemption wrought by Christ, multitudes of all ages, past, present, and to come, who repented of sin and confessed and forsook it, did obtain, do obtain, or shall obtain forgiveness and salvation, according to such promises as Lev. 4: 20, 26, 31, 35, and the quite general assurance of Prov. 28: 13 just cited. But those who, in addition to seeking pardon

[1] Of this idea Pearson (*The Creed*, on Art. 5) says: "this opinion, as general as it hath been, hath neither the consent of Antiquity, nor such certainty as it pretendeth. Indeed, very few (if any) for above five hundred years after Christ, did so believe that Christ delivered the saints out of Hell [Hades], as to leave all the damned there."

through sacrifice, had set their heart upon the heavenly city, and by faith walked on earth as strangers and pilgrims, these shall reach the goal they sought, toward which they struggled, in hope of which they suffered. From all lands, all times, all races such shall be gathered unto the Lord, perfected together.

O happy band of pilgrims
  Look upward to the skies,
Where such a light affliction
  Shall win you such a prize. (Neale.)

PART IV. THE KINGDOM

CHAPTER XV

CHASTISEMENT (12: 1–13)

Ch. XII. 1. Therefore let us also, seeing that 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, 2. looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of *our* faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. 3. For consider him that hath endured such gainsaying of sinners against himself, that ye wax not weary, fainting in your souls. 4. Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin: 5. and ye have forgotten the exhortation, which reasoneth with you as with sons,

> My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,
> nor faint when thou art reproved of him; 6. for whom the
> Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom
> he receiveth.

7. It is for chastening that ye endure; God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is there whom *his* father chasteneth not? 8. But if ye are without chastening, whereof all have been made partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. 9. Furthermore, we had the fathers of our flesh to chasten us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live? 10. For they verily for a few days chastened *us* as seemed good to them; but he for *our* profit, that *we* may be partakers of his holiness. 11. All chastening seemeth for the present to be not joyous, but grievous: yet afterward it yieldeth peaceable fruit unto them that have been exercised thereby, *even the fruit* of righteousness. 12. Wherefore lift up the hands that hang down, and the palsied knees; 13. and make straight paths for your feet, that that which is lame be not turned out of the way, but rather be healed.

1 THE RACE (vers. 1, 2).

i. *The Course.* The life of the Christian is a race. ◆ The length of the race is not settled by the entrant. God has determined its length for the individual believer and for the whole company of the contestants. For the duration of the

whole series of contests is settled by the authorities (Acts 1: 7; Matt. 24: 36; Mark 13: 32).

The chief matter is to "finish the course" (Acts 20: 24), to get to its end, and not to drop out by exhaustion or be disqualified for misconduct, by not observing the rules (II Tim. 2: 5). Paul succeeded in this: "I have finished the course." Therefore he had secured the crown, the reward, the incorruptible glory of the victor (I Cor. 9: 25). The success of one is the encouragement of others. Much more should we be stimulated by the success of the many racers mentioned in ch. 11.

ii. *The Cloud of Witnesses.* Peter mentions that he and others had been "eye-witnesses" of the majesty of Christ (II Pet. 1: 16). The word he uses *epoptēs* is the normal word for an onlooker, but it is not used in our passage. Here is used the usual term for one who bears witness to a matter (*martus*), not one who is at the moment an eye-witness of it. Fifty years ago Sandow astonished audiences by lifting enormous weights. To those who hear of him he still witnesses to the high degree to which the muscles of man can be developed, but this is no evidence that he, being dead, watches the athletic contests of to-day. There seems no Scripture in proof that departed saints are spectators of our conflicts, but the records of their lives do testify to us that faith can enable heroic living.

iii. *Jesus our Example.* But above all others who stir us to steadfast endeavour Jesus is pre-eminent. He is both author and perfecter of faith, its most illustrious example. He originated the principle of faith in God, for there can never have been a moment, even before creation, when the Son did not trust the Father; and He perfected the development and display of faith by surrendering His original glory, by stepping down to the state of manhood, by walking on earth as a dependent being, and above all by surrendering Himself unto the death of the cross. Death by crucifixion was shameful, both by the exposure of the person and because it was reserved for the most despised persons and desperate crimes. But such was the vigour of His faith that Christ simply despised that of which, ordinarily, man would and should be ashamed.

This perfect life commenced in faith: "Thou didst make me to trust when I was upon my mother's breasts" (Ps. 22: 9). It was carried through in faith, as has been already stated at ch. 2: 13, where the Writer follows the Septuagint in making an Old Testament phrase mean (as the Greek may be expanded) "I shall be [one] having trusted [habitually] on Thee," that is, My life entire will be marked by trust.

Faith worked in the Son of God according to its own proper nature: it made real the invisible and the future; first, a seat

on the throne of God, as promised to Him (Ps. 110: 1); and, then, the joy to be there experienced, according to Ps. 21: 1–7, as a reward of faith: "For the king trusteth in Jehovah," or Ps. 16: 6, telling Him that the lines would fall to Him in pleasant places, since He would be shown the path to resurrection life (ver. 11) and would reach in the presence of God "fulness of joy," and at His right hand "pleasures for evermore."

Of the authentic sacred spots of Palestine two left on my heart an indelible impression, one may almost say, a movement of soul that has never subsided. On the east of Hebron there is a long, steep, rough path that leads to the high ground that stretches several miles to the mountain land above the Dead Sea. It was along those miles that the Son of God, not yet incarnate, walked and talked with Abraham His friend (Gen. 18: 16 ff; 19: 27). To the west of Jerusalem there is a stretch of high and broken land where the ancient track to Emmaus still ran. There that same Son of God, now risen from the dead, walked and talked with two men till their hearts burned within them (Luke 24).

To Abraham He spoke of judgment and mercy; to the two disciples of suffering and glory. "Behooved it not the Messiah to suffer these things and to enter into His glory?" (Luke 24: 26), and this He enforced from Moses and all the prophets. As ver. 34 shows Peter was not one of those two, but he learned well what they learnt that night, that the Spirit of Christ in the prophets "testified beforehand the sufferings [that should come] unto Christ, and the glories that should follow them" (I Pet. 1: 10, 11). This double and inseparable prospect the Son of God embraced, and steadfast faith that His Father would give the promised glory strengthened Him to tread to the end the one path that could lead there.

He has gone to that supreme place and bliss as our Forerunner (6: 19, 20) and we are to follow. One who followed Him to life's end in a violent death exhorts us thus: "Forasmuch then as Christ suffered in the flesh arm ye yourselves also with the same mind" (I Pet. 4: 1); or, as our Writer puts it: "let us run with patience . . . looking unto Jesus" (ver. 2), "ponder the One having endured *such* gainsaying of sinners against Himself" (ver. 3).

For he who does thus set his heart on Christ will find that Christ's faith develops within him by the Spirit of Christ, even as Paul says of his life of conflict and suffering: "the life that I now live in the flesh I live in faith [the faith] of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself up for me" (Gal. 2: 20).

For the development and exercise of this faith, and for the running of the race, there are three requisites.

(1) The laying aside of every weight. We do so carelessly and foolishly encumber ourselves with things unnecessary, unhelpful to the life of faith, indeed, as positive a hindrance as a burden to a racer. Wesley wisely and well said that we ought continually to cut off the unnecessary things that surround us, and that God commonly retrenches the superfluities of our souls in the same measure that we do those of our bodies.

Superfluities of the soul— What are these? Pride, anger, bitterness, jealousy, selfishness, lethargy, anxiety—are not these, and such-like, superfluous to the Christian, states of spirit he could very well do without? Let him then deliberately cut off the superfluous *material* things, and he will find that, ridding himself of these weights, the Spirit of holiness will free him from the moral weights. And of all weights wealth is the heaviest: "with what difficulty shall they that have riches enter into the kingdom of God" (Luke 18: 24).

This is what the founder and head of an immense and prosperous factory wrote to me:

> Your words may save a soul from death.
> Early days—I was out and out.
> The Spirit of God was mighty.
>
> I. Obedience to Him was a delight.
> His Word was illuminated.
> It was the chief delight.
> His service was supreme.
> Everything was done by prayer.
> Great distress and crisis in business.
> Remarkable deliverances.
>
> II. Tide turned.
> Prosperity dawned.
> Responsibilities increased.
>
> III. Prayer time shortened.
> Practically nil to-day.
> Experience of His presence gone.
> Life no longer on the heights.
> Foundations of things on the low level.
> Impossible through sheer impotency.
> Habits have the grip.
> Will power gone.
>
> IV. The truth and force of your words realized,
> but case hopeless.
>
> With the outline of your address I can fill in practically all you said: it shall be my close study and may be the recovery of my soul.

"Let us lay aside *every* weight," everything that cumbers and impedes the movement of the heart Godward. Let us

remember what again Wesley said, that laying up treasure on earth is as plainly forbidden by our Lord as are adultery and murder.

(2) Let us lay aside "the easily clinging around us sin." What racer can hope to outstrip the swift if he have not first stripped himself of close-clinging oriental robes? Now clothes are not wrong in themselves, but they may be a hindrance to a *racer*, so he doffs them. A soldier on reserve must perchance engage in business, but he must not become *entangled* in it and be unable to respond promptly to a call to the colours. Still less must a soldier on service allow this (II Tim. 2: 4); and the Christian is always on service, because the battle is unceasing.

(3) The racer requires staying power: "let us run with patience," steadfastness, dogged endurance. This is a long race, lifelong; sprinting will not win it. The heart steadfastly engaged with Christ will find that His faith infused by His Spirit will generate in the soul His patience also: "the Lord direct your hearts into the love of God, and into the patience of Christ" (II Thess. 3: 5). Love is patient.

Thus with Christ as his life, his inworking vital force, by the Spirit (Eph. 3: 16–19), the racer will be fortified against the double peril of first growing weary and presently fainting (ver. 3), thus dropping out of the race and so losing the prize.

There is no need for the Christian to grow weary in soul. He ought not to have to say that if the trial continues he will not be able to bear it. The prophet said that God the Creator "fainteth not, neither is weary," that "He giveth power to the faint; and to him that hath no might He increaseth strength." Thus those who have reached the end of *their* resources may count on *His*. For "even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall," for trials may become so severe and lasting as to exhaust all natural vigour; yet even then "they that wait upon Jehovah," that is, those who "look unto Jesus," "shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles; they shall run, and *not* be weary; they shall walk, and *not* faint" (Isa. 40: 28–31).

Whatever else this may mean it can mean this: that walking represents the ordinary activities and tasks of life, such as all must undertake habitually; that running pictures more strenuous efforts, which some must make sometimes; that flying suggests times of special strain when that which is impossible to man naturally must be borne or undertaken. And that waiting upon the Lord, looking unto Jesus, secures His strength, so that the man of faith proves that he can do all things in the power of Christ Who strengthens him (Phil. 4: 13).

iv. *Discipline* (vers. 4–13). The Writer continues his remonstrance and encouragement.

(1) *Our Antagonist* in the battle is sin, sin in ourselves and others, including the Devil. Hence the severity of the strife, for sin is bitterly, implacably hostile to holiness. "The flesh *lusteth* against the Spirit" (Gal. 5: 17), and presses the fight with such relentless fierceness that the blood of the witnesses of Jesus has flowed freely; "they loved not their life even unto death" (Rev. 12: 11).

You, says our Writer, have not yet been driven to this extremity (ver. 4). Things might be, may yet be, worse than they are. One cut his finger and exclaimed, "Praise the Lord," for, he added, "I might have cut it off." Do not be discouraged. The blood of the martyrs testifies that grace to die can be gained.

(2) *Forgetfulness* (ver. 5), is a deadly disease. In our opening pages it has been shown that God works by speaking. It is by words that He imparts wisdom and courage. Therefore to forget His words is to induce foolishness and feebleness. We are especially ready to forget *exhortations*. Information can be interesting, even exciting; but exhortation is like the crack of the whip, disagreeable; it calls to duty and effort.

(3) *Sonship* (vers. 5, 6). The Writer quotes words of Solomon. The quotation illustrates how words spoken by a God-taught man to *his* son might convey deeper and larger instruction by God to *His* sons.

Solomon might rightly contemplate his son as being heir to his kingdom and he counselled him accordingly. God is bringing many sons unto the glory of His kingdom (ch. 2: 10), and He trains us accordingly. This honourable relationship and its prospects are a key to His ways and a proof of His love. Hence

> My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord,
> Nor faint when thou art reproved of Him:
> For whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth,
> And scourgeth every son whom He receiveth.

(4) *Chastisement* (vers. 6–11). The word so translated *paideia* has the root *pais* a child, and signifies all those steps which a parent takes to educate, correct, train the boy he loves and to fit him for his post and privileges in life. This is proof that

(*a*) ver. 7, the child is the genuine son of the house, for a father does not chasten another man's child:

(*b*) ver. 8, that he is no bastard, one not really a member of the family, or his training would be neglected.

Let Job take this to heart and he will not misread the lesson of affliction.

(*c*) ver. 9. *The Father of spirits.* Right-minded children give respect to their earthly fathers and accept the discipline exercised, though this may be sometimes misguided and work injury to the child in character and work. Much more should a son of God revere and obey the Father of spirits. The title is significant. That new spiritual nature begotten in the believer in the Son of God is actually the life of God in him, by which he is as literally related to God as child to father as he is related to his human father by his bodily nature. The child who does thus honour God finds that the Divine discipline continually advances his true heavenly life in preparation for his future.

(*d*) ver. 10. *Holiness.* Human training is very brief, "a few days"—(Note this instance of "day" meaning a period. Compare "hour" in John 4: 23, 24 and "moment" in II Cor. 4: 17). But God is training His children for eternity, and He takes care that the education shall suit the destiny. For the central, vital necessity is holiness. The believer is *reckoned* to be *righteous* in Christ; but he has thereupon to be made actually *holy* in himself. The imputed righteousness grants him a real valid eternal standing before the law; upon that as basis there is now to be developed in him a godly character and walk.

For the former purpose the parental discipline of God has no place. It is as an *enemy* that man is reconciled to God, his sovereign, by the death of God's Son (Rom. 5: 10). It is the *ungodly* to whom righteousness (*dikaiosunē*) is reckoned (Rom. 4: 5). It is the *dead* to whom life is granted as a free gift (Eph. 2: 1; Rom. 6: 23), and they become thereby children of God, being thus born of His Spirit (John 3).

This having been effected by grace, *now* the parental training begins. The man being now God's child has a new nature, but the old and sinful nature is still present, will assert itself, and, if allowed, will choke the good seed. Against the tendency to yield to this, and so to continue ungodly in practice, the Divine discipline has its necessary place. The Father chastens us "that we may be partakers of His *holiness*" (*hagiotēs*, not *dikaiosunē*).

(*e*) ver. 11. *Exercise.* A wise father does not use the stick first. He begins by talking to his boy about his errors of conduct and defects of character. If the boy heeds and obeys his development advances. Thus is God's word profitable (1) unto teaching His child that which he needs to know, (2) for reproof wherein he is wrong, (3) for putting him right through obeying, and then (4) for further instructing him in righteous conduct (II Tim. 3: 16).

Thus he grows to be a *man* of God, complete in character and furnished completely unto every good work.

But when the child does not heed the word he must feel the rod. "He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." And *scourging* is a pretty severe ordeal. For the lack of it too many sons have become a scourge to the indulgent father. But the Father of spirits is too wise and too loving not to be firm. Job was upright in walk but not holy in heart. Scourging corrected this. His pains proved more profitable than his pleasures. They fitted him for double blessing and to rule over doubled possessions (Job 1: 3; 42: 12). It was thus with Nebuchadnezzar after his scourging: "I was established in my kingdom and excellent greatness was added unto me" (Dan. 4: 36).

But scourging is painful. If it were not so it would not be profitable. No chastisement seemeth for the present to be joyous but grievous. It makes us smart. But *afterward*! Paul did not glory in tribulation for its own sake, but because it developed that patience which is the quiet atmosphere in which other graces grow (Rom. 5: 3–5; Jas. 1: 2–4).

Similarly the Writer says that chastisement yieldeth in the end "the peaceable fruit of righteousness." Peace is a fruit of righteousness (Isa. 32: 17; Jas. 3: 18). Where unrighteousness flourishes peace dies, in a land or a life. On the contrary, the kingdom of God is blessed with peace and joy because righteousness rules in its King and its true subjects (Rom. 14: 17).

Now to walk righteously in the midst of the wicked, as Abraham did, demands great care, constant watchfulness in all transactions, strict self-discipline. It is an exercise, as Paul said: "I *exercise* myself to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man alway" (Acts 24: 16). Such a blissful inward harmony does not come haphazard; it is sweet fruit that must be cultivated sedulously. It demands exercise of soul.

The root idea of righteousness is completeness of character when scrutinized by the eye of the law. This is *reckoned* to be the condition of a believer because God's law sees him as in Christ Whose character is complete and perfect. The added parental discipline of God is directed to the producing in the justified the same personal completeness as has been already reckoned to be his in Christ.

The word *exercise* (*gymnasticize*) carries the picture of the Greek gymnasium where youths were trained for athletic contests. The prizes were coveted, the struggle arduous, the training correspondingly severe. The gymnasium was so called because the candidates were stripped naked (*gymnos*) in order that the trainer might study every muscle of the youth and also that each muscle might work with complete freedom.

Nature dislikes and dreads being stripped, so that all things are naked and laid open before God.

The trainer studied the youth to observe which muscles were underdeveloped in relation to the whole body. He set such exercises as should develop the undeveloped and produce symmetry of the whole form. For it would be the weak muscle that would give way under the strain of the contest. The chain is no stronger than its *weakest* link. It was by this process that the Greek athletes became such perfect models of the human form; they attained to completeness, with no part excessive, with no deficiencies. Judged by the severest standards the form was "right," perfect.

It is this symmetry of character which God has always required in His sons and still requires: "Ye shall be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11: 44, 45; I Pet. 1: 15, 16). This wholly indispensable end is served by chastisement; it is the end to which every kind of training is directed. But if exercise is thus to develop the muscles the pupil must put his heart into every movement. Listless action profits little. If the thought be concentrated on the movement the brain automatically directs nervous force to that muscle, this stimulates the flow of blood to it, and thus it receives nutriment and its growth is aided. Sandow has been mentioned. He asserted that if thought were thus concentrated undividedly upon the movements the muscles would grow and harden as well without dumb-bells or clubs as with them.

All this is abundantly true in the spiritual realm. Spiritual growth and stamina require that the son of God co-operate heartily with the discipline of the Father of spirits, however long, however severe, however varied the exercises set. The heart must be concerned, not to escape the trials of life, but to profit by them. Then will the fruit grow. Then will holiness of heart and righteousness of practice be attained, to the glory of God in the perfecting of His sons.

(*f*) vers. 12, 13. *Exhortation.* A weary traveller, tired of the road and the buffetings of the tempest, stands dispirited and limp. With shoulders bowed, hands hanging slack, knees bent and shaking, he is ready to give up and sink to the ground. Such can God's pilgrim become, as pictured by our Writer.

But one comes to him confident of mien, with kindly smile and firm voice, and says: Cheer up, pilgrim; pull yourself together; stand erect, brace your limbs, take heart of grace. You have already come far; throw not away your former toils. A noble home is at the end of the journey. See, yonder is the direct road to it; keep straight on: seek from the great Physician healing for your lameness, for the limping turn readily into

By-path meadow, where Giant Despair may fling you into the dark dungeons of Doubting Castle. Your Forerunner went this same hard road to the palace of God; others before you have won through; others are on the way; you are not alone; only press on! only press on! and you too shall reach the goal and win the prize.

Happy is he who knows "how to sustain with words him that is weary" (Isa. 50: 4). Happy is he who accepts exhortation (ch. 13: 22). And thrice happy is he whose faith is simple and strong, so that he finds no occasion of stumbling in the Lord when His discipline is severe.

Here bend thy knee and bow thy neck,
And love the pain by Jesus given;
He trains thee here by chain and check,
And leads on bleeding feet to heaven.

He schools with lessons kindly stern
His sinner in a world of sin;
And brings thee line by line to learn
The bitter-sweet of discipline.

But there, in spotless heaven serene,
He gives His rule of suffering up;
There joy shall keep for ever clean
The pain-wrought largeness of His cup.

(H. C. G. Moule.)

CHAPTER XVI

THE FIFTH WARNING (ch. 12: 14–17

Ch. XII. 14. Follow after peace with all men, and the sanctification without which no man shall see the Lord: 15. looking carefully lest *there be* any man that falleth short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble *you*, and thereby the many be defiled; 16. lest *there be* any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one mess of meat sold his own birthright. 17. For ye know that even when he afterward desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected (for he found no place of repentance), though he sought it diligently with tears.

1. THE CHRISTIAN COURSE (ver. 14).

i. *Its Principle—Peace* (ver. 14). By the word *diōkete*, ♦ follow on, pursue eagerly, the picture of the race is resumed from ver. 1. It is the word used twice by Paul in Phil. 3: 12–14: "I *press on* . . . I *press on* toward the goal unto the prize." Paul had in view the final end, the prize; our Writer has regard to an immediate object necessary to reaching that final object, even the leading a life of peace with all men. The believer is to be as zealous in walking in peace as the racer is to secure the crown. In a world marked by greed and contention this is indeed a strenuous affair. It will not be obtained haphazard, but only by such as pursue it as an all-worthy, all-desirable object, and who make every sacrifice to secure it.

In the eighteenth century an American, John Woolman the Quaker, saw clearly and truly that the principle of acquiring and retaining is a basic and inevitable source of strife. The pursuit of wealth (vast or small) will always bring contention; the pursuit of peace alone will change this.

When a certain village refused to grant hospitality to the Son of God two disciples proposed righteous and summary vengeance: "But He turned and rebuked them. And they went to another village" (Luke 9: 51–56). They had not learned His earlier lesson: "Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called sons of God" (Matt. 5: 8). The very God of peace sent into this warring world the Prince of peace, Who made peace by the blood of His cross, peace between God and man, and man and man; therefore to us who know this the

exhortation is: "If it be possible, as much as in you lieth, be at peace with all men" (Rom. 12: 18). If there is to be contention, see to it that it arises wholly from the other party.

The effect on personal character of this one habit and practice is immeasurable. The immediate result is an ever-increasing moral likeness to the Prince of peace; the son of God becomes more and more like the Son of God; which has intimate bearing upon that final goal when the son is to share the glory of the Son.

For by the very grammar of this passage this pursuit of peace is linked indivisibly with the development of that "holiness without which no one shall see the Lord"—it is all one pursuit, one present object. It is obvious that one who is selfish and contentious cannot be holy, for the Holy One is the God of love and peace. To promote peace God made the supreme sacrifice of His well-beloved Son and the Son of God of His life. To be holy like God involves of necessity that the child of God must "seek peace and pursue it" (I Pet. 3: 11; Psa. 34: 14) at whatever personal sacrifice.

ii. *The Character of the Christian Course, Holiness* (ver. 14). The A.V. "holiness" is too indefinite. The Writer used the definite article—"the holiness." This is not a usual English expression, and the R.V. gives "the sanctification." The force of the word *hagiasmos* can be learned from its New Testament use.

(1) Rom. 6: 19: "For as ye presented your members slaves to uncleanness and to lawlessness unto lawlessness, thus now present your members slaves to the righteousness unto *sanctification.*" "The righteousness," that is, that practical righteousness just before mentioned (ver. 13), which is wrought out in our bodies by them being dedicated to God as His weapons in the battle against sin. Having by grace been made free from sin we have become slaves to this righteousness. In ver. 22 this *sanctification* is described as a "fruit" of that dedication to God, which shows that it is not the root, justification, but a living growth from the root; and the end of this process is "life eternal," in full development.

(2) I Cor. 1: 30; "Christ Jesus became unto us wisdom from God, even (*tē kai*) righteousness, *sanctification* and redemption." Righteousness as to standing in law before God, sanctification as the power of a holy life now, and redemption as to the perfecting of the work of salvation at His coming. Here sanctification is the connecting process between justification and perfection, and is thus distinguished from both. Comp. Eph. 5: 25–27.

(3) This practical application of the word is shown with emphasis in I Thess. 4: 3, 4, 7 where it refers to sexual purity.

(4) In II Thess. 2: 13 a yet deeper practical work is in view in the expression "*sanctification* of *spirit*," that deeper inner realm which prompts and controls the dedicated body by the energy of the Holy Spirit.

(5) In I Tim. 2: 15 habitual *sanctification* is connected with faith, love, and sobriety in a woman as conducive to safety in childbirth.

(6) I Pet. 1: 1, 2 shows that the choice God made according to His foreknowledge operates "in sanctification of spirit" (*en hagiasmō pneumatos*, as II Thess. 2: 13); that is, God's choice takes effect in the realm of man's spirit as sanctified by the energy of the Holy Spirit, which leads to obedience and consecration to God through the blood of Jesus Christ.

These are all the occurrences of this word and they emphasize that it points to practical holiness, which the believer is to consider altogether desirable and therefore to cultivate with diligence, to pursue it as more to be desired than fine gold.

That the holiness here in view is not that righteousness which is imputed to the ungodly when he first places faith in Christ is clear from the very fact that the already justified are here exhorted to pursue it. *That* they had received as a free gift (Rom. 3: 24); *this* they are to pursue.

iii. *The Goal of the Race—Seeing the Lord* (ver. 14). Two questions arise: (1) Who is "the Lord"? and (2) What is meant by "seeing" Him?

(1) Concerning the Lord Jesus Christ it is written that before Him "every knee shall bow" (Rom. 14: 11; Phil. 2: 10, 11) and that "every eye shall see Him," including those who pierced Him (Rev. 1: 7). Therefore holiness is no prerequisite for seeing Christ.

But the title "the Lord" is definitely applied to God the Father. This usage follows the Old Testament. In Ps. 2: 2 "the Lord [Jehovah]" is distinguished from "His Anointed," which passage is quoted in Acts 4: 26, followed in vers. 29, 30 by "And now Lord . . . grant . . . that signs and wonders may be done through the name of Thy holy Servant Jesus." The same distinction is made in Paul's words: "the grace of our Lord abounded exceedingly with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus" (I Tim. 1: 14). Christ Himself had addressed His Father as "Lord of heaven and earth" (Matt. 11: 25); and James echoes this by speaking of "the Lord and Father" (Jas. 3: 9).

It would therefore seem that in our passage it must be the Father for the sight of Whom practical holiness is essential.

(2) As to the sense of the word "see," here again the Old Testament will show what is meant.

(*a*) Gen. 32: 30. The "man" Who wrestled with Jacob was so actual and visible that Jacob said of Him, "I have seen God face to face," and therefore he named the place Peniel, which means "The face of God."

(*b*) Exod. 24: 9–11. Moses, Aaron, and seventy-two others, were called by God to go up into Mount Sinai, where "they saw the God of Israel . . . they beheld God."

(*c*) Exod. 33: 22, 23. To Moses God said: "I will put thee in a cleft of the rock . . . and thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen."

(*d*) Judges 13: 22. After open intercourse with an angel "Manoah said unto his wife, We shall surely die, because we have seen God."

(*e*) I Kings 22: 19. Micaiah said to Ahab: "I saw Jehovah sitting upon His throne, and all the angels standing by Him."

(*f*) Job 19: 26, 27. "From my flesh shall I see God: Whom I shall see for myself, And mine eyes shall behold."

(*g*) Isa. 6: 1. "In the year that king Uzziah died I saw Jehovah sitting upon a throne."

In all these places the Septuagint uses the same verb "to see" (*horaō*) as in our passage. It means "to see with eyes." The very noun "eye" (in Greek) is derived from it. So that all these places show that whether it was by bodily sight or ecstatic vision, an actual sight of an actual person is meant by the term "see." In those times the Person it is true was the *Son* of God; but this does not affect the sense of "to see," and

(*h*) Dan. 7: 9 carries the matter further. Daniel said: "I beheld till thrones were placed and One that was ancient of days did sit," Whose appearance the prophet then described. This Ancient of days was the Father, for the Son of man is shortly brought before Him (ver. 13).

Thus to this expression "see God," as to so very much else in this Epistle, there is an Old Testament background, and it creates the notion of a literal sight of a literal Person. The New Testament follows to the same effect.

(*i*) Matt. 18: 10: "in heaven their angels do always behold the face of My Father Who is in heaven."

(*j*) I John 3: 2. "We know that, if He shall be manifested, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him even as He is."

(*k*) Rev. 22: 3. And of the final beatific vision in glory it is written: "His servants shall do Him service; and they shall see His face."

Plainly as all these statements point to a face-to-face sight of God, either of the Son or the Father, there is yet another statement even more completely parallel to our present passage. It is

(*l*) Matt. 5: 8: "Blessed are the pure in heart; for they shall see God"; and, as in *Hebrews*, this is immediately associated with peaceableness by the directly following words: "Blessed are the peacemakers; for they shall be called sons of God." The mention of *sons* of God shows that "God" here is the Father, and thus the Son pointed forward to a sight of the Father.

(*m*) This is the evident sense of the sublime doxology in Jude 24: 25: "Now unto Him that is able to guard you from stumbling, and to set you before the presence of His glory without blemish in exceeding joy, to the only God our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, etc." "God our Saviour" must here mean the Father, for the glory is rendered to Him "through Jesus Christ our Lord"; and the prospect opened is of a permanent position ("set" you) before the very personal glory of God.

It is essential to this that there be conferred a body of glory, spiritual and of heaven, which can endure the blaze of that uncreated light. The natural, earthly body cannot do this: "Man shall not see Me and live" (Exod. 33: 20); for "the blessed and only Potentate," the Father, is "dwelling in light unapproachable; Whom no man hath seen, nor is able to see" (I Tim. 6: 15, 16). The heirs of glory must be "clothed upon with our habitation which is from heaven" (II Cor. 5: 2), at the coming of the Lord (I Cor. 15: 35–38).

iv. *The Prize of the Course is Conditional* (ver. 14).

The prospect thus opened to faith is of inconceivable sublimity. No higher dignity will ever be possible. God has exhausted His resources for displaying grace, for He proposes to bring His sons to His own presence, to share the love, standing, and glory which He has granted to His own beloved Son. More than this He can never design or do, for He cannot place anyone *above* His Son. Therefore could Paul say of this secret counsel of God that it "completed the word [message] of God", brought it to full development (Col. 1: 24–26: *Variorum* Bible).

But the attaining of this high dignity is conditional upon development of godliness. "Pursue the sanctification apart from which [*hou chōris*] no one shall see the Lord." The first privilege which God in His grace confers is a standing in law as justified before Him as Judge; the final privilege which that grace will grant is a standing in person before His presence as the Father of glory. Both of these privileges are conditional. The former is conditional upon the guilty sorrowing over his sins and humbling himself to accept the pardon of His offended Sovereign on the sole ground of the meritorious sacrifice of the Redeemer. The latter is conditional upon the justified giving diligence to advance in personal holiness.

The pathway from starting point to goal may be long and dangerous, but God is able to guard from stumbling till the goal be reached (Jude 24). And God *will* guard all who on their part "add all diligence" in developing, by the Spirit of Christ, the character of Christ. "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure: for, *if ye do* these things ye shall *never stumble*; for *thus* shall be *richly* supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ" (II Pet. 1: 1–11). God does *not* say to the *ungodly* "*If ye do* these things" you shall be justified; but He *does* say to the *justified* "If ye do these things" ye shall never stumble, and *thus* your entrance into the kingdom shall be noble, in place of being humble.

Mr. Carnality and Mr. Faint-heart would fain take comfort from Jude's assurance that God is able to guard from stumbling and set us before the presence of His glory; but they wish to forget the state necessary for that august Presence, even the being "without blemish." Or they fondly suppose that God will produce in them that unblemished and unblameable state without diligence on their part. They will be bitterly disappointed at last. It were wise for such to learn from present experience. If a child of God ceases to give diligence to walk in holiness he loses that present enjoyment of the invisible presence of God which is the joy and strength of the godly. How shall one unfit for that Presence now be found fit for its visible glory where nothing that is unclean shall in anywise enter? (Rev. 21: 27). Let such therefore "wash their robes" betimes (Rev. 22: 14).

Indeed, it is the wisdom of each aspirant for that glory to ponder the Lord's words quoted above from Matt. 5: 8: "Blessed are the *pure in heart*, for they shall see God." "A pure heart is one to which all that is not of God is strange and jarring" (Tauler). How terribly easy it is to indulge in the heart feelings, cravings, purposes unknown to the heart of God, strange and jarring to Him. Yet He can cleanse the heart from these if there be faith on our part, as He did the hearts of the heathen gathered in the house of Cornelius (Acts 15: 9).[1] Let us therefore, with a defiled believer of old, cry "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me" (Ps. 51: 10). For we may be well assured that outward correctness will not by itself suffice for Him Who searcheth the heart, Who is, as Peter described Him, "the heart-knowing God" (Acts 15: 8). A clean life must grow from a pure heart, or it will be but a plant without root, doomed to wither quickly.

One clear day an unbeliever was seen searching the sky with

[1] See my paper *The Clean Heart.*

a telescope. Asked what he was doing he answered: I am trying to find your God, but I cannot see Him anywhere! The fitting reply was given: And you never will, for it is written, "Blessed are the pure in heart, for *they* shall see God." Most true, now and for ever! A king has millions of subjects, most of whom never see him in his palace. It is the few who are counted worthy of this honour. "Many are called, few chosen"; "many shall be last that are first [in opportunity and outward standing]; and first that are last" (Matt. 19: 27–20: 16).

2. *Three Perils* (vers. 15–17). There are three ever-present perils against which the heir of glory must have an ever-open eye. Even as the *episkopos*, the elder of a church, must maintain the keen watch of the shepherd (*episkopountes*) over the welfare of the sheep (I Pet. 5: 1, 2), so must each Christian be ever "looking carefully" (*episkopountes*) against these dangers, lest as wolves they devastate the life.

i. *Falling short of the grace of God* (ver. 15). In ch. 4: 1 this term *hustereo* means *to fail to attain* a given privilege, the rest of God. In Rom. 3: 23 it means *to fail to live up to* a standard, the glory of God. I Cor. 1: 7 states that the Corinthian believers did not *lack* any of the gifts available in Christ. Our present passage may be compared with Gal. 5: 4: "Ye are brought to nought from Christ, ye who would be justified by law; ye are fallen *out of* grace" (*ek-piptō*). You have ceased to be in the realm where grace reigns. Our Writer does not go so far as this, but speaks only of "falling short from (*apo*) the grace of God," of not attaining to and enjoying all that grace makes possible. How many a Christian life is sadly *deficient* of this or that heavenly quality necessary fully to glorify God and to acquire His highest gifts.

It is the personal servant (" his own servants," Matt. 25: 14), who lacks the zeal and devotion to use the pound entrusted to him while his Lord is away, of whom it is said that, at the Lord's return, he must hear the solemn sentence: "Take away from him the pound . . . from him that hath not, even that which he hath shall be taken away from him." This unfaithful servant is not killed as are the enemies of his Lord, but he pays a severe price for having fallen short of the grace of God. He did not appreciate grace in his Lord and therefore lacked it in himself (Luke 19: 24, 26, 27, 21).

ii. *Bitterness* (ver. 15). A feeling in the heart is like a root in the ground; it must either wither and die, or be dug out, or else it will spring up. There is no such thing in this present life as the removing from the believer of the evil soil, the carnal nature, in which evil roots grow; but the roots themselves can

be eradicated by watchful and strenuous care, in the power of the Spirit of holiness.

If the heart be flooded with the love of God (Rom. 5: 5), if by obedience the disciple abides in the continual enjoyment of the love of Christ (John 15: 9, 10), then love will kill bitterness, and the Christian will fulfil the exhortation "Let *all* bitterness," with its evil fruit of wrath, anger, clamour, railing, and malice, "be put away from you" (Eph. 4: 31). Thus the root will not spring up, nor its evil fruit mentioned cause the many [equals, the majority] to be defiled.

But if the child of God, by selfishness and carelessness, allows bitter feelings against another to poison his heart, so that others become involved and defiled, then he is not developing that sanctification without which no one shall see the Lord.

iii. *Sinful indulgence of the body is the third peril* (ver. 16). Of this two instances are mentioned: (1) sexual sin, fornication; and (2) evil indulgence in eating. Perhaps man's deadliest snares are not acts wrong in themselves, as blasphemy or murder, but right acts done wrongly, as these here in view.

(1) For sexual intercourse is an ordinance of God for mankind, but its illicit indulgence is a crime of first magnitude, of which it is written plainly, and to Christians, that "the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as also we forewarned you and testified" (I Thess. 4: 1–8); that is, God Himself sees to the execution of the penalty.

This vice is universal still, as it was when Paul was writing. The craving of the individual is aggravated by the ease of indulgence, and the general consent dulls the conscience. In Christ the child of God is elevated to a purer moral region and is given moral power by which to escape "from the corruption that is in the world by lust" (II Pet. 1: 3, 4); but let him watch and pray, lest he enter into temptation, for the higher the standing the deeper the fall; and a brother in the family of God in Corinth had fallen lower than even the debased heathen would tolerate (I Cor. 5: 1).

This vileness was an aggravation of the sin of Reuben. He indulged once with his father's concubine (Gen. 35: 22); this Corinthian Christian was living habitually with his father's wife. And the atmosphere was infectious; there was the deadly danger of the whole church becoming leavened (I Cor. 5: 2, 6). Reuben paid the severe penalty that he lost his priority, his dignities as the firstborn in the family (Gen. 49: 3, 4); this Corinthian was in imminent danger of losing his life by judicial action of Satan, though secure of his salvation in the day of the Lord Jesus (I Cor. 5: 3–5). It appears that he repented promptly and the sentence was cancelled (II Cor. 2: 5–11).

The most cogent argument on this urgent topic is in I Cor.

6: 12–20. Its conclusion is that we should "Flee fornication" and glorify God in our body (vers. 18, 20).

(2) *Profanity* (vers. 16, 17). The profanity of Esau's mind was shown in that he esteemed a passing gratification of the palate above noble permanent privileges ordained of God. He "despised his birthright" (Gen. 25: 34). It is a vigorous word here used, the one which describes the contempt with which carnal men treated the Son of man: "He was despised and rejected" (Isa. 53: 3), "a reproach of men and despised of the people" (Ps. 22: 6). The Septuagint gives a word (*phaulizō*) which means that Esau regarded the birthright as paltry, a mere trifle, and so he sold it, he bartered it away for a trifle.

The word *apodidimi* "sold," in the middle voice here used, implies that the article sold is *one's own*, a material point to observe. It shows that Esau was not a mere pretender to the birthright, nor self-deceived on the matter. He was Isaac's legitimate elder son and therefore the birthright was his by law of primogeniture. Therefore he cannot be taken here as a type of a mere professor of Christianity, or one self-deceived as to relationship to Christ. Such an one cannot be warned not to lose or sell a birthright to which he has no title whatever. Esau can be here only a type of a real child of God, one who is the true holder of the birthright. He did not have to acquire this dignity, for the title to it was his by birth; but he did need to value it and retain it, and because he did neither he forfeited it.

"Birthright" is a plural term in both Gen. 25: 31, 34 (in the LXX) and in our passage, *ta prōtotokia*. It should be rendered "the rights of the firstborn," for these were three.

(*a*) The firstborn son was ruler of the household under and for the father. Thus David's elder brother "commanded" his younger brother to attend the family sacrifice at Bethlehem, which fact David and Jonathan considered should be adequate reason for absence from the table of even the king (I Sam. 20: 29).

(*b*) This shows also that the eldest son acted as the family priest, for he is shown acting as chief on occasion of a family sacrifice.

(*c*) By the law of God the firstborn received a double share of the father's estate (Deut. 21: 17); that is, if there were six heirs, the patrimony was divided into seven portions of which the firstborn took two.

No alien, no bastard, no pretender had any rights here; and so the legitimate sons of Gilead drove out of the house Jephthah, because he was the son of a harlot, saying, "Thou shalt not inherit in our father's house; for thou art the son of another woman" (Judges 11: 1, 2).

God keeps a full register of all His universal family (Luke 10: 20; Rev. 13: 8; etc.), and therein some are entered as being "firstborn." The reference is probably to the registers kept at the temple in Jerusalem. Who in a numerous family was the firstborn son could be settled beyond controversy, for each such had to be presented to God in the temple (Exod. 13: 2, 11; Luke 2: 21–24). God has the names of His firstborn sons duly recorded as such in His register in heaven.

The three above-mentioned rights typify most accurately the triple dignities of the firstborn sons of God who are being brought unto His glory. For they are to rule the universe as kings; to serve as priests, mediating the merits of Christ's redemption and so aiding the intercourse of man with God; and theirs is the rich heavenly portion, instead of only earthly blessedness. The title to these privileges they do not have to acquire; they hold it, for it is a gift which the grace of God has attached to their calling; even as the sons of Abraham did not have to acquire a title to Canaan. But we, as they of old, do have to value these privileges and so walk and so fight as to get possession and keep it, and as they lost their birthright, so may we forfeit ours.

Of this royal dignity, the "crown" is the symbol: therefore the warning: "hold fast that which thou hast, that no one take thy crown" (Rev. 3: 11), as Jacob took the birthright that Esau despised.

Other Old Testament passages make clear that the birthright was forfeitable. I Chron. 26: 10 mentions that of a certain family of Levites Shimri was the chief ("for though he was not the firstborn, yet his father made him chief"). This shows that the essential idea of being "firstborn" is priority of rank, not accident of birth; which is the force of Col. 1: 15, that Christ is "the firstborn of all creation," not meaning that He was the first to be born and so had a beginning, but that He owns and rules the whole universe by the appointment of His Father (see Heb. 1: 2).

I Chron. 5: 1, 2 (and see Gen. 49: 3, 4) applies this forfeitableness of the birthright to Reuben, "forasmuch as he defiled his father's couch." The ruler's staff went to his brother Judah, "of him came the prince" (Gen. 49: 10); the priesthood went to Levi; and the double inheritance was given to Joseph, whose sons Ephraim and Manasseh each became a tribe in Israel. Here also the one who was the first to be born did not become the firstborn as to rank, for Jacob "set Ephraim before Manasseh" (Gen. 48: 8–20).

Thus from the case of Esau the Writer again warns his brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling (ch. 3: 1), that the noblest gifts offered in Christ may be missed, yea, *will* be missed

if things earthly and present be valued more than things heavenly and future, if the body be gratified at the expense of the spirit.

This last was the sin of our first mother Eve; she forfeited fellowship with God by a false gratifying of the body, by eating wrongly. The spirit succumbed, the body dominated, and thus it has been with all her children. From this slavery to the body God sets us free by redemption and regeneration. It is for each believer to imitate Paul: I buffet my body, and enslave it (*doulagōgō*); lest by any means, after that I as a herald have called others into the race, I myself should be disapproved and refused the crown (I Cor. 9: 27).

(3) *The Loss is Irrecoverable* (ver. 17). The case of Esau shows, indeed, that the sin which involves so serious loss is not casual or unintentional, but deliberate. When Jacob proposed the cunning bargain Esau turned it over in his mind, briefly but sufficiently: "Behold, I am about to die: and what profit shall the birthright do to me?" The compact was made the more conscious and deliberate by Jacob demanding that it be confirmed by oath (Gen. 25: 31, 33). Thus Esau did not lose his rights by accident or mistake but by compact; with his eyes wide open to what he was doing he *sold* the birth-right.

This greatly aggravated his guilt and rendered the position irreversible in two major elements.

First, Esau never after really changed his mind or was sorrowful for his wilful sin in this matter. Gen. 27: 34, 36 shows him blaming Jacob, not reproaching himself. He mourned his loss but not his sin. In this also he proved himself a true son of his first parents, for Eve and Adam each blamed another for their guilty conduct. In each of the three cases there was a measure of truth, for those others blamed were in part responsible; but godly sorrow for sin seeks no such shelter, but accepts its own responsibility and is humble. This change of mind Esau neither showed nor sought.

Secondly. Esau's act had been ratified by God, and Isaac as a prophet was moved to give to Jacob the blessing that attached to the rights of the firstborn, and his God-inspired prophetic utterance could not be recalled. Esau's cupidity sought the blessing that, by his own act and deed, was no longer rightly his, but his bitter tears could not avail to change Isaac's mind: "he found no place for a change of mind in his father" (*American Standard Version*).

It was Kadesh Barnea enacted in advance in a single individual. When Israel stubbornly refused to accept the privilege available God withdrew the possibility of gaining it. How urgently does Esau bring home to each as an individual the

earnest exhortations of ch. 3: 12 that we must each "Take heed" that there be no "falling away from the living God," and that of 4: 1, "Let us fear lest haply . . . any one of you should seem to have come short."

The forfeitability of the birthright is further indicated and emphasized in the case of Reuben. Being Jacob's eldest son this honour was his; but because of his yielding to an unnatural sensual craving, it was taken from him (I Chron. 5: 1), and was given, as to the territory, to the sons of Joseph, the latter thus, in his children, receiving the double portion; and as to sovereignty, to the tribe of Judah, in the person of David and his sons, including Messiah; and as to the priesthood, to Levi. Was this in the Writer's mind when he specified in our passage the sin of fornication?

Yet Reuben remained of the family, and was blessed in measure; but as showing that the rights in question if once lost cannot be regained, it is to be remembered that in the days of the future kingdom the status created by Reuben's misconduct will still abide: the King will be of the house of Judah, the priesthood in Israel will be in the family of Zadok the Levite (Ezek. 48: 11), and Ephraim and Manasseh will hold their double portion. These things Reuben lost for ever, though for ever remaining of the house of Israel, and sharing a portion, though this of ordinary and not special degree. All this is seen by comparing the final and prophetic announcements of Jacob (Gen. 49: 1–4) and Moses (Deut. 33: 6); for Jacob declared that the dignity of the firstborn with its pre-eminence and power belonged to Reuben, yet should not be his, not even in the latter days; yet Moses guaranteed *life* to the tribe, but nothing more: "Let Reuben live, and not die; yet let his men be few."

Note. Mal. 1: 2–5 does not deny that in Heb. 12 Esau is a type of a child of God to-day, but rather establishes it. For Esau is there called "Jacob's brother," as in full fact he was. Now in Heb. 11: 9, 21 Jacob is cited as a man of faith, a sample of all such, and therefore as a child of God. His "brother" therefore cannot in Malachi typify an unregenerate man or Jacob also must be so, for they are of the same family.

It is also to be stressed that Heb. 11: 20 shows, as does the history in Gen. 27: 39, 40, that Esau received definite blessings, though inferior to those of the firstborn son. He is therefore not a type of the unregenerate, who are not related to the regenerate, and who are under the curse and wrath of God (Gal. 3: 10; John 3: 36); but he typifies one who has forfeited priority and privilege, though retaining some measure of blessing.

Thus did the men of war forfeit Canaan and fell in the wilderness, though God in grace treated them as still of the redeemed family and did the best He could for them *in the desert* (Isa. 63: 9, 14).

Love in God is not impaired by that weak partiality which often infects human love, nor is hatred in Him vitiated by that evil bitterness

which makes it wicked in man. In God both are harmonious with His holy preference for piety and holy abhorrence of impiety. It is in this sense only that He "loved" Jacob and "hated" Esau.

It should also be observed that in Malachi it is Esau in his posterity, Edom, rather than in his own person, on whom because of their wickedness the judgments are inflicted, and to whom God's holy "hatred" is shown.

Of Esau himself the history gives, as the final pictures, a man who has risen above his earlier hatred of his brother, welcomes him back with love, is ready to protect him and his substance (Gen. 32 and 33), and who at last joins him at the graveside of their father (Gen. 35: 29). Thus is he a type of one of the family of God who lapses into carnality and bitterness, but years after is restored in soul, yet who nevertheless cannot regain the full position and priority originally owned. He is the first that shall be last, though still in the family.

A wealthy commercial magnate of two generations ago had two sons. The elder did not live worthily and the father left him only enough to maintain him decently; but the title, castle, fortune, and business went to the younger son. Yet the elder remained one of the family and received as much as he deserved.

This is the force of Rom. 8: 16, 17: "we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs indeed (*men*) of God, but (*dē*) joint-heirs with Christ [Messiah], if so be that we suffer with Him that we may be also glorified with Him." For every child, however wayward, inherits something from the Father—His life, nature, love, with food, clothing, training; but sharing with the Firstborn in glory is conditional.

CHAPTER XVII

THE FIFTH WARNING *continued* (ch. 12: 18–24)

THE PRIVILEGES OFFERED AND AT STAKE

Ch. XII. 18. For ye are not come unto a mount which might be touched, and that burned with fire, and unto blackness, and darkness, and tempest, 19. and the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which *voice* they that heard entreated that no word more should be spoken unto them: 20. for they could not endure that which was enjoined, If even a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned; 21. and so fearful was the appearance, *that* Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake: 22. but ye are come unto mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable hosts, the general assembly of angels, 23. and to the church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, 24. and to Jesus the mediator of a new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaketh better than that of Abel.

1. SAVED PERSONS IN VIEW.

IT is very plain that this portion of God's word has no reference to the unsaved. Months before they reached Sinai, Israel had experienced the redeeming power of the blood of atonement, and were freed from the authority of the destroying angel in Egypt. They had also left Egypt for ever as their sphere of life, and the Red Sea was rolling between them and its scenes of bondage or of pleasure. They were thus a picture of us who have accepted the eternal deliverance from wrath through the precious blood of Christ, and who have thereupon been cut off from the life of heart-association with the world by the power of the love of Him Whose death at the cross at the hands of the world implies our death with Him to that world. This union with Him is set forth in our immersion in the waters of baptism in His name; and Israel crossing the Sea is declared in the New Testament (I Cor. 10: 1) to be an old-time parallel to our baptism.

Thus redeemed, and thus separated to a walk of faith in God, Israel presently drew near to Mount Sinai, there to gain a fuller knowledge of the great Jehovah, the God with Whom they had to do. But how terrible was the aspect in which

they were to meet Him! With what dreadful accompaniments did He present Himself! The exhibition was indeed suited to their condition, for their first need was to know that their God was infinitely greater and grander than all the gods of Egypt or the other nations, so that the dread of these latter might be broken from off their hearts.

They stand, then, beneath the mountain, which towers above them some 7,000 feet, and gaze with terror at its cloud-capped, lightning-lit, earthquake-rent summit; and even Moses, the friend of God, says: "I exceedingly fear and quake."

2. *The Prospects of the Christian.* But how different is the prospect at which we are called to look. From our present place as pilgrims in a world that affords our hearts naught by which we can profit, we are brought to gaze up to a height of privilege and glory which is as entrancing and encouraging as Sinai seemed to Israel to be forbidding.

"Ye *have* come," says the Scripture: it is a perfect tense that is used. As Israel had come to Sinai, so we "have drawn near" to these higher, because heavenly and eternal, glories. Let us then inspect closely what is spread before and above us. We will observe first the blood-besprinkled ground where Israel stood and where we stand.

i. "Ye have come unto the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better than that of Abel."

"Abel's blood for vengeance
Pleaded to the skies;
But the blood of Jesus
For our pardon cries."

No matter what is the privilege now known, or hereafter to be gained, all our standing and hope is based upon the atonement of Calvary. Had not the blood of Jesus put away our sin we had been destroyed in Egypt, and had never drawn near to God, nor had any prospect whatever to which to aspire. And if that same blood does not keep us clean, then will continuous communion be impossible; "but if we walk in the light, as God is in the light, we [God and the saint] have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus His Son cleanseth us [keeps us perpetually and wholly clean] from all sin" (I John 1: 7). And to all eternity, and in whatever height of glory we may reign on Mount Zion, we shall know our security to stand in that eternal redemption.

"I stand upon His merit:
I know no other stand,
Not e'en where glory dwelleth
In Immanuel's land."

ii. "Ye have come unto Jesus the mediator of a new covenant." This theme is a chief part of the burden of the Epistle. Hebrew believers, cast out of the synagogue, unwelcome at the temple, deprived therefore of the sacrifices and priesthood, seemed to have lost all that made life great and safe for the Israelite. Gentile believers similarly lost completely their former religious associations, which carried serious consequences in an age when religion interpenetrated all departments of life. To comfort such they are instructed that there are heavenly realities of which Israel's earthly privileges were but shadows. The covenant made at Sinai gives place to the new covenant of which God had spoken through Jeremiah (31: 31). This covenant has eternal force, being assured by a sacrifice which has eternal value; it carries promises which are far, far better than any limited to the earth could ever be; and it is guaranteed and administered by a Priest Who is none less than God's Son incarnate and glorified, and whose office does not pass from Himself to another, seeing that He ever liveth in the power of an indissoluble life (Heb. 7: 16).

Thus those who have come unto Jesus as the mediator of the new covenant gain heavenly and eternal privileges; and these they receive for the sake of what He is to God, and not out of regard to any merit of their own; even as God wrought for Israel in Egypt not because of ought that He saw in them, but because of His own unmerited love and because of His covenant with their fathers, the heads of their family (Deut. 7: 7, 8). Christ is the Head of all the redeemed family of God, the Surety of this better covenant, in which all now share who accept Him as their sacrifice and mediator.

iii. Ye have come unto "the spirits of just men made perfect." As explained above at ch. 11: 40 (p. 228 f.) we understand this to mean that we have come unto a point of privilege entitling us to anticipate a share in the first resurrection of the just, for the just are not yet made perfect, nor can be till resurrection. It is a prospect to which we aspire; just as Israel did not reach the summit of Sinai, but gazed up at it.

iv. Therefore the next honour named is that we have come unto "God the Judge of all." From the preceding clauses it will be seen that the force of the words "ye have come" is that we have come to *participate* in the privileges stated, and not merely to view them. Even thus it was open to Israel to share in the benefits of the sacrifices offered at Sinai, and in the advantages of the covenant there enacted. Keeping therefore to this sense, and thus interpreting the clauses with uniformity, the present words will not mean that we have drawn near to God to be judged, but rather to share with Him the

honour of the office indicated by the title. As the Judge of all we shall not meet God, for Christ Himself declared this in the plain and memorable words, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth Him that sent me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life" (John 5: 24). And as regards the appearing of the saints before the judgment seat of Christ (II Cor. 5: 10), this is indeed a solemn prospect to be ceaselessly reckoned upon, but is not the matter here in question.[1] The saints are to judge the world and even angels (I Cor. 6: 2, 3). The apostles are assured of this office in relation to Israel as a nation (Luke 22: 28–30). The same thought is suggested by the promise of sitting upon the throne with Christ, the Judge (Rev. 3: 21); that is, by the dignity of kingship being conferred, for of old the king was the chief judge of the people; and by such a promise as that to the saints who overcome that they shall rule the nations (Rev. 2: 27).

In the administration of His mighty kingdom, and in the adjusting and rewarding of the affairs of the ages of human and angelic history, the glorified saints will be associated with the King in glory. Doubtless a large part of our training on earth is directed by our Father to capacitating us for such responsible and honourable office. If then a self-willed child refuses and nullifies the training, how shall he be found fit for the high but delicate position that he might have gained?

v. Being thus included in the company of the "kings and priests" of the future, we have come unto the "church of the firstborn [ones] who are enrolled in heaven." The law of primogeniture is Divinely recognized in both the sphere of the family and in that of the nations, and also in the heavenly regions as well as the earthly. This honour is evidently the initial reason for the kingship descending as a rule to the eldest son of a monarch. The honouring of the eldest son is, indeed, founded in nature, and is further enforced by Divine sanction. It is still largely acknowledged in the east, as in the case of a young lawyer in Egypt remarking to the writer, that his eldest brother had just taken off a book, for, said my friend, he thinks that because he is the eldest he can do as he likes with our things.

In this we may see the explanation of Pharaoh's prompt and dogged resistance to God's call that he should free Israel. Egypt was then the chief of the nations in wisdom, wealth, power, and glory. To the proud sovereign of this haughty people a message comes from a God who claims to be the Lord of heaven and earth, the eternal one, Jehovah. The Egyptians, though by that time worshipping many gods, still owned that

[1] Upon this subject see my *Firstfruits and Harvest.*

above all there was the great eternal Deity. From this overlord of heaven and earth the mandate comes to Pharaoh, "Israel is my son, my firstborn" (Exod. 4: 22). No wonder if the monarch starts at the words. To him they mean nothing less than that Egypt's supremacy among the nations is to pass to this race of miserable slaves. Greater humiliation could not be: it were worse than the national foe, the Hittites, wresting this glory from him in fair fight: and the foolish king will dare anything rather than consent.

This word of God remains in force. Israel is still God's firstborn among the peoples of the earth, and must, as we have seen, "possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22: 17), "and the nation and kingdom that will not serve Israel shall perish" (Isa. 60: 12). Referring to that coming period when this shall be fulfilled, and speaking of Israel's King, "David My Servant," Jehovah has said: "I will make him firstborn, the most High to the kings of the earth" (Ps. 89: 27. *Variorum* Bible).

Thus the thought enlarges from the family to the State, and must now expand to the entire universe as the whole realm of God's kingdom. Amongst all the various orders of beings that God will have to His praise in eternal ages, one company is to be to the rest what the firstborn has been shown to be. This company is the church of God: "ye have come unto," ye have membership in "the church [*ekklēsia*, the selected, the called out] of the firstborn ones,[1] who are enrolled in heaven." These will have a double share in the Father's inheritance, that is the glory of the spacious and magnificent heavenly regions and conditions, as contrasted with the great but limited glory of the earthly section of the kingdom of God. To them will be given with Christ authority over all other beings, creatures, and things ("*all things* are yours," I Cor. 3: 22); and so fully will God dwell in them that they will be intermediaries, "priests," between Him and His universe, "they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with Him" (Rev. 20: 6). Well may the same Scripture exclaim, "Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection."

vi. The next point in the panorama of privilege is the relationship of the church to the angelic hosts on a day of festivity to which these will come. The English versions do not rightly divide the clauses here. Commenting on this Alford remarks that "it is difficult to see why the coupling of clause to clause by *kai* (and) which prevails through the sentence, should be broken through"; and Darby (*New Translation*; note) says, "The words 'and' (*kai*) give the division very clearly here," and he translates thus: "and to myriads of angels, the universal

[1] The noun is plural, and cannot refer to Christ personally, as is further shown by the plural verb following, "who *are* enrolled."

gathering"; whilst Alford seeks to give the full force of the words by rendering, "and to myriads, the festal hosts of angels." We may therefore read the clause thus, "Ye have come unto . . . myriads of angels, the universal festal gathering."

And what a vista of splendour thus opens to view as the mind conceives as much as possible of the glory of the Son of God, in Whom "dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily," coming in His own glory, and in the glory of the Father, and that of the holy angels (Luke 9: 26). Such a monarch in such state and with such a retinue will eclipse all that the world ever thought grand and splendid. And in that glory the first-born are to share, being the "bride, the wife of the Lamb," who with Christ will be seen "coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God" (Rev. 21: 9–11). To her as to her Lord the angels will be attendants, for already they are "ministering spirits sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation" (Heb. 1: 14).

But this clause fixes the exact occasion when the church shall enter upon these supreme honours. For this gathering of angels is both "universal," that is, all the holy hosts will be present at once, and it is also "festal," that is, the gathering is on an occasion of joy and triumph. The Word of God elsewhere speaks only of one such day, and that the day of Messiah's appearing in Jerusalem to establish His kingdom on earth. Zechariah foresaw that event, and cried rapturously, "Jehovah my God shall come, and *all the holy ones* with Thee" (14: 5); and Christ Himself gathered up this and some other prophecies into the thrilling declaration, "when the Son of man shall come in His glory, and *all the angels* with Him, then shall He sit on the throne of His glory" (Matt. 25: 31). Thus shall be fulfilled the promise of God summarized through the angel that announced His birth: "the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David: and He shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end" (Luke 1: 32, 33): and then shall come to pass the word concerning the church, "When Christ, our life, shall be manifested [to men on earth], then shall ye also with Him be manifested in glory" (Col. 3: 4).

"Let that day come, O Lord,
  And other days pass by;
Night is far spent, and dawning tells
  That Thou art drawing nigh.

"Hasten Thy coming, Lord!
  Dawn, O Thou glorious day!
Then shall the fairest days of earth
  Pass into shade away."

vii. But great as are the things thus enlarged upon, there are greater and higher glories unto which we have drawn near. Ye have come unto "the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem." During the reign of Christ on earth, Jerusalem, the "city of the great King," will be His earthly metropolis, and the world's centre. But in the heavenly regions there will be another "city," of which that on earth is but a reflection. In that upper realm where the substance of being is spirit, God will have a spiritual metropolis, Himself being the architect that designed and the builder that erected it (Heb. 11: 10). And the persons of the church of the firstborn, perfected spirits inhabiting incorruptible spiritual bodies, will form that dwelling place of God.

3. *The Bride is the City.* During the panorama of the Revelation, John had heard a great multitude in heaven rejoicing that the hour had come for the long expected marriage of the Lamb, but he had not yet seen the bride. And it may be that as the mighty visions progressed, and the millennial age passed into the eternal state, he inwardly wondered at this omission. But after all else had been shown to him the Bride was unveiled to his enraptured gaze, for he says (Rev. 21: 9, 10): "And there came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls, who were laden with the seven last plagues; and he spake with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the wife of the Lamb. And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and shewed me," shewed me—what? a bride? no, a city, "the holy city, new Jerusalem." So, then, the "city" is the "bride," and the latter being a figure of a company of persons so must the former be. The assertion that the "city" is an *interpretation* of the figure of speech "bride" is not founded on the passage. The angel did not say to John, I will interpret, or explain, to thee the metaphor "bride," but he said, "I will *shew* thee the bride," that is, give thee a vision of her. Thus the "city" is a second vision in symbol of the same company of which the "bride" was the former symbol. Such oriental duplicating of metaphors is common in Scripture. The figure of the bride was no longer adequate to reveal the glory of the church, nor her most exalted office as the dwelling-place of God in a reconciled universe, from which all the wicked had been banished. Therefore the city comes into view; and nature and art and language are exhausted to portray her splendour.

In interpreting this vision one error is particularly common, namely, to speak of the city as a region into which the members of the church of God will enter and be blessed. This notion effectually forbids any right understanding of the matter. The bride, that is, the glorified heavenly church of the

first-born ones, *is* the city. Others of the saved enter its gates; these compose it.

It may be hard to assign an exact meaning to each of the details given, but the main features described readily yield their teaching.

i. In the persons of His heavenly saints God will dwell so personally and be so actually present, that they will be to Him what a capital city is to a monarch—a place of residence, a scene for the display of His majesty, a spot to which His subjects may come to have dealings with Him, and a centre of government around which the corporate life of the empire may revolve.

ii. "And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb" (Rev. 21: 14). To members of the church this was not a new thought, for it had been before taught that they, as a body corporate, were "built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets" (Eph. 2: 20). Historically it is the preaching, teaching, labours, and sufferings of the apostles upon which the church is founded; and of their teaching Christ Jesus Himself was the all-prominent theme (the "chief corner-stone"), binding together the foundation, and affording unity and stability to the building.

iii. "The nations shall walk in the light thereof; and the kings of the earth do bring their glory into it" (Rev. 21: 24). It will be under the beneficent guidance of the heavenly saints that the nations, so long "alienated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them" (Eph. 4: 18), will learn to walk in His fear; and they in return will honour those who are thus the occasion of their eternal blessing.

iv. But as it will be by recognizing Israel as the chief nation on earth by God's will that the Gentiles will own God's sovereignty, therefore through Israel mediately it is that they will enjoy the blessings dispensed through the church; and hence on the portals of the city are written the names of the tribes of Israel. For the Gentiles the means of access into heavenly blessings will be by honouring Israel (Isa. 14: 2; 49: 22, 23; 60: 12; 66: 20; Zeph. 3: 10, marg.: Zech. 8: 20–23). It would be as unreasonable to "spiritualize" the literal Israel out of this picture as to "spiritualize" out of it the twelve apostles of the Lamb who are next mentioned (Rev. 21: 12, 14).

v. The Holy Spirit of God will thus flow out through the church for the quickening of all, as pictured by the river of the water of life; and it will be in response to obedience that the peoples will have the benefit of the River, for this proceeds out of the *throne* of God and of the Lamb.

Further into such fascinating details we may not give time

to go; but it is unto no less privileged service and glories that we have come.[1] Such is the ravishing prospect unto which the saints of this age are called, for God hath called us "unto His own kingdom and glory" (I Thess. 2: 12).

4. But we have anticipated the highest feature of all: "ye have come unto Mount Zion." In the earthly Jerusalem, two mounts have been prominent, Mount Moriah and Mount Zion. The former was presently crowned with Solomon's temple; but in the heavenly Jerusalem there is no temple seen (Rev. 21: 22), for God no longer dwells hidden behind a veil, for Calvary has made possible His manifest dwelling with men (Rev. 21: 3). But Mount Zion is found in His eternal realm. On that hill in the earthly city David's palace stood (II Sam. 5: 7–9), and it was the supreme court of justice for the kingdom, for "there were set thrones for judgment, the thrones of the house of David" (Ps. 122: 5). Not a throne, but thrones, are mentioned. How accurate a prophetic picture of the heavenly things yet to be; for Christ, the son of David, will associate with Himself in His kingly office those who have been counted worthy of their calling, and who have reached this pinnacle of honour to reign with Him for ever and ever (Rev. 22: 5). And as many dwelt in Jerusalem and but few comparatively on Mount Zion, is there not here again the suggestion that many more may reach the blessedness of the "city" than will reach the crowning honour and reign on a throne on Mount Zion? "One star," though truly a star, that is, a heavenly being, "differeth from another star in glory" (I Cor. 15: 41).

Only one man, Moses, was permitted to climb to the top of Sinai; the rest of God's people could but look from afar to that height of glory, and in truth they had little enough desire to draw near to those devouring fires. But many are the sons now being brought unto glory in Christ Jesus, and such as walk in the power of His fellowship may approach unto that same God with boldness. Let us therefore "abide in Christ; that if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness, and not be ashamed from Him at His presence" (I John 2: 28). Let us look to ourselves that we lose not the things that we have wrought, but that we receive a full reward (2 John 8).

Of that supremely and eternally glorious state a sevenfold perfection is declared (Rev. 22: 3–5). "There shall be no curse any more"—perfect sinlessness and blessedness: "and the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be therein"—perfect government: "and His servants shall do Him service"—perfect service: "and they shall see His face"—perfect communion: "and His name shall be in their foreheads"—perfect resem-

[1] The theme is treated at length in chs. xiii and xix of my *The Revelation of Jesus Christ.*

blance and identification: "and there shall be night no more" —perfect knowledge and strength: "and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages"—perfect glory.

"Oh, what a bright and blessed world
This groaning earth of ours will be,
When from its throne the tempter hurled
Shall leave it all, O Lord, to thee.

"But brighter far that world above
Where we as we are known shall know;
And, in the sweet embrace of Love,
Reign o'er the ransomed earth below."

Truly it is said of the unspiritual that eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, whatsoever things God prepared for them that love Him. But unto those who, by faith in Christ, have received the Spirit of the Lord, God hath revealed these things so vast and deep and high, for "we received, not the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is from God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us by God" (I Cor. 2: 9–12). And therefore, both the knowledge of and the attaining to these things is possible through the Spirit.

CHAPTER XVIII

THE FINAL WARNING (12: 25–29)

Ch. XII. 25. See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not, when they refused him that warned *them* on earth, much more *shall not* we *escape,* who turn away from him that *warneth* from heaven; 26. whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. 27. And this *word,* Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain. 28. Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: 29. for our God is a consuming fire.

WITH this noble display of the heavenly prospects the mighty argument has reached its climax and it now moves to its conclusion.

1. *Emphatic Recapitulation* (25). "See to it that you do not reject the One speaking: for if those rejecting the one who passed on divine instruction on earth did not escape [penalty], much more [shall not] we, [that is] those turning away from the One from the heavens."

This summarizes the appeal of 10: 26–31. To defy Moses was to incur severe penalties; yet he was only an earthly messenger of God, who offered blessings connected with the earth and denounced penalties to be inflicted on earth. But the Messenger now speaking is the Son of God, the Lord from heaven (1: 1, 2), as much nobler than Moses as the son is greater than the servant (3: 1–4), Whose message opens to faith the sublime privileges laid up in the heavens and warns of penalties more severe than those under the law of Moses.

Now these privileges are based upon that atoning blood which speaks to God in the heavenly sanctuary (ver. 24 above). To turn from *that* blood and *this* Speaker (see 10: 29), by reverting to the law, with *its* mediator, Moses, and *its* but typical blood, is to reject the bright reality and return to the shadow. He who thus rejects the heavenly shall pay a severer penalty than he who rejected the earthly.

From this there is no possible escape. In every place in

the New Testament this word "escape" has its natural force—*ek-pheugō*, to flee *out of* a place or trouble and be quite clear thereof. It comes only at Luke 21: 36; Acts 16: 27; 19: 16; Rom. 2: 3; II Cor. 11: 33; I Thess. 5: 3; Heb. 2: 3, and here. In comparison with Rom. 2: 3 see its use in the Septuagint in the interpolated passage after Esth. 8: 13: "they suppose that they shall *escape* the sin-hating vengeance of the ever-seeing God"; also Judges 6: 11; Job 15: 30; Prov. 10: 19. The sense is invariably as stated. One is either completely free from the penalty or completely involved in it, which latter shall certainly be the experience of the one who turns away from the heavenly Speaker.

But the Writer's words (ver. 25) require strict understanding. It is again shown that not sin by ignorance or inadvertence is in view. He emphasizes his words found at 10: 26 that it is if we sin "wilfully," deliberately, knowing what we are doing and adhering to that decision, that the warning operates. They who rejected Moses did so on definite occasions and maintained the disobedience (*paraitēsamenoi*, aorist participle); and the Christians here are warned not to do the like (*paraitēsēsthe*, aorist conjunctive passive); and this "turning away" is not a thoughtless act soon mourned, but is continuous (*apostrephomenoi*, present participle middle).

While this limits the sin in view, yet the form of his sentence emphasizes again that it is Christians who are being warned. He does not use a general or indefinite expression, as, "such as turn away" shall suffer, but he employs again the specific and emphatic "*we*, that is, those of us who are turning away" (*hēmeis hoi apostrephomenoi*), for this was precisely what some of the Christian circle were doing or about to do; and which some have done all the centuries since.

2. *The Past* (ver. 26). The heinousness of such apostasy, such turning away, arises from the majesty of Him from whom one turns. At court it were an unpardonable insult to turn one's back upon the king, especially should he be speaking. And the One from whom the apostate turns is of incomparable majesty. When of old Sinai's mighty mass heard the voice of Jehovah "the whole mount quaked greatly" (Exod. 19: 18), as it is said in our passage (ver. 26), "Whose voice then shook the earth."

3. *The Future* (vers. 26, 27). Yet that awesome display of His power is but a trifle as compared with what He will do hereafter; for "now hath He promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this, 'Yet once more,' signifieth the removing of those things which are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain."

i. The Speaker from heaven is the same Person as He Whose voice shook Sinai. Christ is the Jehovah of the Old Testament. The Legislator is the Redeemer, the Redeemer remains the Legislator.

ii. Warnings are promises: "He hath *promised*" to shake earth and heaven, and He will keep His promise, whether of mercy or of wrath. Comp. II Tim. 2: 11–13.

iii. The future disturbances of nature will test the heavenly regions as well as the earth.

iv. The period for this is significant, and is easily learned from Hag. 2: 6–9 whence the promise is quoted. The whole prophecy reads:

> For thus saith the Lord of hosts: Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations, and the desirable things of all nations shall come, and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts. The silver is mine and the gold is mine, saith the Lord of hosts. The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former, saith the Lord of hosts: and in this place will I give peace, saith the Lord of hosts.

(1) The subject is the house of God at Jersusalem. The Jews who had returned from Babylon were building the second temple. To the old among these the prophet addresses the question: "Who is left among you that saw this house in its former glory? and how do you see it now? is it not in your eyes as nothing?" (Hag. 2: 3). Thus did God identify this second and smaller temple with that former and nobler temple, speaking of "*this* house in its former glory." It is then added: "the precious things of all nations shall come, and I will fill *this* house with glory, saith Jehovah of hosts," the precious things being the silver and the gold next mentioned. In consequence "the latter glory of *this* house shall be greater than the former, saith Jehovah of hosts."

Now it is clear that these promises have not yet been fulfilled. Herod the Great did indeed enlarge and adorn that second temple, but it never approached to the magnificence of Solomon s temple. There must therefore be built in Jerusalem in days to come a temple grander than even the first. This is the consistent prediction of all Scripture, as Zech. 6: 12, 13; 14: 20, 21 (Zechariah spoke at the same time as Haggai): Ps. 24, esp. ver. 3; Isa. 66: 22–24; Ezek. 20: 40–48; etc. The suggestion that all these and other passages, in the Old Testament and the New Testament, find fulfilment in the present spiritual house of God, the church, empties Scripture of any definite meaning or accomplishment, indeed, it sets aside the plain force of the Word of God.

The three-fold "*this* house" of Haggai definitely identifies the second temple with the first, and the third and future temple with the first and second: in God's view they are all one house. This *compels* the view that the third *must* be as literal as its predecessors with which it is identified and must stand upon the same site at Jerusalem.

(2) This future temple is to be built by Messiah, "the man Whose name is the Branch," Who "shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon his throne, and he shall be a priest upon his throne" (Zech. 6: 12, 13). The era is therefore that of the millennial reign of Christ.

(3) This is confirmed by the feature that "all nations" shall be disturbed: "I will shake all nations." Comp. Jer. 25: 26, 29–33, where judgment is denounced five times against "all the inhabitants of the earth." See also Ezek. 39: 21; Zech. 14: 2; Matt. 25: 32; Ps. 75: 3, 8; all pointing to the time of Christ's coming in judgment.

(4) Other scriptures speak of this shaking of all nature as to take place at that epoch.

Isa. 2: 19, 21 speaks twice of Jehovah arising "to shake mightily the earth." Isa. 13: 13 says: "Therefore I will make the heavens to tremble, and the earth shall be shaken out of its place, in the wrath of Jehovah of hosts, and in the day of His fierce anger." See also Isa. 24: 1, 19, 20; Joel 2: 10, 11; Nah. 1: 3–6. Also the Lord foretold in detail the same disturbances as to occur in connexion with His return in glory, saying that "the powers of the heavens shall be shaken" (Matt. 24: 29) as well as there be "roaring of the sea and the billows" (Luke 21: 25–26; see also Ps. 46: 1–3), which dread panorama the *Revelation* expands in lurid fulness (ch. 6: 12–16; chs. 8, 9, and 16) as ushering in the reign of Christ on earth.

(5) This shaking is not, however, the final cataclysm of the purifying wrath of God which will come at the close of the Millennium, for that will not be only a *shaking* of heaven and earth but a *dissolving* of their very elements, and the agency will be fervent fire, not merely agitation. This shaking is to be at the opening of the kingdom era, not at its close.

(6) The shaking here foretold is to be the final occasion when God will use this form of testing and judgment. Earth and heaven were agitated when God came to Sinai (Exod. 19: 18; Judges 5: 4, 5; Ps. 77: 16–20; 114). These frequent mentions over many centuries indicate how terrific was that disturbance of nature and how deeply its lesson was impressed on pious men.

But the coming shaking shall far exceed that in extent and degree, for the heavens shall be involved, and the effect shall be "the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things

that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain" (ver. 27). Then shall be fulfilled Ps. 93: 1: "Jehovah reigneth. . . . The world also is established, that it cannot be moved."

4. Here is announced *a vital principle,* a fundamental necessity. If a building is to be permanent weak materials and constructions must be removed. Some years ago it was found that St. Paul's Cathedral was in danger; whereupon old and decaying timbers were removed and replaced by sound beams, and other measures taken to assure stability. In the kingdom of God there arose of old sin and its inevitable weakness, and ever since there has developed more and more the need that this shall be eliminated. Hence the shakings and shatterings known in individual experience by the people of God; hence the perpetual attacks of Satan and the world upon the churches of God; hence the ceaseless overthrowing of all human institutions; hence that coming overturning of the government of heaven and earth by angels—all things must be shaken terribly that the base and weak elements may collapse and make room for that which is divine, holy, stable.

This is the proper force of the word *metathesis* translated by "removed." It signifies the substituting of one thing by another, as a name, an opinion, an institution. This is exhibited in ch. 7: 12, which speaks of the substitution of the new priesthood and law in place of the Mosaic, using this word and its root.

And this shows the sense of the phrase "as of things that have been *made.*" For *poiēō* does not here refer to the original creation of the substance of things, or the passage would require a new thought evidently foreign to it, even that *all* things would be "removed," whether good or bad, strong as well as weak. But the statement as given is that some things are to be shaken and "removed" in order that other things, being unshakable, may remain. Yet these last have been "made" in the sense of being created.

The word *poiēō* has therefore here its sense of existing things being arranged and instituted in certain relations to each other. It is not the annihilation of substance that is in view, but the annulling of relationships and the substituting of different relationships and institutions, suitable to the kingdom of God and capable of being everlasting.

Of these new institutions the principal will be that overthrowing of the existing angelic government, and the installing of the Son of man and His heavenly people in place of them, which has been before considered.

And this is the force of the statement before us that believers

are in process of "receiving a kingdom" (ver. 28). What this means may be learned from Dan. 5: 31: "Darius the Mede received the kingdom," where the Septuagint uses the same terms as in our passage (*parelabe tēn basileian*). Or one may consider Mordecai's question to the *queen*: "Who knoweth whether thou art not *come to the kingdom* for such a time as this?" (Esther 4: 14).

5. *Summary of the Five Warnings.* Thus the period of this shaking, as well as its accompaniment and results, show that the millennial epoch and kingdom are in view. This final warning is therefore in harmony with the earlier warnings. In ch. 2 the "great salvation" is the heavenly prospects of the disciples of Christ who attain to the first resurrection. In chs. 3 and 4 Canaan is used as a foreshadowing of the millennial rest, which will be entered by only the diligent. In ch. 6 the forfeiting of Canaan warns of the peril that apostasy from Christ may forfeit that heavenly portion. This is yet more heavily enforced in ch. 10, and positive penalties are added to the negative loss of glory. And here in ch. 12 the prospect of receiving a kingdom is the ground for being stable as believers, seeing that only such shall abide the testings and meet the requirements of that great day, and that the penalty of instability, of not heeding and obeying the One speaking from heaven, is inescapable (ver. 25).

6. *Exhortation* (vers. 28. 29). "Let us have grace." Upon what, therefore, shall the Christian concentrate so as to avoid the perils and secure his privileges? The Writer answers —upon GRACE. The danger underlying all dangers, against which pre-eminently he warns, is that of turning back from grace to law, ceremonies, self-effort as the basic principle of life. The urgent call is to trust in God as "the God of all grace," for it is in this character that He has called us unto His eternal glory in Christ, and it is on this principle of grace that He undertakes to see us through the sufferings of the journey and perfect, stablish, and strengthen us (I Pet. 5: 10). This wholly unmerited and entirely adequate favour of God is made available in Christ His Son and only in Him. It is by reliance upon Him in His various offices and service that the believer acquires in daily experience "all things that pertain unto life and godliness" (II Pet. 1: 3).

Therefore let faith adhere to this as the principle of all dealings with God, for so, and only so, shall we be able to "offer service well-pleasing to God" (ver. 28). To be well-pleasing to Him is the indispensable matter as regards attaining to what grace makes possible in Christ (ch. 11: 5, 6); and for this faith

and its fruits are the secret, and "dead works" are to be wholly renounced (9: 14).

But living by the grace of our holy God is a serious matter. A just appreciation of His marvellous grace to us godless and guilty sinners produces "reverence and awe" (ver. 28). Let the Christian look steadily and long at these words "*reverence* and *awe*." They are a New Testament form of this Old Testament promise: "to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and that *trembleth at My word*" (Isa. 66: 2). It is with such that God dwells and whose spirit He revives, so that they do not collapse under the strain of life (Isa. 57: 15).

John Woolman says of a gathering of Quakers that "there was an awesome sense of the presence of God." Is this what they seek who arrange "bright hours" and other devices for pleasing the carnal mind? Too truly has it been said that the present age, in religion as in things secular, is marked by specific levity instead of specific gravity. Therefore does our Writer remind us that grace produces reverence and awe, not frivolity and flippancy; and therefore does he close this exhortation with the reminder that "our God is a consuming fire," which must and will burn up all that is not suitable to His holiness and glory.

The intense word "consume" *katanaliskō* the Writer borrowed from the Greek Old Testament he so much used. It means to devour completely, to dissolve. He quotes from Deut. 4: 24, where, warning Israel against forgetfulness of their God, and the resulting substitution of something else as the object of their hearts, Moses said, "For Jehovah thy God is a devouring fire, a jealous God." Now jealousy is an outcome of love. A man does not feel jealous that a woman he does not love should give herself to some other man. It is God's love of holiness that makes Him to burn against sin. It is His love for His people that compels Him to consume out of them all that is contrary to Himself and to their true welfare. If we respond to His grace, tremble at His word, serve Him with reverence and awe, then will He rejoice in us and we in Him; but if we provoke Him to jealousy with our vanities then must we learn by painful yet, at the last, salutary experience, that "*our* God is a consuming fire," even as was before shown at ch. 10: 27.

Note to ch. xviii. *On the Warning Words employed.*

1. Ch. ii: 1. *pararheō*. Here only in N.T. Its force is seen in the LXX at Isa. 44: 4: "as willows by *flowing water*." In the only other place in that Version it is used as a warning as in *Hebrews*: "My son, let them not pass [*flow away*] from thee, but keep my counsel and

understanding" (Prov. 3: 21). This is the exact warning and exhortation of Heb. 2: 1; and the result promised is the same: "that thy soul may live," instead of life being cut short prematurely; "and that there may be grace round thy neck," a character adorned with grace.

"The idea is not that of simple forgetfulness, but of being swept along past the sure anchorage which is within reach. The image is singularly expressive. We are all continuously exposed to the action of currents of opinion, habit, action, which tend to carry us away insensibly from the position which we ought to maintain" (Westcott *in loco*).

2. Ch. iii: 12. *aphistēmi.* To withdraw, turn away from a person (I Tim. 6: 5, A.V.), place (Luke 2: 37), or thing (I Tim. 4: 1, "some shall *fall away* from the faith"). Trial or temptation may occasion this: "in time of temptation they *fall away*" (Luke 8: 13).

3. Ch. iv: 1; xii: 15. *hustereō.* To be behind, in the rear of; to be inferior to others (II Cor. 11: 5; 12: 11): therefore not to keep up with them on the journey, and so to lack the support and supplies available while in the caravan, and at last to fail to reach the goal of the journey. This is a possible consequence of turning from the path and company of the faithful. This may lead easily to the next and more serious danger. "The tense *husterēkenai* marks not only a present (Rom. 3: 23 *husterountai*) or past defeat (II Cor. 12: 11 *husterēsa*) but an abiding failure" (Westcott on 4: 1).

4. Ch. iv.: 11. *piptō.* To fall. The one lagging behind may fall by the wayside and prove that word: "Woe to him that is alone when he falleth, and hath not another to lift him up" (Eccles. 4: 10). The word is used at 3: 17 of those Israelites who fell in the wilderness, that is, died by the way.

5. Ch. vi: 6. *parapiptō.* The verb is found here only in N.T., but the corresponding noun *paraptōma* is used 22 times. In R.V. it is rendered "trespass" except in Rom. 11: 11, 12, where "fall" is retained and "trespass" given in the margin. In these verses it ought to be rendered "trespass," for Israel's national attitude was this, a rejecting of God's testimony to His Son given in the Old Testament and by Christ Himself and His messengers. This exemplifies the word. It corresponds to its force in Ezek. 14: 13; 15: 8, where both verb and noun come together. The trespass there in question was the putting of idols in the place of Jehovah. In 14: 7 Ezekiel describes this as a man "alienating" himself from God, where the LXX has *apallotrioō* to estrange, alienate. See Eph. 2: 12; 4: 18; Col. 1: 21, the three places where the word comes in N.T.

That is to say, an Israelite who turned from God to a god of the nations thereby cut himself off from the spiritual and true people of God and put himself into the position of one of a foreign and heathen race. This trespass Israel repeated by rejecting Christ, their God and Messiah, and clinging to their own legal efforts and ceremonies. God disowned them; the Lo-ammi period set in, during which they are treated as "not My people" (Hos. 1: 9).

This shows the force of the word in Heb. 6: 6. The believer turns definitely from Christ and takes to Him an antagonistic attitude, if he, like Israel, turns to legality and self-effort in place of Christ and His sacrifice.

This is the meaning of "apostasy," a taking up of a different

position to that occupied, a reversal of one's attitude to God, His Son, His truth. This leads on to

6. Ch. x: 27. *hupenantios* an adversary. The word is found at Col. 2: 14, where the law is the adversary of the law-breaker. The law takes active measures against the criminal. In like manner the apostate implements his attitude by active opposition to Christ and His sacrifice for sins (10: 26), and so involves himself in the judgment of God against His adversaries.

7. Ch. x: 35. *apoballō*. To throw away, as the blind man cast off his outer garment so as to hasten to Jesus (Mark 10: 50, the only other place of this word in the New Testament). Thus does the apostate deliberately cast off the profession of hope in Christ, he renounces it.

8. Ch. x: 38, 39. *hupostellō, hupostolē*. To withdraw, shrink back. Thus has the apostate, out of fear, withdrawn entirely from the profession of hope in Christ. The act is illustrated at Gal. 2: 12, where the verb describes Peter's false step in withdrawing from the society of Gentile believers out of fear of Jewish believers. Those our Writer has in view withdraw entirely from the Christian profession and circle.

9. Ch. xii: 25. *paraiteomai*. To refuse an appeal, as the guests invited refused to come to the feast (Luke 14: 18, 19, where the verb is translated "to make excuse"). To refuse to be entangled in idle disputes (II Tim. 2: 23). To reject a person (Titus 3: 10). Such actions are definite, intentional; and thus does the apostate refuse to heed God's testimony and turns from God's Son to Whom the Father testifies (I John 5: 9).

10. Ch. xiii: 9. *parapherō*, to be carried away. The final warning is against the subtle and dangerous influence of false teachings. These can sweep the heart along, out of safety into danger, as winds can *carry along* clouds (Jude 12, the same word). In this action of false ideas upon the mind lies the initial peril of man. The figure here employed completes the circle of warning, being closely allied to the first figure used, of water drifting the object out of safety into danger.

The careful student will observe how accurate is the choice of words, each fitting exactly the warning given; and also that there is a progress of thought throughout the Epistle, the warnings intensifying as the privileges are expanded, each ascending to its appropriate climax.

PART V: CONCLUSION

CHAPTER XIX

CONSEQUENT AND CONCLUDING EXHORTATIONS (Ch. 13)

Ch. XIII. 1. Let love of the brethren continue. 2. Forget not to show love to strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. 3. Remember them that are in bonds, as bound with them; them that are evil entreated, as being yourselves also in the body. 4. *Let* marriage *be* had in honour among all, and *let* the bed *be* undefiled: for fornicators and adulterers God will judge. 5. Be ye free from the love of money; content with such things as ye have; for himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee, neither will I in any wise forsake thee. 6. So that with good courage we say, The Lord is my helper; I will not fear: what shall man do unto me?

7. Remember them that had the rule over you, which spake unto you the word of God; and considering the issue of their life [Gr. manner of life], imitate their faith. 8. Jesus Christ *is* the same yesterday and to-day, *yea* and for ever. 9. Be not carried away with divers and strange teachings: for it is good that the heart be established by grace; not by meats, wherein they that occupied themselves were not profited. 10. We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle. 11. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the holy place by the high priest *as an offering* for sin, are burned without the camp. 12. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people through his own blood, suffered without the gate. 13. Let us therefore go forth unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. 14. For we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after *the city* which is to come. 15. Through him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of lips which make confession to his name. 16. But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. 17. Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit *to them*: for they watch in behalf of your souls, as they that shall give account; that they may do this with joy, and not with grief: for this *were* unprofitable for you.

18. Pray for us: for we are persuaded that we have a good conscience, desiring to live honestly in all things. 19. And I exhort *you* the more exceedingly to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

20. Now the God of peace, who brought again from the dead the great shepherd of the sheep with the blood of the eternal covenant, *even* our Lord Jesus, 21. make you perfect in every good thing to do his will, working in us that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be the glory for ever and ever, Amen.

22. But I exhort you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation; for I have written unto you in few words. 23. Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

24. Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

25. Grace be with you all. Amen.

THIS chapter has been regarded as "a kind of appendix to the Epistle." But the connexion is much more intimate. It illustrates the feature of the Word of God that there is an underlying and unexpressed *spiritual* connexion between parts or phrases. This feature is very pronounced in the first epistle of John, but exists everywhere in Scripture, the full sense of which is not known until this undeclared connexion is perceived.

Here follows a series of exhortations which show the child of God how to live so that he may not learn by experience that God is a consuming fire (12: 29).

1. ver. 1. "Let *love of the brethren* continue" (abide). For "God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him" (I John 4: 16). Now love does not consume itself; its fire feeds upon its opposite, all that is not of love. Therefore in the measure that the child of God walks in love he will not experience that consuming fire of God's jealousy just before emphasized.

Another underlying principle is that our real relationship with God is shown in our actual intercourse with our brethren; for "he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen cannot love God whom he hath not seen . . . and whosoever loveth Him that begat [the Father] loveth him also that is begotten of Him" [his brother] (I John 4: 20; 5: 1). To walk in love to my brother is indispensable to a walk in fellowship with his and my Father Who loves us both.

2. ver. 2. *Hospitality.* Under the uncertain conditions of travel of those times and lands free hospitality was a need, a boon, and a Christian privilege. The neglect of it is recorded as a reproach on the men of Gibeah (Judges 19: 15), and on a certain village in Samaria where racial animosity smothered hospitality (Luke 9: 52, 53). By onset of darkness a traveller

might be forced "out of his way" (*ex hodon*) and be compelled to seek shelter with a friend (Luke 11: 5, 6).

The need of hospitality would be specially urgent when persecution suddenly drove Christians far and wide (Acts 8: 1), and, because the exercise of it would then involve risk, the temptation to refuse it would arise. Those addressed had hitherto resisted this temptation (6: 10; 10: 33); they are exhorted to continue their fellowship and to extend it to even strangers who may seek it.

Now to open one's home to a stranger requires no small measure of trust and grace. Hence here again the cultivating of such kindness must needs develop in the heart that love which promotes fellowship with God, and will thus preserve the soul from decline and from the perils incurred in "falling away from the living God" (3: 12).

The reason advanced for receiving strangers is noteworthy. The father of all men of faith was sitting in his tent door when three strangers came in sight (Gen. 18: 2). Abraham hastened to show them hospitality and presently learned that two of these "men" were angels and the third the Lord of angels. The Writer's exhortation must surely imply that this experience may be repeated still. One of Abraham's German children in faith, whose name I do not know, wrote lines which may be rendered as follows:

ANGELS UNAWARES (Heb. 13: 2)

Whene'er a guest draws near thy house
  Then take him warmly by the hand,
And welcome him, at morn or late,
And see if Christ before thy gate
  Doth make an angel stand.

So many all unknown have had
  An angel sent as guest by God;
But minds were blind from other things,
And as they saw no pair of wings
  They deemed him but a load.

Nay, should a guest draw near thy door,
  And though but meanly he be dressed,
Survey him closely, he may be
An angel sent of God to thee,
  And all thy house be blessed.

So comes a guest, then lay to heart
  That welcome warm he has from thee:
May grace suffuse thy countenance,
Nor rob thou him of confidence;
  He may an angel be![1]

[1] See my short collection *The King and other Verses*, p. 45, for full text.

3. ver. 3. *Espousing the cause of prisoners* for Christ's sake follows the same lines and yields the same spiritual results. It will be the test by which the Lord at His coming will determine the heart attitude of men to Himself (Matt. 25: 31–36). In the two great modern wars many servants of Christ, for conscience toward God, went to prison, or endured lesser terms of "bonds," rather than destroy their fellows. It was painful that but comparatively few of their brethren were ready to visit them or otherwise support them, while some openly repudiated them. The believers here addressed had acted more courageously and kindly (10: 33, 34). There was, however, danger that they might lose that first love. It is our danger also.

4. ver. 4. *Sexual Purity.* The exhortation passes from the heavenly family to the natural family. The marriage relationship is the origin of all human relationships. Its purity is therefore indispensable to all social well-being and decay here breeds corruption in all spheres of life. A man who will be unfaithful to his wife, or a woman to her husband, will easily be untrustworthy in all other relationships and transactions. The fornicator dishonours his own body and will be ready to dishonour every other person or obligation.

This wickedness has been universally prevalent in all times: it has lately increased most alarmingly in western lands, which is a sure sign of inescapable deterioration and ruin. The Christian is always liable to be infected by the poisoned atmosphere of the world and to sink to its moral level. Hence the solemn charge to the Thessalonian believers to "abstain from fornication" and in no wise to give way to "lust, even as the Gentiles who know not God; that no man transgress, and wrong his brother in the matter," that is, by defiling the wife of a fellow-Christian. This is enforced by the stern warning, "because the Lord is an avenger in all these things, as we forewarned you and solemnly testified" (I Thess. 4: 1–8).

This strong passage shows that it is impossible to please God and indulge an illicit passion, and that he who rejects the call to purity rejects not man, but God, and acts in defiance of the Holy Spirit. Marriage is honourable, fornication is abominable, whether it be in the married (adultery) or the unmarried.

Paul's assurance to Christians that "the Lord is an avenger" ought to press on the conscience more heavily than is often the case. He taught so fully the truth of salvation by grace that it is the more striking that he balanced this by the fact that the Lord personally acts as an Avenger, an *ekdikos*, one who carries out a legal sentence. See this word Rom. 13: 4, its one other occurrence in New Testament, where it refers to

the magistrate as the bearer of the sword of justice, that is, as inflicting capital punishment.

Now this same Apostle of grace knew well that there operates ceaselessly an angelic system of government, to which all men are amenable, and through which in part God avenges evils not otherwise to be reached and punished. Thus Israel was warned that, if the people of the land did not execute the law upon an evil-doer, God would Himself act and would set His face against that man and cut him off (Lev. 20: 4, 5). In accord with this Paul committed to Satan (the executioner-in-chief of that angelic government), for the cutting short of his bodily life, a Christian who was living in fornication and whom the church was failing to judge (I Cor. 5: 1–5). Thus also our Writer says that "fornicators and adulterers God will judge." It is indeed "a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" for "our God is a consuming fire" (10: 31; 12: 29).

Nobly and faithfully did Bishop Latimer act when to the licentious and adulterous Henry VIII he presented a Bible, wrapped in a napkin bearing the solemn sentence "fornicators and adulterers God will judge" (*Hugh Latimer*, by Demaus, p. 213).

God as the Creator has shown His abhorrence of these vices, and that He is an avenger, by attaching to them the loathsome diseases that attend promiscuous intercourse. Was it, then, anything less than a sheer mocking of God that, in the late war, chaplains to the forces, of all men, supposedly His servants among the troops, should have been required by the authorities of a certain State to instruct men how to avoid these consequences though indulging in sin habitually? Shall not God avenge such defiance of His laws? Let all His children, at least, serve Him in this matter with reverence and awe lest we too feel His holy consuming vengeance.

5. vers. 5, 6. *Covetousness or Contentment.*

The central secret of the fellowship of the Son of God with His Father has been given at 10: 7: "Lo, I am come . . . to do Thy will, O God." This is from the Septuagint. The English rendering of the Hebrew reads, "I delight to do Thy will, O my God; yea, Thy law is within my heart" (Ps. 40: 7, 8).

For Him that will of God included renouncing the infinite riches of the Creator and becoming poor (II Cor. 8: 9). Having learned from Him His secret His servant Paul could say, "Having food and covering we shall be therewith content," and he solemnly warned that those who meant to be rich (that is, to have more than these necessaries for living) "fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and hurtful

lusts, such as drown men in destruction and perdition" (I Tim. 6: 8, 9). God may sometimes permit one of His people to hold more, even much more, but the *intention* to get more is the deadly evil, for it implies discontent with the present ordering of God and becomes a root of all evils.

This discontent is the almost universal state of mind of men of the world and one of the chief causes of their miseries. The Christian is to watch carefully that *his* "turn of mind is free from the love of money." Covetousness is simply the desire to have more, how much more is not the material point. By the very fact of being covetous the heart is cursed with discontent; by being discontented it is cursed with covetousness.

The times when our Writer wrote were hard. The vast majority were perpetually poor, and Christians often had the aggravating circumstance of being deliberately robbed. These addressed had learned to take "joyfully the spoiling of their goods" (10: 34). This was because, being poor, they knew they were rich (II Cor. 6: 10). Did a highwayman take the traveller's purse and coin but leave his pocket-book and bank-notes, the robbed would not feel poor or fear for a night's lodging at the inn. Thus may the Christian when poor feel assured as to future need, for he holds the *promises of God*, Who

> "Himself hath said, I will in no wise fail thee,
> neither will I in any wise forsake thee:
> So that with good courage we say,
> The Lord is my helper; I will not fear:
> What shall man do unto me?"

What indeed! He shall do no more than God sees to be for my good. The vast promise quoted, guaranteeing the perpetual presence and unfailing provision of God, was given to a soldier for fighting the battles of the Lord (Deut. 31: 7, 8; Josh. 1: 5) and to a king for building the house of the Lord (I Chron. 28: 20). He whose whole heart and life is devoted to these two purposes can count upon the promise that, to the one who seeks first the kingdom of God and to act righteously before Him, all needful earthly things shall be added (Matt. 6: 33).

"Teach us, O God, that, if we had Thy perfect wisdom and Thy perfect love, we should order for ourselves exactly what Thou orderest for us" (A. T. Pierson).

6. *Honouring Leaders.* vers. 5 to 17. This paragraph opens and closes by references to the leaders of the church. All that lies between is thus enclosed as being one theme. This it is, for the Writer, as we shall see, passes from the matters of

individual conduct just treated to deal with the corporate life of Christians as a community.

i. ver. 7. *Guides.* The Head of the church has appointed authority therein. Guides, leaders, rulers are His gift and institution for the good order, instruction, and encouragement of His people. They are what shepherds are to the flock, going before, showing the way, gathering stragglers, protecting from foes, guiding to safe pastures and quiet waters.

The commentators take this verse as a call to remember those leaders who had died. They base this view upon the past tense "who *spake* unto you the word of God," and upon the word *ekbasis* taken in its sense of "end," close of life, implying perhaps death by martyrdom. This may be right, but the present participle "remember those guiding you" more naturally implies the guides as being alive, and is exactly parallel to ver. 3, "remember those in bonds," and to ver. 17, "Be obedient to *those ruling you,*" which all take to mean living leaders. *Ekbasis* and its verb *ekbainō* have also the sense of produce of the soil, fruit growing from the ground. The exhortation may be to contemplate the present character, course, and fruitful service of their leaders and to follow in their steps as the flock the shepherd.

But it is the faith of these guides that is to be imitated. Their callings in life or their position in the church may not be those of others, but the faith that led them to glorify God, to suffer for Christ, to serve His saints, that faith each believer needs for what may be his particular calling or service. George Müller was called to care for orphans, trusting God for their support. Not all are called to that form of service, but all are called to bring God into every step in life, to live by faith.

But whether the leaders had died or were alive such are to be remembered and honoured (I Tim. 5: 17; I Thess. 5: 12, 13; I Cor. 16: 15, 16). The house of God is *not* a democracy but a *theocracy,* a place where the Son of God rules (3: 6); it is *not* a sphere where every man has equal status and authority, but in which the Head of the house appoints each to his place and duty (Matt. 25: 14, 15; Mark 13: 34). Therefore to refuse honour to those whom the Lord has qualified to lead His people is to reject the authority of the Head of God's house.

But the two-fold test of who are true guides, raised up by the Lord, is to be noted. First, they can "speak the word of God"; they are "apt to teach" (I Tim. 3: 2), "able to exhort in the health-giving teaching" and "to convict gainsayers" (Titus 1: 9). Then also their manner of life is commendable, its issue is fruitful to the glory of God and is a safe example to others. Thus Paul could unhesitatingly call attention to his

life among Christians and before the world, and call upon others to imitate him even as he imitated the Great Shepherd, the Head of the household, Christ (I Thess. 1: 5, 6; Phil. 3: 17). It is deeply to be regretted that so many gain leadership in the churches who do not manifest these indispensable features. Their influence is hurtful, being not of the Spirit of Christ, but only natural, or even carnal, even when they are capable, energetic, and "get things done."

ii. ver. 8. *Jesus Christ.* In spite of much weakness within and fierce attacks from without that Society known as the church of God has continued through the centuries. Empires have come and gone, all human institutions prove unstable, but the church of God is indestructible.

The reason for this is the unchangeableness of Jesus Christ. He is the Rock of ages (Isa. 26: 4) upon which the house of God stands securely and defies the tempests of time. The Church of Rome says that Peter is the rock, but, great servant of Jesus Christ as Peter was, he was impulsive, needed to be rebuked by the Lord (Matt. 16: 23) and by man, for in practice he could be variable and unreliable (Gal. 2: 11–16).

But "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and to-day and unto the ages." The Son of God has passed through distinct and varied conditions and experiences. He existed originally in the form of God (Phil. 2: 6); He took the form of man (Phil. 2: 7), assuming human nature into indissoluble union with His prior divine nature; He passed into the state and realm of death; He arose and ascended to the throne of God: but throughout He himself in essential individuality was, is, and remains eternally the same person, the same *ego*, the Son of God, Jesus Christ.

iii. ver. 9. *Divergent Doctrines.* His unchangeability. This is the infallible touchstone of truth by which to test and expose error. Even in that early time of our Writer there were spreading teachings as to Jesus Christ which in various ways were diverse from this truth and foreign to it. These false ideas concerning Him have continued till to-day, indeed, have found startling modern revival.

In early centuries many *Gnostics* and *Docetists* asserted that the body of Christ was only a phantasm, an appearance, not a reality. Therefore His humanity was merely an illusion. *Christian Science* to-day includes this falsehood by regarding *all* material existence as mere illusion. Therefore its text book, *Science and Health*, denies the reality of Christ's life, sufferings, death, atonement, and bodily resurrection (see esp. chs. I and II). Thus Jesus Christ has no real existence, neither yesterday, to-day, nor for ever.

The *Gnostics* and *Arius* agreed in attributing to Jesus pre-existence, but as a created being. "Pastor" Russell, Judge Rutherford, with their followers Jehovah's Witnesses, accept this, adding that in resurrection He was elevated to "divinity" as a reward for His fidelity to God on earth. Thus He is something to-day and for ever other than what He was yesterday.

Judaism, Christadelphianism, Mohammedanism, and common *Unitarianism* deny that the One now known as Jesus existed before his birth as man. Therefore He had no "yesterday."

In the fourth century *Apollinaris* taught that the humanity of Jesus had no personal human soul or *ego,* but only an animal life and body suffused by the Divine Logos. Thus the man Christ Jesus had no "yesterday," not being a proper and distinct person.

In the last century *Swedenborg* taught a similar conception, denying the eternal existence of the Son in the Godhead, with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Approximating on this point to Mohammed, God, he said, is One, adding that this One and only Divine Person assumed human nature. Thus again the man known as Christ Jesus had no prior individual existence, no "yesterday" (*The True Christian Religion,* chs. I and II).

In *Esoteric Christianity* Mrs. Besant, President of the Theosophical Society, adopted the early heresy that Jesus was only a man born as other men, that at His baptism "the Christ" descended upon Him, energized Him until the hour of crucifixion, and then withdrew from Him. So that only a man died, and His career ended. Thus as Jesus Christ He had no "yesterday," and has no "for ever," but a merely earthly course and end.

Every modernist who asserts that Jesus had only a natural birth, and denies His personal resurrection, thereby denies that one and the same Person is unchangeable "yesterday and to-day, yea and for ever."

These examples illustrate how the Person of Christ is the standard Christian truth from which every false teaching diverges and becomes anti-Christian. We are here warned, as in Eph. 4: 14 also, not to allow such "winds of doctrine" to toss our minds to and fro and whirl us about as children in a hurricane.

Since Jesus Christ is unchangeable any teaching concerning Him which is new and strange, later than and differing from the New Testament, cannot be true.

iv. ver. 9. *An Established Heart.* This state is the opposite to the feeble child tossed about by the wind. Such a heart says: "My heart is fixed, O God, my heart is fixed: I will sing, yea, I will sing praises" (Ps. 57: 7; 108: 1). It has settled con-

victions, is stout to defend them, and strong to spread them. It is the house built upon the rock.

How shall this firmness be gained. The answer is both positive and negative. It is reached (*a*) by grace; (*b*) *not* by "meats." Here the Writer concentrates once more upon his main theme. "Meats" stand for those external, bodily, legal observances, prescribed by Moses, of which eating or not eating certain foods, or eating or not eating at certain seasons, or on certain occasions, were typical examples. Such ceremonial distinctions and restrictions of food the Lord had annulled by teachings which made "all foods clean" (Mark 7: 19). The Epistles follow to the same effect, as Rom. 14; I Cor. 6: 12, 13; ch. 8; I Tim. 4: 3.

Those Mosaic regulations had value in restraining the gluttonous eating in which the heathen indulged, and so they promoted bodily and mental health. Yet in the higher realm of the moral and spiritual life these observances could be to no profit, as our Writer points out. C. H. Spurgeon sat next to a rabbi at a dinner. When a sucking pig was served, with its savoury accompaniments, the rabbi whispered, "Moses very hard, Moses very hard." Outwardly he walked according to the law, but he broke it in his heart, and misjudged God's laws. There was no spiritual gain, but rather loss. The great preacher gave the appropriate answer: "Yes, there is a yoke upon your necks that neither ye nor your fathers were able to bear" (Acts 15: 10).

From this spiritually profitless yoke Christ sets free, replacing it by His light and restful yoke (Matt. 11: 27–30; Gal. 5: 1).

The means of this emancipation from slavery (John 8: 35, 36) is the revelation of the Father which the Son grants (as is shown in the passages cited in Matthew and John) and especially of the *grace* of the Father to sinners. For it is experience of His grace revealed in Christ that overwhelms rebellion in the heart, creates assured confidence, kindles gratitude and affection, and establishes the child in dutiful obedience to the Father.

To-day, as ever, the lack of such enjoyment of the grace of God is very wide among religious persons. There are great systems, miscalled Christian, the very basis of which is law, not grace, Moses not Christ, works not faith; in which ceremonies, penances, self-mortifications, obligatory observances of days and seasons, monetary payments, in short all that is meant by "meats," hide from the penitent the freeness, richness, vastness, entire sufficiency of what God bestows in Christ upon the principle of grace.

And now, as ever, those who adhere to such systems are

not profited in soul, but remain without assurance Godward or as to eternity; they struggle vainly for peace and power, they live and die in spiritual poverty. Indeed, the clerics who maintain these systems often deceive their adherents with the false assertion that it is pure and serious presumption to think that a sinner can have assurance of salvation prior to the day of judgment, and they order them to be more zealous concerning "meats," if so be that at last they may thereby secure the mercy of God.

v. ver. 10. *The Altar.* If one enters the church buildings of the religious systems mentioned the *first* object met is a bowl of water. Passing up through the edifice to the far end the *last* object found is an altar, and to this the clergy only may approach.

In the Tabernacle and Temple of old, which God then honoured with His presence, the arrangement was vitally different. The *first* object met, at the front gate, was the *altar*, then came the bowl of water, and afterward the building where God then dwelt. That is to say, in God's arrangement the first provision made was for atonement and pardon on the ground of the sacrifice of a substitute for the sinner. We have the clear authority of the Son of God that a repentant sinner who approached that altar with faith on the atoning sacrifice there burning, the morning or evening lamb,[1] "went down to his house justified" (Luke 18: 14). There was no question of his pardon being deferred to some distant date. He was then and there forgiven, justified. Only thereafter came the water of practical holiness, leading on to communion, worship, service in the house of God.

This symbolism, and the truth it taught, Satan skilfully corrupted in early Christian times. The water was brought to the fore and the new birth was falsely said to be effected by baptism. Then the altar was made inaccessible, save to the priest, so that the sinner should not attain to certainty of pardon, but be left dependent upon his own unavailing efforts and the good offices of the thus indispensable priest, for which latter of course he must pay, to the enrichment and power of the priests.

This displacing of the altar, with the consequent annulling of its primary purpose and benefit, marks these systems as anti-Christian. They have not even so much virtue as the ancient Mosaic system. The typology of that was at least

[1] This faith on the sacrifice is implied in his appeal, "God, be *propitiated* to me the sinner." As he was making a general confession of sinfulness, the common public sacrifice availed. Had he been confessing some particular trespass he must have brought a personal offering.

true and helpful, whereas the symbolism of these systems is false and destructive.

An altar is indispensable. There *must* be propitiation for sin. If, then, as our Writer has shown, the Mosaic ritual has been set aside by its fulfilment in Christ, where is our altar? For he says distinctly that "we have an altar," a place of sacrifice, atonement, pardon, reconciliation. Where stands this altar? To what spot must the repentant now betake himself to meet with God? Where shall he find the sacrifice and the priest?

vi. ver. 11. *Outside the Camp.* Attention is next drawn to the greatest day of the year under the Mosaic law, the day of general atonement for the whole people (Lev. 16). There were daily and frequent sacrifices for sins, but these were chiefly (*a*) individual sacrifices for personal offences; (*b*) they left unknown sins unatoned; (*c*) the blood that made atonement was taken no nearer to God than the brazen altar at the entrance gate; (*d*) they left the justified offender standing afar from God, though forgiven.

But on the great day of atonement (Lev. 16) the sacrifices were (*a*) for the whole people (vers. 5, 15, 24, 33); (*b*) for *all* their sins, unknown as well as known, during the whole year preceding (vers. 16, 21, 22, 34); (*c*) the atoning blood was taken into the holiest of all and sprinkled upon the golden mercy-seat in the immediate presence of God; (*d*) on the ground of which blood, there presented, the high priest, as representative of the whole people, was granted access to that Presence.[1]

It was true that he could not stay there, nor venture in on any other than that one day in the year, for the blood of bulls and goats could not provide perfection in communion with God; but the access granted on that day was a foreshadowing of the perfect and perpetual communion which Christ would establish for Himself and His people by the presenting of His own sacrifice to God in the heavenly tabernacle.

Now, with an acute, divinely granted insight, our Writer points out that the bodies of any beasts the blood of which was brought into the holy place were not burned on the altar at the entrance gate but were taken to a place outside the camp and consumed there. Outside the camp was a place of reproach

[1] There were other victims burned outside the camp (Lev. 4: 11, 12, 21) and their blood was sprinkled in the holy place (vv. 5, 6, 16, 17). Our Writer shows that not these but the ceremonies of the great day of atonement are in his mind for he gives a particular true of that day only, even that the high priest brought the blood into "the holy places" (plural, *ta hagia* or *hagiŏn*). This plural is, I believe, found in *Hebrews* only and it always includes the Holy of Holies (8: 2; 9: 3, 8, 12, 24, 25; 10: 19; 13: 11).

where communion with God was denied. It was the sphere of the leper (Lev. 13: 46), the blasphemer (Lev. 24: 14), the sabbath breaker (Num. 15: 35, 36). The carcasses in question bore that reproach because of having been by imputation "made sin."

This detail of the divinely appointed types, as every other detail, Christ must fulfil. "Wherefore Jesus also, that He might sanctify the people through His own blood, suffered *without the gate.*" God secretly overruled every detail of the death of His Lamb. "They led Him *away* to crucify Him" (Matt. 27: 31); away from the temple and the court of the judge "they lead Him *out* to crucify Him" (Mark 15: 20); "and He went *out* unto the place called Golgotha," out of the city itself, "for the place where Jesus was crucified was *nigh unto* the city" and therefore outside of it (John 19: 17, 20).

Thus did men unite to cast reproach upon the Holy One of God. They drove Him away from the temple, they cast Him out of the city, they gave Him the place of dishonour in the execution ground of criminals. *There* the Lamb of God offered Himself without blemish; *there* He died; *there*, not in the temple court, is our altar; *there*, not in the city, must the sinner seek Him, *there* must the believer espouse Him, *there* receive the atoning virtue of the precious blood which entitled Him to return from banishment to the Father's house and throne, and entitles Him as the Priest to bring unto God all who draw nigh through Him.

From that central hour of all the ages the temple became the centre of obsolete ceremonies. He who remains there as his place of worship, or who returns there after having for a time gone forth to Christ, must forfeit any right to eat of the true altar, the cross of Christ. He must starve his soul on the now empty forms of the temple. The worshipper at the altar saw part of his offering dedicated to God in the altar fire, part the priest took and enjoyed, part he himself ate (Lev. 7). "Behold, Israel after the flesh: have not they who eat the sacrifices communion with the altar?" (I Cor. 10: 18). Thus also at the cross of Christ, both God, the great Priest, and the worshipper have holy fellowship. But this is "outside the gate."

The temple is the centre of earthly, ritualistic, legalistic religion. This religion is in the "city," it is the religion of the world, part of its system. But God is not in the "city" or its "temple." When in Christ He came to it He was cast out into the place of the curse; all classes of the city combined to despise and reject Him: the religious leaders, priests and rabbis; the politicians and the men of law, judges, police officers, learned scribes, and the common people, all joined in thrusting

Him away. Neither the city nor the temple saw Him again; *He is not there*, and it is vain to seek Him there. It is at Calvary He must be first met; and Calvary, the place of reproach, is the only doorway into the kingdom, the house, the heart, the glory of God.

In plain language it means that he who wishes to have fellowship with God in His holy heaven must abandon every system of religion that is of law, of ceremonies, of self-effort, of human devising, of secular authority, and must accept the reproach of dependence upon, of fellowship with, of obedience to the Redeemer Who suffered "without the gate."

It can be that honest but unenlightened hearts within those systems may gain some such acquaintance with God as can truly God-fearing Jews, but it cannot be that in such twilight they see and enjoy the full sunlight of God's grace. And should one who has reached the sunlight return to the shadow he must learn by bitter experience the force of this warning by Christ: "If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, the darkness how great!" (Matt. 6: 23).

It is not a matter of leaving one religious denomination to join another company, but of abandoning a system of religion which is of the world, not of Christ, even though it assumes His name. Indeed, it involves that the heart be weaned and separated from the whole world-system of which such religion is a part.

In the time of Christ (and to-day) the city was what the camp was in Israel's early national period. It was the sphere of life, social, political, religious: it was gratifying to the senses, attractive to the natural mind, the realm of activity and prospects. But Abraham had to leave the city, Israel had to leave Egypt, the first Christians were soon driven from Jerusalem, by being crucified with Christ. Paul found his whole life outside of the world system in its entirety. Such men realize that "we have not here an abiding city, but we seek after the city which is to come" (ver. 14). The cities of the nations shall fall (Rev. 16: 19), they are all only temporary; indeed, the whole world-system at present occupying the earth is "passing away" (I John 2: 17), is transitory, disappointing. "Let us therefore go forth unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach" (ver. 13), and so inherit that which is eternal.

vii. vers. 15, 16. *Spiritual Sacrifices.* The place "outside the camp" is in itself uninviting, indeed forbidding. No one would resort there by natural choice. It requires a powerful inducement, a supreme attraction. This is provided. The call is not merely to go outside the camp, but "Let us therefore go

forth UNTO HIM." The altogether lovely One is there, the Joy of the Father, the Lover of our souls.

> Who that one moment hath the least descried Him,
> Dimly and faintly, hidden and afar,
> Doth not despise all excellence beside Him,
> Pleasures and powers that are not and that are?
> (*St. Paul*, Myers.)

And when the soul thus reaches Christ in true, deep experience, and joins the company of those who thus know Him where He now is; when there has been a fulfilment of the mighty promise: "He that hath My commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth Me: and he that loveth Me shall be loved of My Father, and I will love him, and will *manifest* Myself unto him" (John 14: 21); then the outside place becomes as Paradise, for the desert rejoices and blossoms as the rose.

And what are the occupations of those found there with Him? Do they grieve over the loss of the pleasures and prospects of the city? Nay, verily, for they share in His activities, which are two, Praise and Benevolence.

In ch. 2: 12 He has been shown as leading the praise of God in the midst of His people. He is the Chief Singer, the Precentor of the choirs, heavenly and earthly. With Him the heart overflows, bubbles up (Ps. 45: 1), and the desert resounds with songs of gladness. Though still amidst the trials of life, they have reached already in His company the fulness of the psalmist's desire,

> Then will I go unto the altar of God,
> Unto God, the gladness of my joy:
> And upon the harp I will praise Thee,
> O God, my God. (Ps. 43: 4).

These know what His greatly distressed servant meant when he wrote "as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as poor, yet making many rich" (II Cor. 6: 10).

For, in the second place, those outside WITH HIM receive of His spirit of love and faith. This cures them of fear of to-morrow, of consequent love of getting and keeping, and enables them to find their joy in giving. How contrary to the city! They do good and distribute cheerfully, out of their little they enrich many.

The care of the poor by the early Christians astonished the heathen; for there was no ulterior motive, but evident sincerity, when the persecuted were kind to their persecutors. It is a modern rationalist who wrote concerning Christ "that the

simple record of three short years of active life has done more to regenerate and soften mankind than all the disquisitions of philosophers, and than all the exhortations of moralists." (Lecky, *History of European Morals*, ii, p. 8).

And now that in some lands the State has taken in hand to be general Almoner, let the Christian watch carefully that he become not slack in generosity, but let him rather look keenly for the needy who hide their need and who may be overlooked by State officials; and let him, as opportunity offers, send his sacrifices of love farther afield, as the Philippians did to a prisoner of Christ in a distant land or when he was serving in the gospel far away (Phil 4: 10–20), or as the Christians of Greece sent to needy saints in Judea (II Cor. 8 and 9).

In any case let not the followers of the One Who is outside the world-system, having been rejected by it, hand their benevolences to that world to distribute, otherwise than by paying taxes as compelled by law. Let them distribute Christ's money under Christ's direction and in His sweet spirit; for social theorists may argue and scheme as they will, but until the kingdom of heaven has been established on earth under Christ there will always be the poor and so always opportunity for companions of Christ to distribute His bounties and share His joy of sacrifice.

For it is *sacrifice* that is well-pleasing to God, not the giving out of our superfluity (Luke 21: 1–4). And praise becomes a sacrifice when it costs us something to confess our faith in God, and giving is a sacrifice when one impoverishes himself by the gift.

These, then, are the happy occupations of such as "go forth unto Him, bearing His reproach." These shall not fear the consuming fire but shall rejoice in the Father's love.

viii. ver. 17. *Rule and Submission.* This circle of exhortations is completed by a further enforcement of the duty of submitting to the Chief Shepherd by obeying under-shepherds of His appointment. No circle of society can enjoy order and peace save by due respect for proper authority. In the "city" there flourish insubordination and consequent disorder. Christ calls for submission of heart to authority, and He enables this by giving grace to be lowly.

But again it is set forth what manner of men such must be who are to command respect and exercise rule in the house of God. They are such as

(*a*) watch in behalf of souls, as shepherds watch over the health and well-being of the sheep; and

(*b*) they serve the flock as those who must render account to the Owner.

Shepherds that love power, that feed themselves, or are hirelings serving only for pay, are sternly denounced by God (Ezek. 34; Zech. 11; John 10: 12). But woe to the flock, or the individual sheep, that obeys not the true shepherd. The honour of the shepherd and the health of the flock are linked inseparably. The Owner and Chief Shepherd shall require an account from the under-shepherds. If these must report that the sheep were refractory, wandering, and so became ill-fed and unhealthy, then in that day of reckoning this shall not be to the joy of the shepherd, but shall cause him to groan in sorrow, and it shall not be to the profit of the sheep.

Here the Writer closes his arguments and appeals, and does so by emphasizing the same themes that he has pressed throughout. Privilege and responsibility are inseparable: he who would enjoy the one must discharge the other. God in grace has both offered the privileges and will grant the strength to secure enjoyment of them. All is of grace; it is our part to see that we do not fall short of that grace.

7. vers. 18, 19. *Prayer.* Yet the Writer's mind continues to move within the sphere of Christian unity: not, however, an unity of external organization but of spiritual co-operation. He knows the place and power of prayer in the working of the kingdom of God. His appeal for their prayers indicates:

i. That he who seeks the help of God must "exercise himself always to have a conscience void of offence toward God and man" (Acts 24: 16). The word "honest" is not here used in its present narrowed sense as opposed to deceitful or fraudulent. "The adjective *kalos* seems to retain its characteristic sense of that which commands the respect and admiration of others" (Westcott). But the full force includes the thought that the heart and life will bear the scrutiny of the all-knowing God. The widow must be able to cry "Do me *justice* of my adversary" (Luke 18: 3, 5, 7, 8, marg.). For "If I regard iniquity in my heart, the Lord will not hear me" (Ps. 66: 18), but "the prayer of the upright is His delight" (Prov. 15: 8).

ii. That prayer has influence over circumstances, including such as one may not be able otherwise to overcome. Elijah controlling the weather is a chief instance (Jas. 5: 16–18). The Writer was under some restraint which hindered him from being with those to whom he was writing. What those circumstances were they may have known, though we do not. It is to our advantage not to know, for so we may extend the lesson, and our prayers, to other than his particular conditions. Paul as a prisoner was in such circumstances when he wrote to Philemon and asked for his prayers (Philem. 22), but this is

not ground enough to infer that Paul was our Writer, for many others were prisoners for Christ: or our Writer's hindrance may have been from quite other conditions, such as sickness. Whatever were the circumstances the encouragement remains that united prayer can prevail over them.

iii. Intensity of spirit is a factor in effectual prayer. "I *beseech* you . . . I beseech you *the more exceedingly*." "The *supplication* of a righteous man has much prevailing strength in its working." Elijah "prayed with prayer," that is, fervently, without abating till the answer was granted (Jas. 5: 16, 17. See my papers "*Praying is Working* and *Prayer Focused and Fighting*).

8. vers. 20, 21. *The Benediction.* He who seeks the prayers of others will pray for others.

i. The Writer turns to God as "the God of peace"—the God in Whom there are no conflicting passions (as the heathen attributed to their gods); Who feels no distraction or fear, for His almightiness is sure of being equal to every occasion; and Who is therefore a God of order and peace (I Cor. 14: 33). He is the God Who, through the blood of His Son, made possible a righteous peace between Himself and rebels, and thereby causes men estranged from one another to live in peace. And He is the God Who diffuses the peace of His own heart in the hearts of those who trust His almighty power and love, so that they are kept in peace under all adversities and uncertainties (Isa. 26: 3; Phil. 4: 4–7).

Thus does this God of peace become the resource of the believer in every need, the refuge where his heart dwells in quietness even when storms devastate his outward affairs. How hopeful, how useful, how practical to have access to Him and to seek His grace for others. There is no other way so surely to help them.

ii. ver. 20. The power of this mighty God extends over the dread realm of death. The chief proof of this is, that the One Who went into death laden with a far heavier load of guilt than any other who has ever gone thither (for He bore the sin of the world, whereas each other bears only his own sin), and over Whom death might therefore have claimed a firmer and lasting grip, this One, the Redeemer, God nevertheless brought up out of that realm. Christ was "raised from the dead through the glory of the Father" (Rom. 6: 4), "because it was not possible that He should be held by it" (Acts 2: 24), seeing that He had cancelled its full claim against sin by discharging its full penalty.

In Eph. 1: 19, 20 this cancelling of the claim and power of death is described as "that working of the strength of His

[God's] might which He wrought in Christ [Messiah] when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenly places" in supremacy over the universe. This highest, all-dominating example of the power of God exhibits "the exceeding greatness of His power *to us-ward who believe.*"

This is the thought that our Writer here connects with the resurrection of Christ. It is as "the great Shepherd of the sheep" that He has been taken out of death into the glory of heaven, and in this He is the Forerunner of His believing people (ch. 6: 20), even as the Eastern shepherd goes before his sheep. Thus it comes to pass that we are associated with Him *as raised from the dead.* It is in the world of resurrection that the believer is joined to the Lord. It was with Moses as the one who had led them through the Red Sea that Israel were linked as a flock with a shepherd (Isa. 63: 11, 12; I Cor. 10: 1, 2). Thereby he and they were effectually cut off from Egypt, even as they to-day who follow Christ are made dead to sin and the world by association with "Him Who for their sakes died and rose again" (II Cor. 5: 15; Rom. 6: 1–14; Gal. 6: 14).

When the Lord lived on this earth it was as a shepherd who would have to die to secure the eternal welfare of His sheep (John 10: 1–18). Association with Him then and thus was indeed a privilege: but they are but little in the good of present truth and privilege who sing "I wish I had been with Him then."

Nor is any real service done to children by teaching them so to sing. We *cannot* now be connected by the Spirit with Jesus *as a man on earth,* because He is not such, but is the Man in heaven, the great Shepherd raised out of death. "Even though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet *now* we know Him so no longer" (II Cor. 5: 16).

But they who go forth unto Him outside the camp, those in whom His death and resurrection are made operative through faith, by the Spirit, find that the great Shepherd leads them unto fountains of water of life which rise at the throne of God and make heaven itself the fruitful realm of peace and joy.

> Sumptuous the banquet spread by Love divine;
> Melchizedek brings heavenly bread and wine;
> The Prince of peace with stately grace attends
> To serve His faithful servants as His friends.

Since the Shepherd is raised and seated in heavenly places, that is the place of His people (Eph. 2: 5, 6), as they get to know who follow Him whithersoever He goeth (Rev. 14: 4).

iii. ver. 20. This position and portion are guaranteed to faith, for they are secured by covenant, that eternal covenant before reviewed (ch. 9), the ratification of which was by the precious blood of Christ.

iv. ver. 21. This covenant is eternal, because Christ and His blood are of eternal, undiminishable virtue.

v. ver. 20. And this covenant is "ours," for we have associated ourselves with Him to be His sheep, we have set our seal to this, that God is true (John 3: 33). It is for us to persevere to the end in His steps; for there are three chief and indispensable marks of His sheep: they listen to His voice, they are recognized by Him as being His sheep, and they follow His steps as their Shepherd (John 10: 27).

vi. ver. 20. And therefore this Shepherd is to them their *Lord*, whose call, guidance, wishes, words are of unquestioned authority. But this their divine Lord is also JESUS, the Man of human nature, experience, sympathy, as shown at ch. 4: 14, 15; 5: 2, 7–10.

vii. ver. 21. His people are as yet sadly imperfect, sometimes as unhealthy sheep. But the God of peace has taken them in hand with a view to making them perfect. Many are afraid of this word, as if it denoted somewhat of which they are in danger, and they remain very imperfect. Some misuse it to teach that the very root of sin in our human nature can be eradicated in this life and leave no trace in heart or conduct. This idea has nothing to do with this particular word nor is it anywhere taught in Scripture.

The meaning of *katartizō* is that an article is accurately and completely adapted to its intended use. Fishermen were "*mending* their nets," so that these might catch and hold the fish (Matt. 4: 21; Mark 1: 19). Compare Gal 6: 1: "*restore* such an one," so that he shall be again adapted to serving God. Or take the usage in our Epistle. 10: 5: The holy body of Jesus was specially *prepared*, fitted for His life and service on earth. 11: 3: The ages and worlds were *framed*, perfectly adjusted together, as are the parts of a complex machine to produce a finished article. "Comp. I Pet. 5: 10. The word *katartizein*, *to make perfect*, includes the thoughts of the harmonious combination of different powers (comp. Eph. 4: 12 *katartismos*, II Cor. 13: 9 *katartisis*), of the supply of that which is defective (I Thess. 3: 10), and of the amendment of that which is faulty (Gal. 6: 1; comp. Mark 1: 19)" (Westcott).

Thus is God dealing with "broken earthenware," human beings ruined by sin. He is remedying broken parts, and supplying new parts and faculties, so that we may be able and glad to do "good works" (as contrasted with our former "dead works," 9: 14), works, that is, good according to His

own standard. It is Paul, the apostle of grace, who urges "that they that have believed God" must be careful to maintain good works, be "zealous of good works" (Titus 3: 8; 2: 14).

viii. ver. 21. The standard of these good works is the will of God. This His will we learn from His Word, by His Spirit. The one truly perfect Servant God has yet had on earth said, "Nevertheless, not My will, but Thine be done" (Luke 22: 42). The Son learned the Father's will from the Father's Book and by the leadings of His Father's Spirit. It was a principle of His life that the Scripture must be fulfilled, no matter the cost.

ix. ver. 21. This willingness of spirit, and this conduct "which is well-pleasing in His sight," God works in the heart that is utterly devoted to Him. Here enters the gracious activity of the Spirit of God.

> "And every virtue we possess,
> And every victory won,
> And every thought of holiness,
> Are His alone."

It is He Who teaches us what is well-pleasing to God, removing our perverted ideas; He it is Who enables the soul to delight in God's will and to do or to suffer it cheerfully. Of ourselves we could neither know nor do that will of God; but when the soul has ceased from its own notions and endeavours, God works in us and adjusts and empowers effectually.

"And each deed is at once the deed of man and the deed of God (*poiēsai, poiōn*). The work of God makes men's work possible: He Himself does (*autos poiōn*), as the one source of all good, that which in another sense man does as freely accepting His grace. And all is wrought in man 'through Jesus Christ' (Comp. Acts 3: 16)" (Westcott).

x. ver. 21. And all is "well-pleasing to God through Jesus Christ," forasmuch as, in this yet incomplete stage of our development as children of God, there is nothing absolutely fit for God save as it becomes acceptable by the mediation of our great Priest and the association with it of His merits, as incense and frankincense suffusing all with sweetness (Lev. 16: 12; 2: 2). And when we shall at last have been brought unto perfection we shall still be acceptable through Jesus Christ, for then there shall be in us nothing that is not of Him, and He shall be all in all.

xi. ver. 21. Thus is served already in measure the end that once governed the universe, and shall yet govern it, that unto God shall "be the glory unto the ages of the ages," even for ever and ever. The essence of sin is that it deprives God of due glory and sets up a creature to receive glory. This is

that "vainglory of life" (I John 2: 16) which in reality makes the creature wholly inglorious. This dishonourable condition God is rectifying through Jesus Christ. None but God can effect this. Therefore to Him belongs all glory both as Creator, Redeemer, and Restorer. It is for each to watch narrowly his own acts, to scrutinize closely his inner motives, so as to exclude self-glory and to render all glory to God Whose exclusive right it is.

9. ver. 22. *Exhortation.* The Writer here indicates the character of the whole Letter: it is *exhortation.* It is designed to stir up to ceaseless watchfulness against backsliding and the rather to press on after Christ unto the goal of Christian hope.

His words were few having regard to the vastness of the theme. It may be doubted whether the infinite topics which the New Testament writers handle could be treated so concisely, yet so comprehensively and lucidly, by merely human skill. Even as literature they bear the hall-mark of Divine ability. This is abundant reason for accepting, pondering, obeying their instructions and exhortations.

10. ver. 23. *Timothy.* i. The Writer knew Timothy. ii. He knew that Timothy had been a prisoner. iii. He knew that he was now free. iv. It was possible that Timothy would reach him shortly. v. In that case they would together visit the believers addressed.

These particulars are used by some to maintain that Paul was our Writer. This is plausible and possible but insufficient. For Timothy worked sometimes without Paul (I Tim. 1: 3), sometimes with others besides Paul (Acts 20: 4), for a time with Silas alone (Acts 17: 14). The supposition that no one else than Paul could fulfil the above particulars is untenable and so the argument is inconclusive.

As far as the records show Timothy was never in Palestine, which throws doubt upon the notion that the Epistle was written to believers there. It is more likely that they lived somewhere in the regions where Timothy travelled and was well-known.

The brief reference indicates (1) the troubles that preachers met in that period; (2) the brotherly regard the Writer had for Timothy; (3) the concern which he knew the believers addressed would have for Timothy; (4) his own welcome of Timothy as a companion in service. Evidently Timothy had "won his spurs."

11. ver. 24. *Salutations.* There is a courtesy which becomes a Christian. It saves from abruptness of manner.

The Writer first honours pointedly those set over the church by the Head of the church. "Salute all them that have the rule over you," those guiding you. This is the third mention of the leaders (vers. 7, 17). It is important to note that in this community of Christians there were several overseers—"all them." It is ever so; see Acts 14: 23; I Cor. 16: 15, 16; Phil. 1: 1; I Thess. 5: 12–14; Titus 1: 5. The rule of a church by a single leader has no New Testament warrant. The "angel" in the churches in Rev. 2 and 3 was an *angel*, a heavenly being, as in the sixty-seven other places where the word comes in that book.

The church was to salute its leaders for the Writer. So the Letter was not addressed to the leaders, let alone to any one of them as pre-eminent, but to the community. Thus were the leaders not elevated to an undue superiority above the church as being the addressees of the Letter and officially distinct from the rest of the saints, and yet the latter were to show due respect to the leaders as marked out for particular salutation.

He then greets "all the saints." Brotherly love is comprehensive and is warm towards all children of God.

"They of Italy salute you." He is in fellowship with brethren where he is writing. Either he was in Italy or some from that land were with him. It is obvious that Paul was not the only person of whom these conditions could be true.

12. ver. 25. *Conclusion.* "Grace be with you all. Amen." A noble conclusion, concentrating in its brevity the whole Letter. That divine, infinite grace of God which has given His Son, and in Him all possible benefits, be with you; accepted by faith, producing responsive gratitude and obedience, teaching you to be gracious to one another, supplying to faith all that will ever be required to bring you to that glory to which God is conducting His sons (2: 10)—that grace be with you, and with you *all*, for the grace of God is free to all who will receive it. AMEN. So be it. It shall be so!

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