THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS - VOL 1-2

by Adolph Saphir

Saphir's comprehensive two-volume commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, providing verse-by-verse analysis from Hebrews 1:1 through 13:25, exploring Christ's superiority, the high priesthood, faith, and the major theological themes of the epistle.

43 Chapters

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00.4 - Introduction to American Edition

INTRODUCTION TO AMERICAN EDITION To produce a satisfactory exposition of one of the most wonderful books of the New Testament, the Epistle to the Hebrews, is no small task. More than any other Epistle this Epistle goes to the Old Testament Scriptures, the Levitical institutions, historical events, and to the Psalms, and shows from all not only the fulfillment of types, sacrifices, prophecies, but proves throughout the completeness, perfection and glory of the New Covenant. It is the Epistle of Perfection, and the Perfection which it unfolds is Jesus Christ entered into the Holy of Holies, a Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Ephesians makes known to the heart the heavenly possessions which are ours in Christ Jesus, and Hebrews bids us to enter into the Holiest of all and worship there. The Epistle looks back to the blood which was shed, and shows all accomplished through it. However, it does not linger there, but its chief aim is the place in the Highest Heavens, where He lives ■ Jesus Christ the same yesterday, to-day and forever. Nor is this all. That Christ is coming again is a well known doctrine of the Word of God, and the Epistle to the Hebrews unfolds this precious Hope as many of the others do. The first and second chapters make it so clear that only one, who willfully turns away from the light does not see it. The first begotten is to be brought in again into the habitable earth (Hebrews 1:6). The second chapter shows Him as Son of Man from the eighth Psalm, and that all things are yet to be put under His feet. Later in the Epistle we find the statement that He who was offered once, He who appears now in the presence of God for us, is to come the second time, without sin, to them that wait for Him. The exhortation in the tenth chapter (Hebrews 10:22-25) has for its basis the approaching of the day, and the comfort for the tried and persecuted Hebrew Christians is in the same chapter: "For yet a little while and He that shall come will come and will not tarry." The man who goes into this Epistle, this inexhaustible mine of God’s revelation, to make known its unsearchable riches, must therefore be well furnished. He must have full grasp of the entire Old Testament Scriptures, especially the Levitical institutions. He must have heart knowledge of the Person and the Work of our Lord Jesus Christ, His work for us on the cross, His work for us in the Holy of Holies, and His future Glory. Without the knowledge of the latter the Melchizedek Priesthood of Christ (still future in its exercise), a Priest upon His throne, can hardly be understood. Nor is this all. The Epistle was written primarily to Hebrew Christians, who were peculiarly situated, surrounded still by the shadows of a dispensation past and gone. It is almost impossible to understand certain parts of the Epistle, except the conditions and circumstances of these Hebrew Christians are understood and taken into consideration. It is here where many expositors have failed. This is especially the case with the 6th and 10th chapters. Arminianism has built much of its unscriptural theory of falling from Grace upon the well known statements contained in these chapters. Many others are kept from a real enjoyment of the assurance of salvation by a misapplication of the exhortations contained in these two chapters. A correct understanding of the primary meaning makes these passages clear. And now the man, who under God was fitted to unfold this Epistle and write a solid scriptural and spiritual exposition of it, we do not hesitate to say is Adolph Saphir.

Adolph Saphir, whose voice is no longer heard in the earth, was a Hebrew by birth. Brought up in an orthodox family, he had from childhood a good knowledge of the oracles of God committed to the Jews (Romans 3:3). When quite young he was saved by Grace and the dead letter became spirit and life in him. He soon developed through the Grace of God, into the man as he has often been described, "a man mighty in the Scriptures." His "Christ and the Scriptures" and "the Divine Unity of the Scriptures" are unanswerable arguments for the verbal inspiration of the Word of God. As a Hebrew Christian he had a grasp of Scripture, and of God's purposes such as few Gentile minds acquire. His exposition of Hebrews is a masterpiece in which all the wonderful knowledge of the Scriptures given to him by the Head in Glory is brought out. It is a joy to read this book. It has a freshness about it which refreshes. It is simple, clear, its language not only interesting, but eloquent. The exposition was delivered in form of lectures in England during 1872 and 1873. Large crowds of all denominations, Episcopalians, Congregationalists, Methodists, Baptists, and others attended them, and wonderful blessing came through the lectures, which were shortly after issued in book form. The English edition in one volume being exhausted it has been made possible to issue from the plates, imported into this country, a new edition in two volumes, and we shall not be at all surprised if the value and beauty of this exposition is once discovered, that other editions will become necessary. We bespeak a large sale for, and great blessing in the edification of the body of Christ through this work.

We like to call the attention of the reader to the introductory remarks. These ought to be carefully studied and read a number of times, for these remarks will greatly help in the understanding of the entire Epistle In these remarks he gives a short sketch of the Epistle and dwells especially on the Jewish Christians and their situation in Jerusalem. We do not think another man has grasped so forcefully the circumstances in which these Hebrew Christians were when the Epistle was written by the Holy Spirit. He clearly shows them in their national relation, loving and hopeful, with an apostate Judaism fast ripening for its complete overthrow. They were still going to the ceremonial worship and upholding Levitical institutions. It was a transition period in which they lived. It was difficult to realize for them the new age of the church and all it meant. Thus we read in these introductory remarks: "Surrounded by temptations of a peculiarly sifting character, tested by persecution and reproach most fitted to shake their faith and loyalty to the Messiah, rejected by the nation, the apostle speaks to them, in language of intense and piercing earnestness, of the fearful danger of apostasy, and points out to them that it was a mark of the true Israel, and a necessary sign of the follower of Jesus, to be despised and persecuted ■ that the proper position of the God-chosen saint, of the believer, was outside the camp, bearing reproach, enduring the cross, and despising the shame." We put the above words in italics because it seems to us they are heading up all the exhortations contained in the Epistle. After all the doctrinal statements and proofs of the greater glory of the New Covenant and the passing of the old dispensation of shadow things, the Holy Spirit exhorts to go out of the camp, to have done with earthly tabernacles and earthly ceremonies. We call attention to this because of late both in Europe and America the teaching has been given, that a believing Hebrew should even now, not sever his connection with his nation and still continue with the Law of Moses and practice certain ceremonies, as well as keep the seventh day. That such a position and teaching is altogether unscriptural and untenable needs hardly to be demonstrated here. The transition period is past long ago, the new age has come and is drawing to its close, but as long as it lasts and the church is being gathered out, it is no longer "to the Jew first," nor is there a distinction between Jew and Gentile in the body of Christ.

The church complete and caught up to meet her Lord in the air, there will be once more a Jewish-believing remnant in the earth, which remnant is not a part of the one body, and that remnant, like the Hebrews in the transition period before the destruction of Jerusalem, will cling to the national Hope and they will not be disappointed. The believing Jew in Christ has no national Hope. His Hope is the blessed Hope of a coming Christ for His own.

Adolph Saphir brings this out very strongly in his exposition. Nor does he confine himself to the Jewish phase, but he is very pronounced against Judaistic Christendom. One of the finest and strongest passages in this exposition is the following: "Before the coming of Jesus the shadows symbolized truth to believing worshippers. After the coming of Jesus it must fade and vanish before the substance. If this is true of the Levitical priesthood, which was of divine appointment, how much more fearful is the assumption of any priestly title, position and function during the new dispensation. All Christians are priests. To imitate a revival of that which God Himself has set aside by a fulfillment, perfect and glorious, is audacious, and full of peril to the souls of men. It is not even the shadow of a substance, but the unauthorized shadow of a departed shade."

There are a few interpretations, touching, however, none of the essential doctrines of the Bible, from which some of our readers may differ; to enter into some of these in a short preface would hardly be advisable. We fully believe, and know others share this belief with us, that Saphir on Hebrews is the best work on this Epistle in print.

Again and again in reading through the book the thought came to us how it is possible for other Hebrews to read such a sublime exposition of their Scriptures by one of their own and to remain indifferent. We hope and pray that through this new edition not only the body of Christ may be edified, but that some Hebrews may find Him of whom Moses and the Prophets speak. May the blessing of our Lord rest upon it all.

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Chapter 2

00.5 - Introductory Remarks

INTRODUCTORY REMARKS THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS

********** INTRODUCTORY REMARKS

COMMENCING in the style of a doctrinal treatise, but constantly interrupted by fervent and affectionate admonitions, warnings, and encouragements, this grand and massive book concludes in the epistolary form, and in the last chapter the inspired author thus characterizes his work: "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation; for I have written a letter unto you in few words."

We are attracted and riveted by the majestic and sabbatic style of this epistle. Nowhere in the New Testament writings do we meet language of such euphony and rhythm. A peculiar solemnity and anticipation of eternity breathe in these pages. The glow and flow of language, the stateliness and fullness of diction, are but an external manifestation of the marvelous depth and glory of spiritual truth, into which the apostolic author is eager to lead his brethren. The epistle reminds us in this respect of the latter portion of the prophet Isaiah,* in which, out of the abundance of an enraptured heart, flows such a mighty and beautiful stream of consoling revelations. In both Scriptures we behold the glory which dwelleth in Immanuel’s land; we breathe the Sabbatic air of Messiah’s perfect peace. Both possess the same massiveness; both describe things which are real and substantial, the beauty and strength of which is eternal; in both is the same intensity of love, and the same comprehensiveness of vision. (*Isaiah 40-66. Remark of Delitzsch.) The central idea of the epistle is the glory of the New Covenant, contrasted with and excelling the glory of the old dispensation; and while this idea is developed in a systematic manner, yet the aim of the writer throughout is eminently and directly practical. Everywhere his object is exhortation. He never loses sight of the dangers and wants of his brethren. The application to conscience and life is never forgotten. It is rather a sermon than an exposition. Thus he himself describes the aim of his letter, and thus the Apostle Peter, writing to the same Hebrew Christians, refers to our book when he says, "And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you."*(*2 Peter 3:15.) In all his argument, in every doctrine, in every illustration, the central aim of the epistle is kept ■ prominent the exhortation to steadfastness. Surrounded by temptations of a peculiarly sifting character, tested by persecution and reproach most fitted to shake their faith and their loyalty to the Messiah, rejected by the nation, the apostle speaks to them, in language of intense and piercing earnestness, of the fearful danger of apostacy, and points out to them that it was a mark of the true Israel, and a necessary sign of the follower of Jesus, to be despised and persecuted, ■ that the proper position of the God-chosen saint, of the believer, was outside the camp, bearing reproach, enduring the cross, and despising the shame. Representing to them the awful danger of drawing back, and the glory and blessedness of the cross, he entreats them, by the whole spirit of their history, and all the mercies of Jehovah, which in Jesus find their perfect manifestation and eternal fulfillment, to hold fast the beginning of their confidence unto the end, and to continue steadfast in

the faith, and wait for the joy set before them.

It is worthy of notice and thought, that when the Hebrews were in such a dangerous condition of mind, when the apostle was afraid of their yielding to the strong temptations and persecutions of the temple, so that he felt it necessary to remind them that if after being enlightened they fell away, it was impossible for them to be renewed, that the method, which he adopts in his epistle, is to enter into the depth of Christian truth, to unfold before them all the glory of the eternal High Priest and the heavenly sanctuary, to leave behind the elementary doctrine, and to launch forth into the deep ocean of New Testament mysteries.1 Thus it appeared to apostolic wisdom, that lukewarm, languid, and tempted Christians are to be roused, strengthened, and revived. The milk of simple gospel truth was not sufficient. It was necessary to declare unto them the whole counsel of God. As in the epistle which the exalted Saviour sends unto the church of Laodicea, there is the most glorious description of the person of Jesus, and of His overflowing and tender love, as in all His seven epistles2 the self-revelation of Jesus is the basis and source of exhortation, thus in every age of the Church the renewal of strength, the rekindling of love, the deliverance from languor and inertness, bordering on death and destruction, can only proceed from a fuller and deeper knowledge of the Lord and His truth, from a renewed beholding of His countenance and of His glory. When the love of the majority shall wax cold, when iniquity shall abound, and the last struggle prepare, then let the church go on unto perfection, and behold with open face the glory of Christ; and, gazing on His brightness, she will be strong and courageous, and remain steadfast unto the end. (1The apostle leads us also into the depths of Christ's humiliation. Nowhere in Scripture is the humanity of Christ so fully revealed; nowhere are we so fully taught the sufferings through which the Son was made perfect, and the experiences of His earthly life, on which His sympathy with us is based.

2Rev. 2 and 3) The circumstances, in which the Hebrew believers were, at the time when this epistle was written to them, claim our attentive consideration. Perhaps Scripture is sometimes obscure to us, because we neglect the ordinary rules which are observed in the reading of uninspired books. We forget the human and historical element. We do not read consecutively and with the expectation, as well as the aim, to understand the scope and import of a whole book. And eager to arrive immediately at what we consider a practical application to our own circumstances, we do not sufficiently consider the primary meaning and bearing of the inspired Word. The condition of the Hebrew Christians in the period of apostolic history, of which we now speak, is peculiarly difficult for Gentile believers in the present day to realize. As it was difficult for the believing Jews to realize during the transition period the new approaching age of the Church, of a body in which Jew and Gentile are united, which while different from and a contrast to the Theocracy (and yet filled with the same Spirit and glorifying the same Messiah), was to manifest its life and power apart from the law of Moses and the Jewish economy, so it is difficult for us now to think of the apostles Peter and John, and of thousands of Jews, observing the law of Moses, worshipping in the temple, and in every respect identifying themselves with the nation and her hope.

Jesus had, through suffering and death, entered into glory. Rejected by His people, He was exalted according to the promise to the right hand of God. He sent His apostles to Israel. They preached the death, resurrection, and exaltation of Jesus, and His second coming to judgment, and to establish His kingdom. They declared the gospel unto the nation, exhorting and beseeching

them to turn to Jesus, who was sent first to them to bless them, by turning everyone from their iniquities. Between the cross and the glory, when the Messiah would fulfill the promises unto the fathers, the apostles stood and testified to Israel. Their aim, their hearts' desire, their constant appeal, was Israel's national repentance and faith in Jesus. Thus was it becoming, and in accordance with the whole dealings of God. Thus the Saviour Himself came to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, as the minister of the circumcision. Thus in the marvelous love of God another opportunity was given to Jerusalem, even after her rejection of the divine Lord. And only when the Jews rejected the counsel of God, the apostles turned unto the Gentiles. Nor was it without difficulty that they entered into the full understanding of the divine counsel, according to which for a season Israel as a nation is left to itself, and the church, in which there is neither Jew nor Greek, receives the testimony and the blessing of God.*(*Acts 3:26; Acts 27:25, etc.;Romans 15:8; Eph. 3)

While the apostles were thus as Jews preaching Jesus to the nation, many believed in the crucified Messiah. We read that when the apostle Paul and his companions came to Jerusalem, James, who was a pillar of the church, and all the elders received them, and said unto him, "Thou seest, brother, how many thousands (μυριαδες, ten thousands) of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law: and they are informed of thee, that thou teachest all the Jews which are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses." It is evident that those believing Jews observed the statutes and ordinances of the law with great zeal and earnestness. They went daily into the temple; they appeared to the ordinary Jews as most diligent and scrupulous in their obedience to the precepts of Moses. And this observance of the law did not conflict with their exclusive and explicit trust in Jesus as their Saviour. David and all the godly Israelites were saved by faith, and knew the grace of God, and righteousness without works, though it was God's will that unto them the law should be the rule and form of life.*(*Acts 21:20;Acts 2:46;Romans 4:6.) Nor must we be astonished, that even to these believing Jews it was difficult to receive such glimpses into the then future church dispensation as were given by the proto-martyr Stephen in his teaching about the temple, and the approaching crisis in Jewish history. After the death of Stephen, and the bitter persecution which then broke forth against the believing Jews, a lull seems to have succeeded. James, the brother of our Lord, according to tradition, revered by all the Jews as a just and devout man, Peter and John were pillars of the church at Jerusalem. Rejoicing in the work among the Gentiles, and acknowledging their freedom from the law of Moses, the apostles of the circumcision saw no reason and no right to alter the customs and observances of the Jewish believers. And the apostle Paul followed their suggestions, and showed to the Jews, both believers and unbelievers, his reverence for the law. That same apostle who, when the liberty of the Gentile Christians was concerned, and the truth of the gospel doctrine was endangered, withstood the apostle Peter, observes the law when he is among Jews; for herein he does not lose his liberty, but uses it. He became a Jew unto the Jews, as under the law, to them that were under the law; at all times and everywhere living in the love and liberty of the Son of God.*(*Acts 15;Galatians 2:14;1 Corinthians 9:20-22.)

Then arose another persecution of the believers, especially directed against the apostle Paul. Festus died about the year 63, and under the high priest Ananias, who favoured the Sadducees, the Christian Hebrews were persecuted as transgressors of the law. Some of them were stoned to death; and though this extreme punishment could not be frequently inflicted by the Sanhedrim,

they were able to subject their brethren to sufferings and reproaches which were felt most keenly. It was a small thing that they confiscated their goods; but they banished them from the holy places. Hitherto they had enjoyed the privileges of devout Israelites; they could take part in the beautiful and God-appointed services of the sanctuary; but now they were treated as unclean and apostates. Unless they gave up faith in Jesus, and forsook the assembling of themselves together, they were not allowed to enter the temple; they were banished from the altar, the sacrifice, the high priest, the house of Jehovah.

We can scarcely realize the piercing sword which thus wounded their inmost heart. That by clinging to the Messiah they were to be severed from Messiah's people was indeed a great and perplexing trial; that for the hope of Israel's glory they were banished from the place which God had chosen, and where the divine Presence was revealed, and the symbols and ordinances of His grace had been the joy and strength of their fathers; that they were to be no longer children of the covenant and of the house, but worse than Gentiles, excluded from the outer court, cut off from the commonwealth of Israel, ■ this was indeed a sore and mysterious trial. Cleaving to the promises made unto their fathers, cherishing the hope in constant prayer that their nation would yet accept the Messiah, it was the severest test to which their faith could be put, when their loyalty to Jesus involved separation from all the sacred rights and privileges of Jerusalem. The apostolic writer of the epistle enters fully and lovingly into their difficulties, and comforts them in his exhortation (παρακλησις) [<G3874>] by showing them the unspeakably greater glory of the new covenant, in which they now stood by faith in the Saviour. Hence the subjects spoken of here are the priesthood, the sacrifice, the altar, the holy of holies. It is not, as in the epistles to the Galatians and Colossians, a question about circumcision, about things which are not lawful to eat, about ordinances ■ "Touch not, taste not, handle not." The Sanhedrim did not, and could not, interfere with their domestic and private religious life: it is the question of their Jewish citizenship - of their connection with the temple and its services - of their relation to the beloved city, and the chosen nation. In order to establish and comfort them in this temptation, the apostle unfolds the glory of the new covenant; reminding them both of the unity and connection, and the contrast which subsists between the two dispensations.

He tells them that they are the true Israel, listening to the same God who spake of old by the prophets to the fathers, who had sent the perfect and ultimate revelation of Himself in His Son, who is Lord above all. Children of the law, which was given by the administration of angels, they were now reconciled and ruled over by the royal High Priest, whom the Father hath exalted above all principalities and powers. The disciples of Moses, who was faithful as a servant in all God's house, they were now partakers of Him who is the Lord and Master of the house, the Son, who abideth for ever. Brought into the promised land by Joshua, they had now, through faith, entered into rest, of which their history was but the shadow and imperfect type. And while the priesthood of Aaron was precious, as a picture and pattern of atonement and sympathy, Jesus was the true High Priest, who offered a perfect sacrifice, whose intercession is all-prevailing, whose compassionate love is boundless, and whose power and glory are the substantial and infinite fulfillment of the prophecy of Melchisedec. The tabernacle, with its symbols and services, was indeed glorious; but how much more glorious is the heavenly sanctuary, into which Christ has entered! and how much greater is the perfection, nearness, and liberty of worship, which He gives unto all His believers!

"We have," the apostle says so frequently, because the Hebrews imagined that they had lost treasures and blessings. Though deprived of the temple, with its priesthood, and altar, and sacrifice, the apostle reminds them, "We have" the real and substantial temple, the great High Priest, the true altar, the one sacrifice, and with it all offerings, the true access into the very presence of the Most High. And having thus reminded them that the glory which pertaineth unto Israel (Romans 9:4) was truly and fully theirs, he exhorts them to steadfastness, and encourages them by their whole past history, throughout which for thousands of years the one golden thread of faith and the scarlet thread of reproach and suffering marked the presence of Jehovah. Nay, from the beginning of the world the true people of God were despised and persecuted. Righteous Abel believed the sacrifice, and became a sacrifice. Enoch testified to an ungodly generation. Noah was the only one who saved himself and his household. Abraham and all the patriarchs were strangers and pilgrims; they had to leave their home and kindred; they had to sacrifice what was dearest; Moses had to suffer the reproach of Christ; all your ancestors and prophets lived and suffered in faith, waiting for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. And He who is the crown of Israel, as well as Israel's Lord, Jesus, the root and offspring of David, in whom all Israel's history culminates, the glory of the temple, the Lord of the Sabbath, the messenger of the covenant; Jesus the Lord Himself was rejected by His people, and as a malefactor, as one unworthy to live in the beloved city, He was cast outside the camp, and there He was crucified and nailed to the accursed tree. If you are the true children of Abraham, if you are the true disciples of Jesus, do not wonder that your place is also outside the camp; that you also are called to endure the cross and to despise the shame. Yet yours is even now the substance, and yours will be hereafter the joy.

Hence in this epistle the peculiarly large and full meaning of the word faith. Throughout Scripture faith means more than trust in Jesus for personal safety. This is the central point, but we must take care that we understand it in a true and deep manner. Faith, as the apostle explains in the epistle to the Corinthians, is looking at the things which are not seen and temporal; it is preferring spiritual and eternal realities to the things of time, sense, and sin; it is leaning on God and realizing His word; it is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

Thus every doctrine and illustration of this epistle goes straight to the heart and conscience, appeals to life, addresses itself to faith. It is one continued and sustained fervent and intense appeal to cleave to Jesus, the High Priest; to the substantial, true, and real worship; a most urgent and loving exhortation to be steadfast, patient, hopeful, in the presence of God, in the love and sympathy of the Lord Jesus, in the fellowship of the great cloud of witnesses.

Whoever is the author of this epistle, its value and authority remain the same. "We may compare it to a painting of perfect beauty, which had been regarded as a work of Raphael. If it should be proved that it was not painted by Raphael, we have thereby not lost a classical piece of art, but gained another master of first rank."* But let us see how far the supposition of the Pauline authorship meets the circumstances. (*Thiersch.) The apostle Paul, according to his own testimony, which is abundantly borne out by his life and sufferings, cherished an affection for his brethren which finds its equal only in the devotion of Moses, and was surpassed only by the Lord, from whom all love descends into human hearts. Though he rejoiced in the calling and faith of the Gentiles, his heart was continually with Israel. It was no doubt a trial to him that Christian Hebrews regarded him with something like suspicion. Much as he desired to confirm and comfort them, he

could not write to them as an apostle. We see how very modestly lie justifies his writing an epistle to the Romans; in the same tone the author of the epistle to the Hebrews writes, "I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation." Hence it appears natural that the apostle Paul should sink his individuality and apostleship as much as possible, and in harmony with the key-note struck in the first verse, "God spake," be to the Hebrews as the voice of one speaking truth and comfort to them in their hour of need and trial. In the concluding chapter it is difficult not to recognize the apostle Paul. A few expressions (as Hebrews 2:3)1 seem such, as could not have come from his pen,2 and it is not unnatural to suppose that some Tertius was entrusted with more than the mere mechanical writing, with the formal and verbal arrangement of the argument. (1According to a statement of Clement, Pantaenus, head of the Alexandrian school, held the apostle Paul to be the author, and explained this difficulty by saying that he who was the apostle of the Gentiles could not speak of himself as apostle of the Hebrews, as the Lord Himself was the apostle of God to Israel.

2The question of the authorship of our epistle is difficult and complicated. The opinion that the apostle Paul is the author, though not the writer and composer, seems on the whole the most probable. The testimony of the ancient Eastern Churches is important. It is true that style and diction differ from that of the Pauline epistles, excelling it in purity, regularity, and smoothness. But this and other difficulties would be sufficiently accounted for by the supposition, already referred to, that the epistle was Pauline in thought, design, and argument, but not Pauline in its actual form. With regard to doctrine, the parallels with (other) Pauline epistles are striking and numerous, although the epistle contains several peculiarities of doctrinal statement. In no other portion of Scripture (not merely Pauline) is Christ represented as High Priest (the isolated passages, Psalm 110 and Zech. 3, excepted). The emphasis with which the humanity and the sympathy of our blessed Lord are mentioned requires also notice, as well as the peculiar importance attached to the ascension of Christ and the heavenly sanctuary. But the epistle itself accounts for these peculiarities, which are moreover in full harmony with the teaching of the apostle Paul. The hypothesis, first started by Luther, that Apollos wrote the epistle, is ingenious, and meets to a large extent the difficulties real or supposed. But there is no historical foundation for it Resemblances between our epistle in thought and expression and the writings of Luke have been pointed out. The first impression of the simple reader, that he is listening to the words of him whom we so naturally call the apostle, is likely correct, though the question of the actual writer may remain unsolved. The following incidental remarks of Mallet are forcible: "Where do we find beside the apostle a theologian who could have written this epistle? Who beside him would have ventured to write it with such decided apostolic authority? And who had greater reason to write anonymously to Israel than the apostle who loved his people so fervently, and who was so hated by them that they refused to listen to his voice and to read his writings?" Although the authorship of Isaiah 40-66 is much more clearly and fully established, we may say both of that prophetic section and the epistle to the Hebrews, how could the authors of such writings, transcendently beautiful and glorious even among Biblical books, remain anonymous?) But when we think of the depth and breadth of the epistle, when we remember the wisdom given to the apostle Paul, when we bear in mind that on this special point, the relation between the old and the new covenant, none was so fitted and gifted to teach the church as he,* we find it difficult to waver in our decision, especially as so many collateral proofs seem to point to the same result. We have referred already to the testimony of the apostle Peter. We notice also the concluding benediction-mark of all Pauline epistles. Neither the Epistles of Peter, or John, or Jude, or James, conclude with words like these:

Grace be with you all. (2 Thessalonians 3:17.) The tradition of the Church in the East, where the Epistle was first received, is unanimous in asserting the authorship of the apostle Paul. And thus we believe, that according to the word of the Lord Jesus, when He appeared unto this chosen vessel, the apostle Paul, after testifying to the Gentiles and to kings, last of all in this epistle unfolds to the children of Israel the glory of the Messiah and His kingdom. However this may be, the epistle is in full and striking harmony with all Pauline teaching; it is in full harmony with all other portions of the Scripture; for it is not the word of man, but written by inspiration of God. (*"Comparing the manner of argument," says Lightfoot, "with the Talmuds Zohar, and Rabboth, and such like, you might easily tell with whom he is dealing, though the epistle was not inscribed to the Hebrews; the very style of it may argue the scholar of Gamaliel." And we may add the matter of it marks one "who had profited in the Jews religion more than many;" and in my mind this sufficiently accounts for the writer's name being suppressed, not because the apostle of the Gentiles desired to address the Jews anonymously, but because he wished to sink his apostolic authority, and to argue with the Jews upon their acknowledged principles." GEORGE VISCOUNT MANDEVILLE, Horae Hébraicae. pp. 5 and 6.)

It is an epistle which enters deeply into the truth as it is in Jesus. It offers strong meat to them that are of full age; it goes on unto perfection. Let us approach this portion of the divine word with reverence, and with a deep sense of our dependence on the teaching and influence of the Holy Ghost. Our very weakness, and the peculiar trial of the present time, render this epistle more suitable to our need, and encourage us to hope that it will prove a word of exhortation to our hearts, establishing them in faith and love. Above all, let us bear in mind .that, as the true difficulty throughout Scripture is our unwillingness to deny ourselves and to take up our cross, so this epistle, throughout, bears the inscription, "Outside the Camp." Every step of true progress is a step "outside the camp" with Jesus, who was crucified outside the gate. If we know the cross of Jesus, not merely as a doctrine, but a power of life, we possess the golden key which opens the treasuries of revelation."*(*"The veil which is spread over the Scriptures for the Jews is also there for false Christians, and for all who do not hate themselves. But only let a man be sincerely disposed to hate himself, and how eager will he be to understand them, and to obtain the knowledge of Jesus Christ." - PASCAL'S Pensées.)

Jesus, the Son of God, exalted above all, in finitely high above us, and unspeakably near us in the power and sympathy of His High-priestly intercession, is set before us in this solemn and heart-stirring epistle. To look constantly and steadfastly unto Him, and with Him to be separated from the world, waiting for the glory of His second coming; behold, here is wisdom and the patience of the saints.

01 - Hebrews 1:1-4

THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

CHAPTER I.

COMPARISON AND CONTRAST BETWEEN THE OLD AND NEW COVENANT; THE PERFECT AND ULTIMATE REVELATION IN THE SON.

Hebrews 1:1-4. THE first four verses contain, as it were, an epitome of the whole epistle, and therefore it will be necessary for us to dwell more minutely on their weighty sentences. We consider the first and part of the second verse:

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by the Son."*(*Literally God, who in many portions and in many ways spake in ancient times unto the fathers (or for the fathers) in the prophets. In many portions refers more to the matter, in many ways to the methods, of revelation. The Greek wordλαλ■σαςdenotes a confiding expression of inward thought, sentiment, and will. The expression, in the prophets, reminds us of the condescension of God, who clothed His thoughts in the garment of the prophet's individuality, and adapted His word to the peculiar character of the time and messenger. Hence in the prophetic books the words of the Lord and of the prophet frequently succeed one another and alternate.) The great object of the epistle is to describe the contrast between the old and the new covenant. But this contrast is based upon their unity. It is impossible for us rightly to understand the contrast unless we know first the resemblance. The new covenant is contrasted with the old covenant, not in the way in which the light of the knowledge of God is contrasted with the darkness and ignorance of heathenism, for the old covenant also is of God, and is therefore possessed of divine glory. Beautiful is the night in which the moon and the stars of prophecy and types are shining; but when the sun rises, then we forget the hours of watchful expectancy, and in the calm and joyous light of day there is revealed to us the reality and substance of the eternal and heavenly sanctuary. Great is the glory of the old covenant; yet greater is the glory of the new dispensation, when in the fullness of time God sent forth His own Son and gave unto us the substance of those things of which in the old times He had shown types and prophecy. When the apostle says it is God, the same God "who spake at sundry times and in divers manners unto the fathers by the prophets, who hath in the last days spoken unto us by His Son," he confirms and seals the doctrine which was held by the Hebrews, that unto them had been committed the oracles of God; and that in the writings of Moses and the prophets they possessed the Scripture, which could not be broken, in which God had disclosed unto them His will - the counsels and purposes of His grace, "Unto them," as the apostle declares to us in the epistle to the Romans, "were committed the oracles" (or the outspeakings) "of God." And, as Jesus Christ Himself continually testifies, Moses and the prophets spake of Him. The Scriptures were that complete and infallible record of the revelation of God, from which all our knowledge of the grace and will of the Most High is derived. This solemn acknowledgment of the fundamental importance and divine authority of the Scripture is from the very outset to gain the confidence and

to establish the hearts of the Hebrew brethren. It is to give them the assured and trustful feeling of home. Thus the gospel narrative commences with a summary of Old Testament history, from Abraham to David and the Babylonian captivity, and to Jesus, the Immanuel predicted by Isaiah. Christ, or Messiah, is the comprehensive word, of which Moses and the prophets are the preparatory and expository heralds. The Saviour identifies Himself constantly with the Jewish Scripture - with the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He, of whom the Jews confessed that He was their covenant God, was according to the declaration of the Lord His Father. And as the apostle of the Gentiles testifies to all churches, and most emphatically to the Church which was in the metropolis of the world, Rome, that unto Israel was entrusted the word of God, that Israel is the root, that the Jewish prophets and apostles are the foundation, so was it necessary and natural to remind the Hebrews that the God who spoke to their fathers was now speaking to them, that they heard the same voice, and were blessed by the same love.

"God hath spoken unto the fathers;" and by that expression "unto the fathers" the apostle reminds us that without a church, without a union of believers, without a manifestation of God in grace, historically, among a people whom He had set apart for His service, there would have been no Scripture; and that there was a congregation of the Most High from the very beginning of the world. "Unto the fathers" whom He had chosen that they might have fellowship with Him, that they might worship Him and rejoice in His name, God spake in old times, even as in the last times unto the Church unto those who are called both from among Jews and Gentiles - He has made fully known His purpose in Christ Jesus.

This, then, is the great resemblance. The same God in the old covenant and in the new covenant. He spake unto His church or unto His people. The Father is the author of revelation in both. The Messiah is the substance and centre of the revelation in both. The glory of God’s name in a people brought nigh unto Him, to love and to worship Him, is the end of the revelation in both. The two are one. Martin Luther has quaintly compared it to the two men who brought the branch with the cluster of grapes from the promised land. They were both bearing the same fragrant fruit; but one of them saw it not, yet he knew what he was carrying. The other saw both the fruit and the man who was helping him. Thus is it, that the prophets who came before Jesus testified of Him, although they did not yet behold Him; and we who live in the fullness of times see both the Christ of whom they testified, and themselves who were sent by God to witness of Him. But let us consider the marvellous unity of the two covenants.

"God hath spoken." This is the first point. Oh, how little do we think of the grandeur and majesty and all-importance of this simple declaration, "God hath spoken." A living God and a loving God must needs speak.* "The god of the philosophers is a silent God, for he hath neither life nor affection; but our God, who created the heavens and the earth, who is and who loves, must speak. Even in the creation, which is an act of the condescension of God, He utters His thoughts; and when He created man as the con summation of the world, it was for this purpose, that man should hear Him and love Him, and should rejoice in His light and in His life. When sin enters into the world silence ensues. Man dreads God, and the melody of praise and prayer ceases; but the need of a revelation remains continually the same. God has created man, that out of the fullness that is in God, man may have living water wherewithal to satisfy his thirst. When man forsakes the fountain of living water he cannot get rid of the thirst, and he cannot divest himself of the nature with which God has endowed him; so that there is still within man the same absolute and utter

necessity for a revelation of God from on high. He sees God’s works in nature; he sees God’s dealings in history; and when he examines his own mind, heart, and conscience, he reads there, although the letters seem almost obliterated, the record of the holiness and of the all-sufficiency of the only true and living God. Yet it is impossible for him to find in nature, history, or within himself that authoritative, living, and clear revelation and unfolding of the mind of God in which alone light and life can be brought to him. "Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered the heart of man" the things, which alone can satisfy the immortal spirit, whom God has created for the very purpose, that he should hear and with gladness obey the voice of God. Therefore it is necessary that God should speak. (*Compare my remarks on the necessity of Revelation inChrist Crucified. - Accture 5.) And God does speak. It is a very simple declaration of Scripture that God has spoken, a grand truth expressed in simplest words, in order that we all may understand it. Often we read the words and do not realize what marvel of condescending love they reveal, what great and central mystery they unfold. "And God said to Abraham, to Moses, to the people of Israel." "The word of the Lord came unto the prophet." "Thus saith the Lord." Take a little child that has begun to think and to will, and even the thoughts and volitions of that little child remain an impenetrable mystery to you - an unknown land - unless that child chooses to express his thoughts and to utter his desires. And if this is true of a child, how much more is it true of Him who is unsearchable, the ever blessed and eternal God? Who knoweth the things that are in man except the spirit that is in man? And who knoweth the thoughts of God except the Spirit that is in God? For God’s thoughts are not as our thoughts. As the heavens are higher than the earth, so much are God’s thoughts higher than our thoughts. Who, then, can find out the Almighty by his own cogitations? or who can search the counsel of the Most High by the penetrating glance of his own intellect? Unless God speaks we do not know the thoughts of God. But notice, secondly, man having by his own sin fallen away from God, and silence reigning now, it is only the infinite compassion and love of God that induces him to speak. If there was no redemption, there would be no revelation. If there was no blood of the Lamb, there would not be a single syllable uttered unto man by the Most High. It is because God is the God of redemption, that He is the God of revelation. It is because in Jesus Christ there is an atonement that God began to say to Adam in love, "Where art thou?" The love of the Father, and the blood of Jesus Christ, and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost; behold, these are the three necessary foundations upon which the Scripture rests. God, the Triune Covenant God, hath spoken. And that God hath spoken is a very awful thing, full of power and life. We have got accustomed to it, to believe that we have the thoughts of God embodied in His word, and that He who is almighty and ever blessed in Himself, and against whom we have sinned, hath in His infinite love uttered unto us the thoughts of His compassion and of His mercy; but God Himself is astonished at it, and commendeth His love, and saith, "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken." And saith again, "For as the rain cometh down, and the snow from heaven, and returneth not thither, but watereth the earth, and maketh it bring forth and bud, that it may give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater: so shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it." And again, that He has magnified His word above all His name. And again, that He will come as a Redeemer unto His people, and that He will manifest Himself unto them by speaking. "I who speak am He." "Therefore my people shall know my name; therefore they shall know in that day that I am He that doth speak." (Isaiah 52:6; comp. John 8:25.) And throughout all the Scripture this wonderful indication is given unto us, that there is one who is the Word of God,

and yet a person equal with Himself, the bearer of all His thoughts and purposes, His beloved, His only begotten Son. God hath spoken: in old times unto the fathers by the prophets; fully and perfectly unto us by His Son. In both dispensations the same God, on account of the same sacrifice, impelled by the same love and for the same sublime and gracious purpose.

Both Old and New Testaments are of God; the New Testament as the Church - father Augustine said, is enfolded in the Old, and the Old Testament is unfolded in the New.1 Nor can we, who live in the times of fulfillment, dispense with the record of the preceding dispensation,2 As an old author writes: "As the brilliancy of the sun appears far greater when contrasted with the darkness of the shade, so this epistle compares the light of the gospel with the shadows and types of the Old Testament, and by this means displays the glory of the gospel in full relief; for as shadows are images of bodies, so the ancient shadows are images of Jesus Christ, of His power and of His graces, and assist us to recognize more and more the substance and the truth; but from hence we derive also this additional advantage, that although the shadows of other bodies serve only to obscure them, the shadows of the Old Testament are so many reflectors, contributing light to the gospel." (1InVetere Testamento Novum latet, in Novo Vetus patet. "What is the law, but the gospel foreshadowed? What the gospel, but the law fulfilled?" - HOOKER.

2This thought is more fully stated in my book, Christ and the Scriptures; and in chap. 5 of my Lectures on The Apostolic Commission. Is not this epistle another illustration of the truth, that they only who accept with reverence and faith the Old Testament understand fully the peculiar glory of the New Covenant? Compare 2 Cor. 3. The neglect of the ancient Scriptures necessarily leads to a dim apprehension of the fullness, liberty, and joy of the gospel. While, therefore, the intention of many is to exalt the New Testament, they must necessarily fail unless they adopt the method of our Lord and of His apostles, which is to teach according to the Scriptures.) But now let us consider the contrast. Jesus Christ was not born till four thousand years after the creation of the world. He came in the fullness of time. Why were so many ages allowed to elapse before the Word was made flesh? Herein also is revealed the condescension of God. When it is said that "in the fullness of time God sent forth His Son, born of a woman," you must remember that this "born of a woman" refers also to the four thousand years, in which His goings forth were from of old to the whole history of the - woman of the daughter of Zion - of the Jewish nation. During all these years He who in the fullness of time came, and was born of the Virgin Mary, was going forth out of the human race out of the chosen family out of Israel, the covenant people of God, making Himself a little sanctuary unto us, as it were, condescending to our limited capacity, teaching us line upon line and precept upon precept, developing truth as the history of the nation developed. "At sundry times and in divers manners" did God speak unto the fathers by the prophets.

He chose prophets to be His messengers. The meaning of a prophet is one who is directly commissioned by God; one who, whatever his tribe, position, and dignity may be, is chosen by God according to His good pleasure, and is gifted with the Holy Ghost, and is entrusted with the message of God to utter it to the people. These three things constitute a prophet: direct commission from God Himself, gift of the Holy Ghost, and being entrusted with the very thoughts and words of the Most High. It is not merely by the prophets, that God spake. They were chosen not merely as the channels of separate and isolated revelation. God spake in them. They were the personal bearers of the message, the representatives and exponents of divine truth. Their words and typical actions were inspired, and in them the word of the Lord came unto Israel. When God in

His infinite condescension sent prophets unto His people from the very beginning of the world (for by "prophets" we must understand all the messengers that God sent),* "this was a great, good, and perfect gift in itself; and not only for one age, but for all generations, for the instruction and guidance of the whole Church. (*"God hath spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began." (Acts 3:21.) "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after." (Acts 3:24.) "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied." (Jude 1:14.) Yet let us consider what were the imperfections of these messengers. The first imperfection was this that they were numerous; they were many. One succeeded another. They lived in different periods. Another imperfection was, that it was "in divers manners," in dreams, in similitudes, in visions, in symbols. Each prophet had his peculiar gift and character. Their stature and capacity varied. They were men of different temperament and tone of mind. The manner in which the revelation of God was given to them varied; even in the case of the same prophet the One Spirit appeared in various manifestations. Highest stands Moses, who therefore predicts, as in type so by direct announcement, the "prophet like unto me," to whom God spake not in vision, or in a dream, or in dark speeches. (Deut. 18; Num. 12.) Another imperfection was that they were sinful men. When Isaiah beheld the glory of God, he said, "Woe, is me! for I am undone: I am a man of unclean lips." When Daniel, the "man greatly beloved," enjoyed communion with God, he felt and confessed that he had sinned, and transgressed, and done wickedly. All of them, from the greatest downwards, were men full of infirmities and sins. Another imperfection was that they did not possess the Spirit constantly. Of a sudden, after a long pause, the Spirit of God came upon them. God spake unto them, and gave unto them His message. But it was not like a continuous river. The word came to them from time to time; they did not possess the word. Another imperfection was this, that of that message that was entrusted to them they did not understand the heights and the depths. They themselves had to search diligently, and to enquire what the Spirit that was in them did signify of the sufferings and glory that should come. Another imperfection was, that, as they did not understand adequately that portion of the message that was given unto them, they could still less comprehend and contain the whole message. They saw only one aspect of it, only one portion of it in connection with the peculiar history and the peculiar trials of the people at the period to which they were sent. Another imperfection was, that they all testified, like John the Baptist, "I am not the light. I am only sent to witness of the light." They were only finger-posts directing the pilgrim, as he was in pursuit of the heavenly city, to go on further, until he would come to the pearly gates of the New Jerusalem.

We notice the imperfect and fragmentary character of the old dispensation, when we consider not merely the words, but the types, which are living prophecies. There was not a single one which could stand by itself, it had always to be supplemented, Abel shows to us that the righteous shepherd was to suffer and die; Enoch that the man of God would be lifted up into the heavens; Noah that there will be a Righteous One who will save not merely himself, but others, out of the destruction and judgment which sin draws down from a holy God. If we want to have an idea of the salvation of God we must combine the three - Abel, Enoch, and Noah in one person; the Righteous Man, who suffers, saves, and enters into glory. Moses is a type of a mediator, prophet, priest, and king; but to obtain a view of the true Redeemer you must combine him with Joshua, for only Joshua leads the people into the promised land. Melchizedek is a priest and king, but we must combine him with Aaron in order to have an idea of atonement and of intercession, as well as of blessing and rule. David is a shepherd meek and lowly, a man who does not lift up himself

above his brethren, and rules in love and in justice; but we must combine him with Solomon to get the idea of the kingship, both in its gentleness, sympathy, and suffering, and in its glory and extensiveness. Wherever we go we find it is in fragments. There is an altar; there is a sacrifice. There is a fourfold sacrifice, a sin-offering, a burnt-offering, a peace-offering, a meat-offering. There is a high priest; there is a tabernacle; there is a holy of holies; there is a candlestick; there is a shew-bread; there is a veil. Everything a fragment; everything in itself showing unto us some aspect of truth, some portion of the treasure, without which we would be poor; but we must combine them all to see the full and blessed truth. The old dispensation was imperfect. This is evident from the very fact that the message was sent in sundry fragmentary portions and in many different ways. It appears also from the nature of the chosen men, in whom the Lord spake. They were not merely finite and limited in their capacities, but sinful and fallen; and they witnessed of the perfect, ultimate, and all-comprehensive revelation of the light of Jehovah in the latter days. Great was the glory of the old covenant; for it was God who spoke. It was the Lord God of the covenant, of redeeming and sanctifying love, who for the sake of Christ and in Christ spoke unto His chosen people, and in the marvellous wisdom of His educating fatherly guidance taught them by a variety of types and of gradually unfolding prophecies. But now the time of fragmentary, imperfect, and temporary revelation is past. God speaks to us now in another and more glorious manner.

Look now at the contrast. The whole contrast is in one word - in our language in one syllable - "by the Son." The prophets were many: the Son is one. The prophets were servants: the Son is the Lord. The prophets were temporary: the Son abideth for ever. The prophets were imperfect: the Son is perfect, even as the Father is perfect. The prophets were guilty: the Son is not merely pure, but able to purify those that are full of sin and pollution. The prophets point to the future: the Son points to Himself, and says, "Here am I." God has spoken to us "by His Son.* "He is the only Prophet. God asks, "Who is like unto me?" To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal? "Who hath directed the Spirit of the Lord, or being His counsellor hath taught Him?" "With whom took He counsel, and who instructed Him, and taught Him in the path of judgment, and taught Him knowledge, and showed to Him the way of understanding?" God asks proud man, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?" Who is there that knows God, or is equal unto Him? None but the Son. He was with Him before the foundations of the world were laid. The eternal, uncreated Word was with God before the morning stars sang together and the angels shouted for joy. He is the true and faithful witness; for He speaks of that which He hath seen, and testifies of that which He knows. "No man knoweth the Father but the Son. No man hath seen the Father. The only begotten of the Father He hath declared Him." He is the true and faithful witness, whose testimony is co-extensive, if I may so say, with the counsel and the things of God: the Prophet whose mind is adequate to understand the mind of the Father. He is not merely the true and faithful witness because He is from everlasting, He is also the beloved of God. Notice this in the word "Son." "The only begotten," says John, "who was in the bosom of the Father," who is His treasure and delight, the infinite object of His love, in whom from all eternity was His rejoicing, who shares with Him all His counsels. This beloved one of God - oh surely He is the true messenger who will reveal all the secrets of the Father’s heart, and who will tell unto us all the fullness of His counsel, and all the purposes of His grace! God hath spoken to us by His Son. (*Or more correctly in One who is Son. Notice here also thein. For the whole message of God is onlyinChrist; and Him we only seek to know (Php 3:10), and know onlyε■κ με■ρουςin part. (l Cor. 13)

Now contrast Him with the prophets. Were the prophets sinful? Behold our blessed Jesus, born of the Virgin Mary, conceived by the Holy Ghost, true man, yet growing up from His infancy in the love and fear and knowledge of God, without spot and blemish, not merely sinless but gifted with every perfection, showing forth true humanity according to the mind of God. Were the other prophets dependent upon momentary visits of the Holy Ghost? Look at Jesus. You never read in the gospels that the Spirit came upon Jesus, or that the word of God came unto Him. The Spirit was always in Him; for He had the gift of the Spirit without measure. The word of God was always in Him, abiding, living. Oh, how beautiful is that expression of the apostle Peter, "Lord, to whom shall we go? Thou hast the words of eternal life." Not, "Thou utterest the words of eternal life;" but, "Thou hast them: they are thy property, thy possession. Thou art Lord of the words, master of the words, and fountain of the words." Notice again, the prophets say, "Thus saith the Lord." Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto you;" and yet He spake nothing except what He heard the Father say; for He is the Son of the Father. The Son, and therefore equal; the Son, and therefore subordinate; yet whether the Father speaks or Jesus speaks, it is one voice, one love. And not merely does He say, "Verily, verily, I say unto you;" but He Himself is His message. Not like the prophets does He testify of one that was to come after Him;1 but He says of Himself, "I am the bread of life. I am the resurrection and the life. I am the way, the truth, and the life. I give unto every one that cometh unto me rest and the water of life." And thus, dear friends, we ascend to the marvellous truth, that Jesus, the Son of God, not merely declares unto us the message of the Father, but He Himself is the message of the Father. All that God has to say unto us is Jesus. All the thoughts and gifts and promises and counsels of God are embodied in Jesus. He is the Light, the Peace, the Life, the Way, and the End. And this leads us still higher. How is it that the message and the gift are one? Because Jesus is the Word of God. "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God." How mysterious and intimate is the union, how deep and essential the relation between the Son of God and the revelations of God in Him and in the Scripture! Christ, the Son, is the real, substantial, eternal Word, by whom the worlds were made, by whom all things are upheld, by whom God speaks unto us, and reveals His saving love. Christ is the Word of the written Word,2 the substance and spirit, the centre and life of Scrip ture; and as the Word He quickens and blesses us with eternal blessings. How comprehensive and simple is the declaration, "God speaks in His Son." (1Jesus does indeed speak of the Comforter, the Holy Ghost. But what is the mission of the Comforter? Is it not to glorify Christ? to bring to the remembrance of the disciples all that the Saviour had taught? to take of the things of Christ and of the Father, and to show them unto us? The Holy Ghost is not a substitute for Jesus, but by Him the real presence and indwelling of the Father and the Son are vouchsafed. Jesus is the Son, manifesting forth His glory. [John 2.]) (2"The Scriptures and the Lord Bear one most holy name: The written and the incarnate Word In all things are the same.)

Let me remind you how in the Son all the message of God is contained. I appeal to your remembrance of the teaching of Scripture. You who know the Scripture, and you especially who have come through the law unto the gospel, will understand me when I say that if the sinner knew nothing else but this, "God has sent a messenger, and this messenger is His own Son," he might discover in this the whole gospel, good news, glad tidings; for, in order to send unto us condemnation, in order to give unto us the knowledge of our sin and of our desert, in order to send unto us the message of impending judgment, His own Son is not needed. Any angel would suffice for this work; any servant could proclaim this message. Moses is able to utter it; even our own

conscience is sufficient messenger. When God Sends His own Son into the world, when God makes the stupendous sacrifice of allowing His only begotten to take upon Him our flesh and blood, there can be only one meaning in it - SALVATION.1 It can only have one purpose - our redemption. It can only have one motive the overwhelming love of God. In the fullness of time God sent His own Son - to teach, to preach, to announce judgment? Oh, no, a thousand times no. God sent His Son to redeem us. Behold, I declare unto you tidings of great joy. Unto you is born this day a Saviour. Eternal life is in Christ Jesus the Son before the world began. These two ideas are always connected in the teaching of the apostle Paul - the law and time - that which passes away and man, the gospel and eternity, and the Son of God and the everlasting counsel. So Paul says "in promise of eternal life which God gave unto us before the foundation of the world," because it is not human, but divine; not temporary, but eternal; not connected with man and his works and efforts, but entirely and exclusively connected with the mission of the Son of God. God has spoken to us by His Son, and therefore we know that He has spoken peace to us.2(1It need scarcely be added that the teaching and the life of the Lord Jesus, and even His death on the cross, proclaim the law of God, and reveal to us our guilt and lost condition; and that in one aspect, the Father sent Jesus to Israel as a preacher of repentance, "peradventure they will reverence my Son." But the primary, as well as the ultimate object of His mission, was to seek and to save that which is lost, to preach the glad tidings of salvation.)

(2To preach Jesus is to preach peace, joy, life. The evangelist, that is, the bearer of the glad tidings, "opens his mouth, and beginning at (whatever) Scripture, preachesJesus." (Acts 8:35.) "The word which God sent unto the children of Israel,preaching Peace by Jesus Christ(He is Lord of all)." [Acts 10:36.]) But notice, secondly, as the Sonship is the beginning of the gospel, so it is also the end and purpose of God’s message. God, speaking to us by His Son, shows unto us that we also are to become the sons of God. He that receiveth a prophet in a prophet’s name shall receive a prophet’s reward; he that receiveth Him in a righteous man’s name, a righteous man’s reward; but he that receiveth the Son of God as the Son of God shall become a son of God. Jesus will give him power to become a son of God, born of the Spirit unto eternal glory. "Whosoever shall confess that Jesus is the Son of God, God dwelleth in him, and he in God." Such is the marvellous declaration of the apostle John. "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God," was the confession of Simon Bar-jona. Jesus replies, "Flesh and blood have not revealed this unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven." So great a thing is it for a poor sinner to know that the only begotten of the Father was made flesh and dwelt among us, and died for our salvation, that whenever anyone among the Jews or the idolaters said, "I believe that Jesus is the Son of God," the apostles said: "Come, let us baptize him. What need we more? He has discovered the secret. The secret has been revealed to his soul. God has come to him: God dwelleth in him, and he in God. Let us baptize him." This is the rock upon which the Church is built - "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God." God has spoken to us by the Son, and in knowing the Son we receive sonship, the adoption. And this is the peculiar glory of the new covenant, this the distinguishing feature of the Pentecostal Church. In the Incarnate Son the Father has brought many sons unto glory. The only begotten of the Father has, after His death on the cross, become the firstborn among many brethren. The Holy Ghost, coming through the glorified humanity of Jesus, unites us to Him, who is the beloved Son, and in whom the eternal and infinite love of the Father rests upon all His believing people. In the Son we know and have the Father; in the Son we also are the children of God.

Lastly, brethren, remember this is the ultimate revelation. There can be nothing higher; there can be nothing further. In "these last days" He hath spoken unto us. "Little children, it is the last time." The Saviour testifies in the book of Revelation: "These things must shortly come to pass." Surely, I come quickly. We are hastening unto the coming of Christ. Oh that we may know Him who is coming, as the Son of God! If Christ is our life, then, when the Son of God shall appear, we also who are the sons of God now in weakness, suffering, temptation shall be made manifest with Him in glory. Amen.

02 - Hebrews 1:1-4

CHAPTER I I. THE GLORY OF THE SON OF GOD.

Hebrews 1:1-4.

WE have considered the contrast between the Old and New Dispensation, which is brought before us in the words of the first and second verses, God speaking in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, and God speaking in these last days* unto us by His Son. When the apostle arrives at that word, "by His Son," he has reached the central and culminating point of all the revelations of God. The Son of God has come. In this all things are summed up. For what other purpose could the Son of God come but for salvation? Judgment, the preaching of the law, mere teaching, are works indeed high and important, but which may be executed by any creature chosen and sent by God. The message of law needs only human and angelic mediators. But when the Son of God Himself comes, surely it must be for the purpose of a new creation; it must be for the purpose of the manifestation of infinite love and boundless compassion, bringing deliverance and life. Again, if the gift is salvation, who else can bring it but the Son of God? Prophets have announced the will of God. Moses has declared unto us His holy commandments. By the law cometh the knowledge of sin and condemnation. By the prophets is kindled the hope of redemption. But no man, no angel, no creature, can restore us. If we know the depths of the fall, we know also the grandeur of the remedy that is needed. As soon as we hear the Son of God is come, we may expect salvation; as soon as it is announced to us that salvation is to appear, we may expect none but the Most High can bring it; for Jehovah is Redeemer; He only is our salvation. Not like a gift from heaven, as sunshine, and rain, and bread; not as a servant, or angel, or messenger, does Jesus come to this earth, but the Son of the Father, equal with Him in glory and majesty; the Lord from heaven, unto whom all things belong, who abideth in the house for evermore. Thus was it that the apostle Paul, from the very commencement of his Christian life, from the very moment of his conversion, saw these two ideas combined. He is Lord from heaven above all; He is Jesus, who died for the sinner, and identifies Himself with the church. And therefore, throughout all his epistles, as throughout the whole experience of the children of God, these two wonderful facts are seen together. How can we sufficiently adore Him who is the Son of God! How can we sufficiently love Him who shed His precious blood to deliver us! (*The contrast between the time before the first advent and the last days will be again referred to in connection withHebrews 2:5. The expression, "last days," occursGenesis 49:1;Jeremiah 23:20;Ezekiel 38:16;Hosea 3:5;Micah 4:1;Isaiah 2:2;Daniel 2:18. According to the Jewish canon of interpretation, the last days denote the days of the Messiah. Now, according to the perspective of Old Testament prophecy, whenever some obstacle which stood in the way of the fulfillment of the Messianic promise was removed, the immediate advent of the time of blessedness was expected, and then anew revelation was given which disclosed some further delay, and enlarged the vista of God’s expectant people. Thus 2 Sam. 7 points to a son of David; Daniel 9 to seventy sevens after the return from exile. But since the day of Pentecost the apostles knew with a perfectly assured clearness that the days of Messiah had commenced, as the exposition of Joel’s prophecy by the apostle Peter distinctly declares. (Acts 2:17). In "these last

times" the beginning, or the first advent, and the consummation, or the second coming of the Lord, are viewed sometimes as coincident, or at least as lying very close together, and this in harmony with Old Testament representation; for instance, Isaiah 61, the acceptable year of the Lord and the day of vengeance of our God. And at other times the two advents are viewed as separated by the period of the Church, and the second coming of Christ is viewed as the transition between our days and the "world to come." Thus in one sense we live in the day of fulfillment ("the darkness is past, the true light now shineth"); in another sense, in the days of expectation and waiting, the Son of God Himself on His Father's throne expecting and looking forward. While we are thus contrasted with the fathers of old we are also like them (and like God's ancient people at present), looking forward to theHope of Israel. [Acts 26:6]) The moment he says "the Son," the apostle has reached a mountain-height from which a vast and most extensive view opens before his eye. We are accustomed, in the epistles of the apostle Paul, to have him take us, with the mighty wings of faith and love, unto high, lofty peaks, and show unto us the wonderful land of Immanuel, boundless and infinite, as well as full of beauty and sweetness, and perpetual harvest.

Thus is it in the epistle to the Ephesians, where he begins by ascribing praise to God the Father, who hath "blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus." Having gained this wonderful position, "with Christ Jesus in the heavenly places," he shows unto us the eternity before the foundation of the world, when God chose us in Him; and he points out to us the ages that are to come, when God shall be glorified in Christ Jesus, and in the church whom He has given unto His Son, when we who first trusted in Christ shall be to the praise of the glory of His grace. Thus is it in the epistle to the Colossians (chap. 1:14-29) [Colossians 1:14-29]. The moment he speaks of the redemption which we have through faith in the blood of Jesus, He opens unto us the glory of the Lord Jesus who died for us, and leads us back to the very beginning of things, when all things were made in Him, and to the end of things, when all things shall be summed up in Him. God's eternity has become our home. All things are ours, because in Jesus we behold the Son of God. But accustom yourselves always, when you hear of Jesus, to think of Him as divine and human - two natures in one person. When you hear of the Son of God, think of that glorious and loving One who was born of the Virgin Mary; who lived for thirty-three years upon earth in poverty and lowliness; who died upon the accursed tree; who rose with the self-same body out of the grave, and appeared unto His disciples, and spoke unto them, and ate with them broiled fish and of an honeycomb; who ascended in His body into heaven, and who shall so come again - the man Christ Jesus, the Son of God - to reign upon the throne of His father David, and to show forth the majesty and the love of God throughout all His creation.

It is of the incarnate Son of God that the apostle speaks; and showing unto us His glory, he leads us, in the first place, to the end of all history, He is appointed the heir of all things; (2) to the beginning of all history, in Him God made the ages; (3) before all history, He is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His being; (4) throughout all history, He upholdeth all things by the word of His power.

(1) The end of all history. The Father has appointed the Lord Jesus Christ, His Son, the heir of all things. Him, the Son of Abraham and the Son of David, the theocratic Son, the Messiah; not in His abstract Deity, but as the Son who became man; as the Word made flesh; as the Lord God, visiting and redeeming His people; as the Son who became the servant to fulfill all Jehovah's good pleasure. Thus He promised unto Abraham that his seed should be the heir. Thus He promised

unto the Son of David, who is also David's Lord, and the only-begotten of the Father. "Ask of me, and I will give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost ends of the earth for thy possession." He ratified it through all the prophets; and finally the angel who appeared unto the Virgin Mary declares unto her that the holy child shall be called the Son of the Most High, and the Lord God shall give unto Him the throne of His father David, and He shall reign over the house of Judah for ever; and of His kingdom there shall be no end. The Father hath appointed Him, in the everlasting covenant, according to the good pleasure of His will, in the infinite love and delight which He had to Him who is. His equal, to be "heir of all things." What great expressions these are in Scripture! What wonderful conceptions, far transcending anything that men ever could have imagined! The Old Testament speaks of heaven and earth, summing up all things by these two words. The New Testament speaks of the creation of God all things which He by the word of His power and in His wisdom hath called forth; or it speaks of the ages - ages upon ages, worlds upon worlds, in which the manifold fullness of the divine thoughts come gradually into existence. All things He hath given unto Jesus to inherit;* as the Messiah, the theocratic Son, according to the promise to the fathers, and this only on the basis of His eternal and essential sonship. Because He is the Son of God, therefore is He the Messiah. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands." According to His deity there is no necessity for any gift, reward, or transfer. According to His deity incarnate, the Messiah, in the everlasting covenant, is appointed Heir, and al1 things are given into His hand. (*CompareRomans 4:13; Romans 8:17;Galatians 3:29;Zechariah 3:7. The Lord has not yet entered fully into the actual possession of the in heritance which, according to the Father's eternal counsel, and as a reward of His obedience unto the death of the cross (Phil, 2), is appointed unto Him. Notice how the promise is given unto Him, as our Saviour and Head. We are joint-heirs with Him. He and His people will beglorified together, according to the blessed mystery that we were crucified together with Christ. What glory! and yet a glory which always reminds us of our sin and unworthiness, and of the grace and love of the Lamb that was slain.)

What are these "all things"? It is clear that there is nothing excepted that is not given unto Him. So said the risen Saviour, - "All power is given unto me in heaven and on earth." In His intercessory prayer before His sufferings He had said, "Thou hast given Him power over all flesh." This is the first thing. The whole human race is given unto Him. Since He took upon Him our flesh and blood, God has given unto Him the whole human race - power over all flesh. And out of this whole human race, which belongs unto Him by eternal right, and by the right of His incarnation, by the right of His perfect and holy humanity, by the right of His unspeakable love, and of His death, - out of this whole world of humanity God has chosen in Him a people, that the Son should give eternal life to "as many as thou hast given Him." "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me." All these are His in a special sense. That innumerable multitude which no man can number from among all nations, peoples, and kindreds, and tongues - the chosen family in whom God has manifested His love, who have been renewed by the Holy Ghost, who have been washed in the blood of Jesus, who have been trained, educated, sanctified - all the lively stones, who by the Spirit have been built on the only foundation, who have been chiselled, beautified, perfected by the all - loving Divine Spirit, through experiences and sufferings most precious, appointed by perfect wisdom and grace, who have become the members of His wonderful mystical body, they all are His. He not merely rules over them; He lives, He moves in them. He thinks, and they think; He feels, and they feel. His will is the power which energizes in them. As a man who is in perfect health and strength has control

over all the members of his body, so the whole church is the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, each member in his separate sphere, each according to his peculiar preparation and gift of nature and grace, each shadowing forth some feature of Christ's beauty, and echoing some syllable of the Divine Word - all perfect, all beautiful - organized into one harmonious, living, and glorious whole - "the fullness of Him that filleth all in all." They belong unto Jesus. God has given us unto Him as His inheritance. And this church Jesus Christ has obtained as the first and central part of His inheritance. As the material sun is placed in the firmament to be a source of light and heat and joy unto the rest of the creation of God, so God appoints the church to be the first-fruits of His creatures - the body of Christ, wherewith He influences and blesses, whereby He guides and controls all things. Even over angels they shall rule: even unto powers and principalities more ancient and majestic than our race He shows forth by them the good pleasure of His will and the fullness of His counsel and love. And the material creation which God hath made in Jesus Christ He hath also given unto His Son, that Jesus, through the glorified church, and by the angels in heavenly places, as well as through Israel and the nations dwelling on earth, should be glorified in the whole realm, which is His portion and His inheritance. How rich is our adorable Jesus! The blessed Lord, when He was upon the cross, had nothing. He had not where to lay His head; even His very garments were taken from Him. He was buried in a grave which belonged not to Him or to His family. On earth He was poor to the very last; none so absolutely poor as He. He rose again, and then declared that all power is given unto Him by the Father in heaven and in earth. He has appointed Him the "heir of all things." As man, He is to inherit all things; as Jesus, God and man in one person. All angels, all human beings upon the earth, all powers in the universe, when asked, "Who is Lord of all?" will answer, "Jesus, the Son of Mary." Our poor earth, Bethlehem-Ephratah, little amidst the thousands of this world, has been chosen that out of us should come He who is the heir of all things.

"All things." Nothing shall be lost. You remember that apparently startling word in the parable of the talents, "Take from him that hath the one talent, and give it unto him that hath the ten talents." What is the meaning of it? Whatever has been dispensed in the kingdom of grace - whatever seed has gone forth from the divine sower - whatever thought, whatever beauty, whatever element that is valuable, and good, and true can never be lost. The unfaithfulness of man will never lose it to Jesus and to His beloved church. It must remain in the family; it must be secure and permanent. The one talent that the unfaithful steward did not use is not to be wasted and to be lost unto the commonwealth; but it is to enrich the chosen people; for all things are given unto Jesus. He has appointed Him heir of all things. And lest anyone should mistake or misinterpret the truth of God, as if any passage in Scripture encouraged the hope that all beings should be finally brought unto happiness and into the love of God, let us remember that the "all things" includes also that dark and fearful region of which we know so little (enough only to be filled with terror and dismay) - that awful region where the light and the love of God can never penetrate, where there is uttermost darkness. Even under the earth, in hell, in the abyss, Jesus has power. (Phil. 2.) He has power over death, and shall ultimately destroy it. He has power over Satan, and shall ultimately bruise him under our feet, banish him and imprison him where he can no more send forth the influences of sin and of injury. And all everywhere - friends and toes, saved and lost - shall acknowledge that Jesus is Lord; for He who has power in heaven and on earth has also the keys of Hades and of death. He is "appointed heir of all things."

All things are His. And this is so natural; because, in the second place, God has made "all ages," or "all worlds,"* by Him. It is natural that He who is the Alpha should also be the Omega. Scripture teaches us creation as the work of the triune God. God is triune, and therefore in everything that God does we behold the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. You read, in the first article of the creed, of "God, the Creator of heaven and earth; in the second, of Jesus as the Redeemer; in the third, of the Holy Ghost. But as in Jesus, the Redeemer, we must behold the Father, even as we receive through Him the Holy Ghost; as when we speak of the Holy Ghost we must behold the Father and the Son, of whom the Spirit testifies, and by whom He is sent; so when we think of the Creator, we must not think merely of the Father, but we must think of the Word by whom and the Spirit through whom all things were made. "The Word was with God," equal with God, and in love and continual intercourse and communion with the Father. And this Word was the beginning of the creation of God (Rev. 3; Col. 1), Himself eternal and uncreated; that is to say, in the Son of God all the creation was planned and summed up from all eternity. In Him was life; in Him was light; and God in Him beheld all things that were to come into existence. He is before all things (not merely as before and above time, but) as the idea and cause of all things. He is that eternal wisdom of which we read in the book of Proverbs, which was with God before the foundations of the world were laid. God has made all things by Christ according to Christ, and for Christ. What more natural, then, that He by whom and in whom all things were made should be also the inheritor of all things? (*"Byαι■■νεςages is meant the same as by the ‘all things.’ Scripture has various modes of expressing the idea of the universe. In the Old Testament there is no comprehensive word; there the two great divisions are mentioned heaven and earth. In the New Testament we have the terms creation (κτι■σις,Mark 10:6; Mark 13:19;2 Peter 3:4;Revelation 3:14), the world being viewed as created by God; all things (1 Corinthians 8:6; 1 Corinthians 15:27) as the totality of all finite being, ages, or (αι■■νες) as that which exists and moves in time. The most common expression is kosmos, but without reference to the classical idea of an artistic work." KAHNIS’Dogmatik, 1:247.)

(3) But the apostle goes still further. Before all history He is "the brightness of the Father’s glory, and the express image of His being." Wherever He looks He sees Christ, the light. Without Christ, there is darkness. Think of the end of history, and you are lost in amazement; think of the beginning of the world, and you are lost in ignorance; think of before the beginning, and you are altogether lost in an element transcendent and incomprehensible, because it is not for our finite minds to contemplate such wondrous heights until the heavenly, divine light of revelation comes to our aid. And who is the light? Christ is the light. The eternal, infinite God reveals Himself in Christ. The son is the light, which maketh manifest; God is manifest in Him. Christ is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His being." By the glory of God, His own inapproachable, infinite light is understood.1 We must not imagine that Jesus Christ is the light illumining something which is not light; for God is light. The Father is light, yet not to us without the mediation of the light, which is Christ. Without Christ He is darkness by excess of brightness. It is because that sun is so exceeding glorious, so exceeding bright, so exceedingly unbearable in its majesty, that it shines forth in another sun - and yet not another, but one with Him - which God, in His wonderful wisdom and power, hath given unto all worlds; that in this sun they may behold the brightness, the effulgence, the outflow of His glory. The glory of the God of Israel appeared between the cherubim; the tabernacle itself was called the glory; and when the tabernacle was removed, God’s people exclaimed, "Ichabod" - the glory has departed. These were symbols, but when Jesus was born of the Virgin Mary, we beheld the glory of the only-begotten - the glory of God in the face of

His Son Jesus Christ.2(1■pa?gasma, occurs only in this passage. (Compare2 Corinthians 4:6;Colossians 1:15.) In Christ we behold Him, whom none can see. But Christ is not merely a reflection of the Father, but is Himself light. God covers Himself with light, as with a garment; but the apostle speaks here of the essential glory of God, which appears to us in the person of His son. The two aspects of truth, that the son is equal with the Father, and that the son is begotten of the Father, are expressed in the old creed "Light of light." The Father hath life in Himself, and hath given unto the son to have life in Himself. (John 5) "Who is so void of understanding as to doubt concerning the eternal being of the son? for where has one seen light without effulgence?" (ATHANASIUS) "The Sun is never seen without effulgence, nor the Father without the Son." [THEOPHYLACT.])

2CompareEzekiel 1:26andEzekiel 1:28; Ezekiel 10:4; Ezekiel 43:2;Exodus 24:16; where glory of the Lord appears evidently to be a person. Thus the Messianic promise is often expressed, as inIsaiah 40:5: "The glory of Jehovah shall be revealed." InExodus 24:16, after stating that the glory of Jehovah abode upon Mount Sinai, the verse continues, "AndHecalled unto Moses." Notice also (Exodus 33:19) the request of Moses, "Show me thy glory," is answered "I will makeallmygoodnesspass before thee. This harmonizes beautifully with the Scripture teaching, that in the Son, the Saviour, glory is beheld, as the full manifestation ofgrace; as, for instance, "The Word was made flesh andtabernacledamong us, and we beheld His glory, the glory of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.") And this brightness of the glory is the express, substantial, true, living image of His being; so that he that seeth the Son seeth the Father. In Jesus we behold infinite power, wisdom, goodness, holiness, compassion, truth. All things that are in the Father are in the Son. The divine substance is revealed to us in the Son, who is the image of the invisible God. It is as the Son that the eternal life, which was with the Father, was manifested unto us. He who declares unto us God, whom none hath seen, the Word, is God (John 1), He is truth, substance; and the beloved disciple testifies of Him: He is the true God and eternal life. And as the Lord Jesus is the heir, the end and consummation of all things and the beginning of all things, and the eternal Word before all things, the apostle Paul tells us (4) that throughout the course of history, in providence, he beareth all things with the word of his power.* If it was not for Jesus and for the atonement, if it was not for the Lamb foreordained from the foundation of the world, the history of this world would never have been continued after the fall of man. The reason why God in patience and long-suffering continues the ages, delays judgment, and sends forth the gracious and life-sustaining influences of His Spirit to arrest the process of decay and disintegration ushered in by sin, is that Jesus the Lord is the restorer; and it is the good pleasure of the Father’s will to reconcile in Him all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His Cross. But not merely are all things upheld for the sake of Christ, but also through and in Him. He by whom all things were made is the life of all things. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I also work." He is the inherent energy, truth and beauty of all things. He is as it were the spirit, the symmetry, the logic and substance of all that exists. By Him princes’ rule and senators decree justice. In Him every truth is rooted. By Him everything that is firm stands. By Him all things are continued; for He is the Word of God - the expression of the eternal thoughts and truths of the Most High. [*"The Son of God is a person; for He has the word." (BENGEL.)]

Although the history of Israel is in many respects unique, yet it is also to be viewed as a specimen of the history of all mankind. If we had an inspired record of the history of nations, we should see

that in all history Christ is the centre and the moving as well as the upholding power. Moses saw from the beginning that the heathen would not possess this light of knowledge, and would ascribe to themselves what is manifestly only the work of Jehovah. (Deuteronomy 32:27-38.) Thus it happened literally in the case of Ashur, which ought to have recognized the hand of Jehovah in their victory over the surrounding nations and their gods, as well as over Israel and Juda, but who ascribed glory to themselves, and boasted in their praise. (Isaiah 10:8-15.) The examples of Nebuchadnezzar, Darius, and Cyrus show how the heathen might have traced the guidance of Jehovah in their own history."1 It is easy for us to see how the great victories of the Greeks, by which they conquered the Eastern Power, before which the whole world trembled, how the establishment of the Roman Empire, and the unity and communication thereby established among many nations - how all the great movements of the past were subservient to the spread of Christ's gospel and the gathering of His church. All nations must be evangelized (Matthew 24:14); and hence doors, which for centuries seemed hopelessly closed, are opened through events which apparently are quite secular in origin and spirit, but which are only instruments in the hands of Him who openeth, and no man shutteth.2(1BAUMGARTEN, Apostelgeschichte, 1:350.2Think, for instance, of the way in which China, only a few years ago, was opened to the Christian missionaries.)

It is the Lord Jesus who is moving all things, carrying on by His wisdom and power the development and progress of all things, restraining and overruling, guiding and blessing, that the purpose of God may be accomplished, and that ultimately the kingdom may come.

Christ is Lord of all. The whole universe centers in Him. A star appears at the time of the Messiah's advent. The sun loses his splendor when Jesus Christ dies upon the cross. There shall be again wonders and signs in the heavens when the Son of man shall come in power. In the material world we know that there have been many and great cycles of development. And both science and revelation teach us to look forward to a new earth. It is the Lord Jesus who shall make all things new. And all developments are borne up and moved by the word of His power. Oh, I know that the general conception which the world has of Jesus is that He is Lord of a spiritual realm, of thought and sentiment, bishop and head of ministers and pastors for edifying souls! But the world does not know that He is moving all things by the word of His power; that all politics, all statesmanship, all history, all physics, all art, all science, everything that is - all that has substance, truth, beauty, all things apart from that cancer of sin which has attached itself to it, consist by Jesus the Son of God.

Now, when the apostle has given us this idea of the wonderful glory of the Lord Jesus, the Son whom God has appointed Heir of all things, by whom He has made the worlds, who is "the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His being," who "upholdeth" and moveth "all things by the word of His power," He continues by stating something still more marvelous. Why has this wonderful and glorious being, in whom all things are summed up, and who is before all things the Father's delight and the Father's glory; why has this infinite light, this infinite power, this in finite majesty, come down to our poor earth? For what purpose? To shine? To show forth the splendour of His majesty? To teach heavenly wisdom? To rule by His just and holy might? No! He came to purge our sins. What height of glory! What depth of abasement! Infinite is His majesty, and infinite is His self-humiliation, and the depth of His love. What a glorious Lord! And what an awful sacrifice of unspeakable love, to purge our sins by Himself!

Sin has brought Him down from heaven. Our defilement has drawn Him from the height of His glory. Oh, what an expression, what a climax! "Who being the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His being, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had by Himself purged our sins."

Sin may be viewed as a transgression of God’s good, just, and holy law, deserving punishment, and bringing down the curse of God. Sin may be viewed as a disease unto death which requires healing. Sin is also defilement, and this view seems both the deepest and the most painful. Here perhaps we see most clearly and feel most painfully the difficulty, the utter impossibility, as far as man or angel is concerned, of being delivered from sin, and brought nigh unto the source of life, love, and blessedness.

Sin is a great and heavy burden. It is a departure from the Father’s house into a far country. It is ingratitude and rebelliousness, yea, even hatred of God. Power can lift and remove a burden. Compassion can seek the wayward and lost sheep, and follow it across hill, and moor, and wilderness until it finds it. Grace can stoop to declare unto an enemy the message of peace and good will. But sin is defilement. It is that which is loathsome to God, which fills His inmost being with repulsion. Think of our sins as defilement. Think of their number, of their heinousness! Who will remove this fearful and utterly loathsome iniquity which separates us hopelessly and infinitely from God in His holy and righteous love? Who will touch the leprosy? Who can take it out of the way, and cleanse the sinners, so that they appear pure and spotless in God’s sight? The Son of God came to make the purification of our sins; and this, oh marvel of marvels! by Himself. Not like the high priest in Israel, offering something as a sacrifice; not with the blood, the life of another, but by Himself. He came into contact with this sin. He was the only one who could properly understand the true nature, depth, and guilt of sin. God of God, Son of the Father, He perfectly sympathized with the Father in His loathing and abhorrence of sin; but having befriended us, and having become one with us, He could not bear the thought of our being lost. So this loathsomeness of our iniquity, as loathsome to Jesus as to the Father, He takes upon Himself, as Joshua the high priest is seen by the prophet Zechariah. Jesus, perfect in His love to the holy and righteous Father, perfect in His love to the sinful and guilty people whom He came to save, with infinite hatred of sin and with infinite love of the sinner, enters, alone and unassisted, into that awful wilderness where, as our substitute and sin-bearer, He feels the Father’s face turned away from Him. As the expression of His agony, in which faith and love endured all things and triumphed, He utters the cry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" Then Jesus the Son of God purged by Himself our sins. The manner and power of this purification form the subject of this whole epistle. But in this short expression, "By Himself He purged our sins," all is summed up. By Himself: the Son of God, the eternal Word in humanity. Himself: the priest, who is sacrifice, yea, altar, and everything that is needed for full and real expiation and reconciliation. Here is fulfilled what was prefigured on the day of atonement, when an atonement was made for Israel, to cleanse them from all sin, that they may be clean from all their sins before the Lord. (Leviticus 16:30.) Thus our great High Priest saith unto us, Ye are clean this day before God from all your sins. He is the fulfillment and reality, because He is the Son of God. "The blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin." (1 John 1:7.) The church is purchased by the blood of Him who is God. (Acts 20:28, with His own blood.) Behold the perfection of the sacrifice in the infinite dignity of the incarnate Son!*(*Although the additionby Himselfmight at first sight seem superfluous, the thought

being already indicated by the medial formποιησ■μενος, yet this full and emphatic declaration is most frequent in the apostolic writing, and both befitting the importance of the subject as well as confirmatory to our faith. [Com.1 Peter 2:24.])

Sin is taken away. Oh, what a wonderful thing is this! When once you see that Jesus the Son of God died upon the cross, and purged your sins, and that because of His obedience unto death God hath exalted Him at His right hand, that, having effected by Himself this purification, He entered into heavenly glory, you have no more conscience of sin. You do not require day by day, as it were, to receive the forgiveness of your sins. You have been washed, you have been made clean, you have received full absolution and remission. Nay, more. In the heavenly sanctuary where Jesus is, sin no more can rise; and as you were crucified and buried with Him, so you are raised with Him, and seated together with Him in heavenly places. You need only to confess day by day, and with great humility, and contrition and sorrow, your continual transgressions and trespasses, that your feet may be washed. "He that is washed needeth not save to wash his feet, but is clean every whit: and ye are clean." But conscience of sin you have no longer. And although, as Christ becomes clearer and dearer, we see and feel more our sinfulness and unworthiness, although with increasing sorrow and mourning we confess our unbelief and ingratitude, we have no longer conscience of sin, the con science is free from the burden, and purified from the defilement of sin. As forgiven and accepted, as pure and spotless, as worshippers within the holiest of all, we appear before God: in the light of His love we behold, and acknowledge our sin.

Christ, the Son of God, the Lamb that was slain, is our High Priest, our Righteousness.

What other - man-invented and appointed - priest will intrude here? What other sacrifice can be mentioned? What works, offerings, or tears of our own can be thought of? Jesus, the Son of God, the Son of man, by Himself hath cleansed us from our sins. The apostle has thus spoken of the greatness of Christ. Why does Jesus reveal His majesty and His glory? Not that we should tremble, and not merely that we should reverence and adore, but that our hearts should be drawn out to Him in love. The words of Jesus Himself in Matthew 11 are quite a parallel to our passage. Jesus first shows that no man knoweth the Father but the Son, and no man knoweth the Son but the Father, and that all things are given into His hands. Why does He say this? Why does He, as it were, exalt Himself, and reveal His dignity, and His divine authority over all creation? It is only that He may embrace us in His arms; it is only that He may add immediately, "Come unto me, all ye that are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest." Oh, the more majestic and glorious Jesus appears to us, the sweeter will be our peace, and the more childlike our confidence! This great, this infinite, this glorious Jesus was attracted by your very sin, and by your very guilt, and by your very helplessness. It was to purge our iniquities that He came down from heaven. Let us know, that we have obtained mercy, and that we have received the forgiveness of our sins, even through the redemption by the blood of Christ. Let us know it, that henceforth we may no longer be the servants of sin, that hence forth we may no longer walk in darkness; but, being delivered from all fear, and brought nigh unto God in Jesus, we may walk in love even as the Saviour God has loved us, and that we who have obtained mercy may show in our daily walk that we are merciful, forgiving one another, and forbearing one another, and introducing into every branch of our life and every sphere of our activity the new principle of love, even the holy, forgiving, and renewing love of God. Amen.

03 - Hebrews 1:3-6

CHAPTER I I I.

CHRIST ABOVE THE ANGELS.

Hebrews 1:3-6.

"WHEN He had by Himself purged our sins, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high; being made so much better than the angels, as He hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. 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? And again, when He bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, He saith,* And let all the angels of God worship Him." (*Literally, when He shall have brought in again the first- begotten into the habitable earth. The time is future; and the place, not the world in general, but this earth of ours, which is the chosen sphere, where Christ is to be manifested and to reign.) The opening verses of this epistle contain, as it were, a summary of doctrine.* They set forth the glory of the Son of God. We behold Him as the Christ, the true Prophet, in whom is the perfect and ultimate revelation of God; the true Priest, not merely fulfilling all that was prefigured by Aaron (who purged by Himself our sins), but also fulfilling that which was prefigured by Melchizedec, king of righteousness, at Salem, seated in heavenly glory, and crowned with majesty at the right hand of the Power on high, exalted above all angels and principalities. We behold in these verses the nature of Christ. He is the Son, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of the Father's being. We behold the work of the Son: by Him all worlds were created; by Him all things are upheld; by Him the atonement was made; and as He is appointed the heir of all things, history shall find its consummation in His manifestation and kingdom. And here we behold also the exaltation and the future glory of the incarnate Son, given unto Him as the fruit of His obedience. He is seated at the right hand of the Father, and all things are put in subjection under Him. (*They contain a summary of the first chapter and the germ of all truths expounded in this epistle. The following analysis of Bengel is useful. "His Majesty is set forth (1)Absolutelyby the very name 'Son,' and by three glorious predicates, 'Whom He hath appointed,' 'By whom He made the worlds,' 'Who sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;' thus His course is described from the beginning of all things till He reached the goal (Hebrews 1:2-3). (2)Relatively, in comparison with the angels (Hebrews 1:4): theconfirmationof this follows, and the very name 'Son' is proved at verse 5; the 'heirship,'Hebrews 1:6-9; the 'making the worlds,'Hebrews 1:10-12; the sitting at the right hand of God,Hebrews 1:13-14.") Is it more wonderful to see the Son of God in Bethlehem as a little babe, or to see the Son of Man at the right hand of the Father? Is it more marvellous to see the Counsellor, the Wonderful, The mighty God, The Prince of Peace, the everlasting Father, a child born unto us, and a Son given unto us - or to see the Son of Man, and in Him the dust of earth, seated at the right hand of God? The High Priest entered once a year into the holy of holies; but who would have ventured to abide there, or to take up his position next to the Cherubim, where the glory of the Most High was revealed? But Jesus, the Son of Man, ascended, and by His own power, and in His

own right, as well as by the appointment of the Father, He is enthroned, crowned with glory and majesty. On the wings of omnipotent love He came down from heaven; but to return to heaven, omnipotence and love were not sufficient. It was comparatively easy (if I may use this expression of the most stupendous miracle) for the Son of God to humble Himself, and to come down to this earth; but to return to heaven, it was necessary for Him to be baptized with the baptism of suffering, and to die the death upon the accursed tree. Not as He came down did He ascend again; for it was necessary that He who in infinite grace had taken our position should bear and remove our burden and overcome our enemies. Therefore was His soul straitened to be baptized with His baptism; and therefore, from the first moment that He appeared in Jerusalem, He knew that the temple of His sacred body was to be broken, and He looked forward to the decease which He should accomplish on that mount. Not as He came did He ascend again; for He came as the Son of God; but He returned not merely as the Son of God, but as the Son of God incarnate, the Son of David, our brother and our Lord. Not as He came did He ascend again; for He came alone, the Good Shepherd, moved with boundless compassion when He thought of the lost and perishing sheep in the wilderness; but He returned with the saved sheep upon His shoulder, rejoicing and bringing it to a heavenly and eternal home. He went back again, not merely triumphing, but He who had gone forth weeping, bearing precious seed, who Himself had been sown, by His sacrifice unto death, returned, bringing His sheaves with Him. There had been given unto Him in His resurrection the Bride, the Church; she was raised with Him to be seated with Himself in heavenly places. It was when He had by Himself purged our sins that He sat down at the right hand of God; by the power of His blood He entered into the holy of holies; as the Lamb slain God exalted Him, and gave Him a name which is above every name.

"The Father said unto Him, Sit thou at my right hand." But it is equally true that the Lord Jesus Himself ascended, entered into the most holy sanctuary, and took His place at the right hand of God. He sat down: this expression shows that it was not merely the exaltation by the Father, but His own act and right; for Scripture is careful to teach us not only the sub ordination of the Son, but also His equality with the Father. Thus are we taught that the Father raised up Jesus, and also that Jesus had power to lay down His life, and He had power to take it again: "The Good Shepherd giveth His life for the sheep." "No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again." For this purpose the Son of God came down to earth, that through suffering, and after having purged our sins, He might return to glory, that in His transfigured humanity He should have the glory, which as the Son He had with .the Father before the foundation of the world. The cross was the only way to the throne. The session at the right hand of God is spoken of in Scripture exclusively as of the Messiah, the Son of David, the Lord, who is God and man. And now, the God-Man, the Son of God incarnate, Jesus who is the Christ, being exalted to the right hand of the Father, the apostle teaches us that God has given to Him a more excellent name than the angels, and that He has obtained this name by inheritance. He does not speak here merely of the Son of God in His deity; for if He spoke of Him as the Son of God merely, would it not only be superfluous, but would it not be also blasphemous and irreverent, to speak of Him who is Lord over all as greater than the angels? But when he speaks of Jesus the Son of God and the Son of Man, then is it necessary, salutary, and comforting for us to know that this Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, formed in fashion as a man, in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin, that Jesus in His humanity is now exalted, and that a name is given to Him above all angels. We who live in the West think a name of slight importance; but God always

taught His people to attach great importance to names. The first petition in the Lord's Prayer is, "Hallowed be Thy name;" and all the blessings and privileges which God bestowed upon Israel are summed up in this, that God revealed unto them His name. The name is the outward expression and the pledge and seal of all that a person really and substantially is; and when it says that the Son of God has received a higher name than the angels, it means that, not only in degree, but in kind, He is high above them. He has obtained it by inheritance; that is to say, God decreed from all eternity to give that name unto Him, as the Son and Mediator. In the book of Revelation we are told that the Son has a name which no man knoweth. There is an infinite, incomprehensible depth and mystery in the Son as there is in the Father; and as no man knoweth the Father save the Son, so no man knoweth the Son but the Father. But an excellent name, a name which is above every name, has been revealed unto us; and such is the loving-kindness of God, that Christ's highest name and His sweetest name are identical; even Jesus, "who saves His people from their sins."

Now, in order to prove this truth, the apostle reminds the Hebrews of a number of passages in which the Messiah is spoken of. And here let us briefly consider the method according to which the quotations are given. We must notice that the author of the Epistle to the Hebrews always quotes the Scriptures as the Word of God. He does not say, 'as David says,' or 'as Isaiah says,' or 'as Moses says,' but whenever he quotes from Moses and the prophets he always quotes their words as the words of God, or "as the Holy Ghost saith," or "as One saith;" because among the Hebrews it was well known and firmly believed that "all Scripture was given by inspiration of God," and that every word of God is pure. Our Saviour, when He quotes the Scriptures, sometimes says "the Scripture," sometimes "the prophets," sometimes "David," sometimes "Isaiah." And so also the apostles do not always introduce quotations from Scripture in the same manner. The human and the divine character of the word must both be acknowledged and remembered. According to the spiritual condition of the persons addressed, and according to the purpose of the speaker, is the manner in which the words are introduced as God's or the words of Moses, etc. Sometimes the words, which are manifestly the utterance of Jehovah, are quoted: Well doth Isaiah say, and Isaiah is very bold, and this both by the Lord Jesus and the apostles. So fully and freely is the human channel in all its individuality and spontaneity acknowledged, though the divine authority and the inspiration of the Holy Ghost are always maintained and pre supposed. Our Lord appeals even to the books of Moses as "your law;" when Israel does not recognize the Word incarnate, He refers them to the document which they held as their own, and in which they trusted, not knowing its power and spirit. To him who has not the word abiding in him, the books of Isaiah, Matthew, Paul, are simply the writings of these men. To us they are the word of God. In this epistle all quotations are traced direct to the Lord Himself, thus corresponding with, and carrying out, the key-note struck in the first verse of this epistle: "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, hath in these last days spoken unto us by His Son."

Jesus, after His resurrection, opened unto His disciples the Scriptures. He spoke of Moses and of the prophets, and specially mentioned the Psalms; and we read, "Then opened He their understandings that they might understand the Scriptures;" and after the day of Pentecost the Holy Ghost brought all things to their remembrance, all the words and instructions He had given to them; and we see from the Acts of the Apostles that they saw, as it were, the whole edifice of Scripture in the grandeur and symmetry of its structure. Now they were full of light. These very men who before were not able to understand what they saw with their own eyes, still less to

comprehend His words, remembered and understood now that all these things happened that the Scripture might be fulfilled. (John 2:22; John 20:9.) The infallible instructions of the Son of Man were brought back to their remembrance by the Great Teacher’s aid. And shall we not therefore attach the greatest value and the greatest importance, as well as the most implicit and docile faith, to the explanations given in the Acts of the Apostles, in the Epistles, and in the Revelation, of quotations from the Scriptures? We are bound by a blessed tie to their interpretations.*(*Notwithstanding many plausible objections to and limitations of this assertion, I cannot think and say otherwise. I believe also in the inexhaustible, many-sided, and eternal meaning of Scripture above the capacity and measure of the prophet, or of any individual or any period of the church. This has been expressed by Stier as the "Vollsinn," and by another in the quaint and somewhat paradoxical sentence - Whatever Scripturecanmean, itdoesmean.)

David is called a "patriarch" on account of the position which he held in the history of Israel; a "prophet" because, as he tells us, "The Spirit of the Lord spake by me, and His word was in my tongue." (2 Samuel 23:2.) But he was also a type in his own character and history of that One who was to come. Many people read the Scriptures without considering the perspective of Scripture. It appears to them as a picture, so to speak, upon a flat surface, in which there is no perspective; they do not see the gradual unfolding and development; they do not perceive the historical basis upon which prophecies rest, and the varying shades and tints which their peculiar position and distance in reference to the fulfillment gives them. They do not remember that the Lord Jesus Christ had His goings forth from of old, from everlasting; that His condescension goes back far into the ages, and that the whole Jewish nation was, as it were, the mother out of which the Messiah proceeded. Thus their history not only contained prophecy, but their history is prophecy. The evangelist Matthew gives us the key to the whole Jewish history in the first chapter, when he tells us that the infant Jesus was taken by Joseph and His mother Mary into Egypt, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Israel and Israel’s history are typical; they are installments as well as shadows of the great history.

It is very wonderful how, in God’s ways, fixed necessity and liberty goes hand in hand. In a way which we cannot understand, but which we can admire and adore, God’s counsel must stand fast; while His people act and move in perfect liberty, and His enemies are left to freedom and dealt with in patience and justice. From all eternity Jesus is appointed the Son of David; but the development of history goes through liberty, the exercises of faith, of hope, of patience, of love, of joy, of suffering. Everything that is human is in sweetest harmony with that unfailing and unchangeable purpose of God’s love which must surely come to pass, even as in the greatest sin - the crucifixion of our Lord - the determinate counsel of God was fulfilled; and yet it was "with wicked hands," and of their own free choice, that the Jews crucified the divine and loving Saviour. This same blending of liberty and necessity is seen in the history of the patriarch. By a free choice of faith Abram, who was chosen to be the father of Israel, and of all who are blessed in the Messiah, left his father’s house, and followed God. By faith he received the promise of Isaac, and, as a reward of his implicit confidence in the truth of God and in his death-conquering power, the eternal promise was renewed and sealed to him. And the inward clinging of the soul to the word of the Redeemer God, which amidst many struggles and failings characterized Jacob, who is Israel, breaks forth, interrupting the inspired (objective) predictions, when on his death bed he exclaims, I have waited for thy salvation. Quietly and gently God fulfilled His counsel, hidden as yet to David,

when the son of Jesse was taken from the sheep-folds. He did not know the wonderful significance of that morning when Samuel came to his father’s house, and all his brothers passed before him, and David, in the simplicity and unconsciousness of his youth, was chosen and anointed to be king over Israel. It took some time - it took many years of bitter sorrow, of painful conflicts - before the meaning of that act was explained to David himself. And at last, when through all the varied and profound discipline which he underwent, and by the inward teaching and the heart-renewing work of the Holy Ghost, God brought out in David, according to his limited and human measure, what in perfection is only in the Son and Lord of David, he went forth a true king of Israel - a man after the heart of God, strong in faith and love to the Most High, gentle and meek toward men, anointed by the Spirit, upheld by loyal and free Israelites, who loved him intensely and were willing to die for him, and yet not lifting up his heart above his brothers, but desiring to rule with the. righteousness of meekness, and to show forth judgment and truth; to found his kingdom upon the word of God, upon knowledge and light, justice and love, concord and brotherly affection; building his dominion more upon the hundred golden pillars (as we might call them) of the Psalms, founding his throne on the firm foundation of his union with all the godly in the land, of their harmony in the praise and joy of Jehovah. Think of him thus as a parable, as it were. Think of this shepherd king, by the grace of God and the loving and free choice of God-fearing men - a king whose power rests upon invisible pillars, not upon outward authority, and pomp, and splendour. He gathered round about him not that which was high and lofty and lifted up; he looked not, like Saul, to that which seemed strong and mighty, but to the meek of the earth, the excellent, who put their trust in Jehovah, those who knew how to praise and to serve the God of their fathers. Thus was David a true king after the heart and mind of God; and when he thought of building a house of God, then God sent unto him the prophet Nathan, and confirmed to him the promise, that as he was king over Israel, so his seed was to rule after him; that the throne of David was to be an everlasting throne. Of that seed of David it was also said that God would be a Father unto him,1 and he should be God’s son. David is quite overcome with the condescension and love of God, and, being filled with the Spirit, he saw that Solomon was not the completion of this prediction, and that he to whom God had thus promised to be a Father was to be One infinitely greater and higher than himself or his own children; that God spake of that One for whom all the fathers looked, and waited as the revelation and full realization of God’s salvation. I may say of David as it was said of John the Baptist - "He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light" - He was not that King, but was sent to witness and to prefigure that King - the Son of the Most High. And thus, in all the sufferings and exaltations of David, in all the events and experiences of his life, he felt and saw that the lowest and deepest foundation of his own life was the Messiah, Christ Himself; that his own sufferings were ultimately to be fulfilled in the Son, who was above all. And therefore it is that in the Psalms of David we find David; his very heart and soul, the man himself; but we find also Christ. David and Christ are completely identified. David, according to his limited measure, is an installment of Christ. He is a type of Christ; and therefore that psalm which was an expression of David’s experience, in which he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" is also the expression of the experience which no finite mind can fathom; the Lord Jesus on the cross utters these very words! What marvellous poetry is here, not in words merely, but in life and history! What wonderful condescension! He who is Jehovah, David’s Lord, is mirrored forth by the son of Jesse. David’s Son is none other than the Son of God, and He shall rule over Israel forever. "I will give you the sure mercies of David." There is no other man in Scripture thus identified with Jesus

Christ;2 and therefore He is emphatically called "the Son of David." It is in this light that we must read the expressions quoted here by the apostle from the second psalm. (12 Samuel 7. A very important chapter; commencement of a new phase of Israel’s history; one of those turning-points with which commences a new period. The promise refers primarily to Solomon, who built the temple, who reigned in peace, and who extended the kingdom in manifested and acknowledged glory. The typical character of Solomon is set forth clearly in Psalm 72, where the Messiah, the Prince of Peace, the Divine King and Lord is described, and his reign of truth and prosperity. In1 Chronicles 17:17also it is evident that David knew the fulfillment was in the distant future: "Thou hast also spoken of thy servant’s house for a great while to come, and hast regarded me according to the estate of a man of high degree, O Lord God." Luther translates, "Thou hast regarded me in der Gestalt eines Menschen, der in der Hohe Gott der Herr ist," in the appearance of a man, who in the height is God the Lord. Stier renders, "And this is the manner of a man, who is God the Lord."2David therefore often stands for Messiah.Hosea 3:5;Ezekiel 34:23, etc.)

Most majestic is the book of Psalms. Very significant and striking is the commencement of this book, so grand and sweet, so precious to all the children of God, even as it was peculiarly near and dear to the Lord Jesus during His life on earth. The book of Psalms commences with two psalms, which have no superscription. The first chapters in the books of Scripture are often, as it were, the expressive announcement of the subsequent chapters; the countenance of the whole; the short, compressed key-note is struck; out of the abundance of the heart the inspired author seems to utter immediately the sum and substance of his commission. In the first two psalms we have a summary of the whole book. The first word is Blessed, and the conclusion of the second psalm is, "Blessed are all they that trust in Him."1 For God’s thoughts are always thoughts of love. And though by reason of our disobedience, and the corruption of our heart, we cannot obtain the blessing which the law promises to all who keep it (Psalm 1), the promise of David’s son was given in order to bring unto us new and greater blessing through the marvels of redemption. (Psalm 2) As the apostle Peter said, "Unto you first, God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you." All the thoughts and purposes of God toward His people are blessings.2(1Psalm 1 was viewed as a prologue of the whole collection. Comp.Acts 13:33, where the words, "Thou art my Son," are quoted as the first psalm. The ancient Jewish view is expressed in the beautiful saying - The first psalm begins and ends with blessing. That is because the first and second psalms are one. The first psalm is didactic, a response, as it were, to the law of Moses (David’s Bible); the second prophetic, Messiah’s kingdom.2Luther onPsalms 2:7: "Here the whole law is abrogated, and the office of Christ most clearly and distinctly described. He teaches not whatweare; for this the law doeth; but He teaches whoHeis, the Son of God, that we may receive Him, and use His gifts with rejoicing and delight.") The psalmist represents in the second psalm all the world united against God; He describes their determined, inward, and zealous opposition to Him. He describes God in His holy calmness, in His quiet majesty. He has laid the foundation, He has ordered the method, rule, and triumph of His house from all eternity. He can afford to give centuries and thousands of years to His enemies to mature all their plans, to utter all their thoughts, to bring forth all their objections, and to try all their experiments. He is patient also, and long-suffering; not willing that any should perish, but that sinners should turn unto Him and live. But He has anointed His holy King. He has appointed One - that wonderful person, Who is His representative and the sceptre of His might - God and man, through Whom the power and the pleasure of the Lord are to be established on the earth. And this Son is now declaring to us the decree, the counsel according

to the good pleasure of His will, the purpose which cannot be changed, the promise which standeth firm from eternity to eternity: "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten Thee."

Now what this passage means is evident from the exposition given to us by the apostles. It refers to the resurrection of Jesus. He was the Son of God before the incarnation. We must ever hold fast the fundamental truth of the eternal, essential sonship of our Lord. It was the Son who was sent into the world, and given unto us by the Father. Thus Scripture teaches; and not that He who was sent and was born of the Virgin Mary thus and then became the Son. At the incarnation the Son of God became man. (Galatians 4:4.) But the truth specially taught here is, that the Son of David, the Theocratic King, the Messiah, who is to subdue all ungodliness on the earth, and to exalt all who trust in Him, is "declared to be the Son of God with power."

Let us consider the apostolic interpretations of this psalm. In the book of Acts (Acts 13:32) the apostle Paul, speaking of the resurrection, said: "And we declare unto you glad tidings, how that the promise which was made unto the fathers, God hath fulfilled the same unto us their children, in that He hath raised up Jesus again; as it is also written in the second psalm, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He said on this wise, I will give you the sure mercies of David." Here the general and comprehensive view is taken of Jesus as the Messiah and fulfiller of all God's promises; and the "to-day" of the second psalm is referred to the resurrection. In like manner the apostle writes to the Romans, with evident reference to our psalm: "His Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh; and declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Analyzing now the comprehensive term Messiah into its constituent parts - Prophet, Priest, and King - we notice, besides the above reference to His kingship, that Peter in his address to the Jews quotes the prophecy of Moses - "A Prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren" (Acts 3:22); even, as he says, that "God, having raised up His Son Jesus, sent Him to bless you." (Acts 3:26.) And as to the priestly office, Paul declares that Christ glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest, but He that said unto Him, "Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee."*(*InRevelation 2:27we see that the second psalm, though applying directly to the resurrection, extends to the time of the second advent, when Messiah shall declare the decree to the Gentiles. "Now" (Psalms 2:10) the time of grace, "then" (Psalms 2:5) the day of judgment. Although the words are thus connected with the resurrection of Christ, we must still view them as referring also (implicitly and fundamentally) to the eternal, essential sonship. Both aspects, the eternal and historical, are found in the prophetic writings: Prov. 8 contains the germ of the doctrine of the eternal generation of the Son. "To-day" is thus viewed by the church fathers to refer to the timeless and eternal generation.)

Thus in the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, when as Messiah He was fully brought into His prophetic, priestly, and regal dignity, was fulfilled the word - "Thou art my Son." Unto which of the angels said God this at any time? What angel has a name like this name? What angel can be compared with our Lord, the Man Christ Jesus, who was crucified and liveth for evermore? The apostle passes on to another passage, which has no reference to the first coming, but to Christ's second advent, when God shall bring in again into the inhabited earth the First Begotten. The 97th Psalm speaks of the (return or) coming of Jehovah to the earth to subdue His enemies, and to be the rejoicing of His people. The psalm commences with a call to the in habitants of the land, and to

all the earth, with the multitude of isles, to rejoice at the coming of the Lord Jehovah, who shall reign and deliver the godly, and manifest His glory. It is the advent in which, as Zechariah almost in the same words predicts, Jehovah shall be King overall the earth. (Zech. 14) The period between the first and second advent is not beheld by the prophetic psalmist. The world during this interval seeth Jesus no more. He is hid. The heavens contain Him, and only His people see Him by faith, and know His presence by the indwelling Spirit. He is ruling the world; but He is not known, not recognized. But God shall bring Him in again, He shall bring Him into sight and manifestation. Not as the only-begotten, mark; for as the only-begotten He came in His incarnation (John 1), but as the first-begotten; that is, as the risen Lord, the second Adam, the first-begotten of the dead, the first-born among many brethren. Thus the prophet is supplemented by the apostle. Jehovah, of whom the psalmist speaks, is identified by the apostle with the risen Jesus, the Son of God. Now at His coming (the second, as we Christians know, not coincident with the first, as according to the prophetic perspective ancient Israel believed) the world is divided into the righteous, the upright in heart, who worship and love God; and idolaters, that serve graven images, and boast themselves of idols Just as in the Apocalypse we read the world is divided into the saints of God, and those who worship the beast and his image, and receive his mark upon their foreheads and in their hands. The advent of Jehovah brings judgment and confusion to the idolaters, and a harvest of light and joy to the godly, (Hebrews 1:11.)

Now, bringing in the glorified Son, God the Father, who alone has the right to command creatures to perform acts of worship and adoration, saith unto the angels, "Worship Him."*(*The angels are mentioned frequently in connection with the second advent. (Matthew 16:27; Matthew 25:31;1 Thessalonians 4:16;2 Thessalonians 1:7.)

Thus is humanity in the person of Messiah exalted far above any creature. Thus the consummation of all history, and the perfect manifestation of God’s glory to the rejoicing adoration of angels and men, will be in the Lord Jesus, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, who is one with us by a link which can never be severed. Who then is like unto Jesus? Who like Him is adorable? Holiness and goodness are worthy of adoration only in their essenceand source. He, whom holy angels are called by God to worship, must be essential holiness, goodness, love - must be none other but the infinite and eternal, the ever blessed and coequal Son of the Most High.*(*We shall consider m our next lecture the reason why the apostle Paul institutes this comparison between the incarnate Son of God and the angelic creation.)

How near is Jesus unto us, although He is so high above us! This is the very reason why God has exalted Him. This is the reason why He is so high above everything, above all powers and dominions; that He who has all power and love may be visible and accessible; that every one may see Him, and draw near to Him; that out of the lowest depths we may behold Him; and that from the utmost corner of the land we may cry unto Him, and be saved. Jesus is exalted for the very purpose of being a Prince and a Saviour, to give repentance and remission of sins. If Jesus was not so high, would He be so nigh? He who is omniscient, omnipotent, all-wise, all-loving, whose sympathy is full of human tenderness, is in the holy of holies for the very purpose that He may succour, comfort, and uphold us during the clays of our trial and sorrow, that He may be a present help in time of trouble. Jesus is exalted above all, that He may fill us with His power and love. He is high above us, that, looking unto Him, the author and finisher of faith, unto Him who through the cross entered into glory, seeing Him constantly above us, the Lamb in the midst of the throne, we

may run with patience the race set before us. With all the holy angels and all the saints of God we look unto Him, we worship and rejoice as an old father of the German Church says - "Jesus is in heaven; therefore it is easy for a poor sinner to have his heart in heaven. Let Jesus dwell in the heart, and then heaven will be in the heart." Amen.

04 - Hebrews 1:5-14 - Hebrews 2:1-4

CHAPTER I V.

CHRIST ABOVE THE ANGELS.

Hebrews 1:5-14 - Hebrews 2:1-4.

I CONTINUE the argument of the apostle to prove that Jesus is exalted above the angels. He began with the second psalm, in which, based upon the promise which God gave unto David, and which is recorded in the second book of Samuel, the glory of the Messiah, as the omnipotent King of all nations, appointed and upheld by the Father, is described, founded as it is upon the eternal and essential Sonship which was manifested in His resurrection from the dead. Well known was this psalm among the Jews, and well understood was it that it spoke of the divine dignity of the Messiah; for it was in the light of this psalm that Nathanael, as soon as Jesus manifested Himself unto Him as the searcher of hearts, exclaimed, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." It was on the basis of this psalm that the high priest adjured Jesus to tell him whether He was the Christ, the Son of the living God.* Nathanael and all Israelities knew that the Messiah, who was to be King, was to be in the dignity and glory of the Son of God. As in the second Psalm the Son of David is addressed in a way in which God never spoke to any of the angels, so in the 97th Psalm, which describes the coming, or in New Testament light the return, of Messiah to earth, He is said to be Lord and King, and all angels are commanded to worship Him. The 97th Psalm speaks of the advent of the Messiah, which is yet in the future, to which both the believing synagogue and the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ are looking, when He is to be manifested in great power, and to be acknowledged as King of the whole earth. Fire and darkness go before Him, and He shall execute judgment upon the nations, and divide the idolaters from the faithful, and the wicked from the godly. For in this psalm the world is described as in the same condition as that referred to in the book of the Revelation. When Jehovah comes, the man who is to be the Lord and King of the whole earth (as is said also in Zechariah and all the prophets), then shall all idolaters be confounded, and they that are upright in heart shall enter into the harvest of light. And so in the book of Revelation, His own people are they who have not worshipped the beast and yielded to idolatry; whereas all the rest of the world shall have fallen away both from the Son and from the Father. In our own day, religious questions begin to concentre on this point - Is God the Creator? or is there no God? Men who deny that Jesus is the Son, begin to deny the Father also. (*Hales says the sole application of this illustrious prophecy to the Messiah was the unquestionable doctrine of the primitive Jewish Church. He adds a few quotations: "Our masters deliver, that the blessed God said unto Messiah, Son of David (who is shortly to be revealed in our days), ‘Ask of me somewhat, and I will give it thee,’ as it is said inPsalms 2:7-8." The Midrash Tillim understands the Gentiles of Gog and Magog, and states that Messiah is styled "my Son," and not "a Son to me;" that is, absolutely and not relatively, as in Nathan’s prophecy.

Jarchi affirms, that whatever is sung in this psalm our masters interpreted of Messiah the King; but "according to the sound of the words, and for the confusion of the heretics (i.e. Christians), it is

convenient that we expound it of David." From Vise. MANDEVILLE'S Horae Hebraicae.) The apostle reminds us, that while Jesus is thus spoken of, as the Son, the angels are only the swift and penetrating messengers in obedience to the power and will of God. He proceeds to another psalm, the 45th, and he asks the question: "To which of the angels said He at any time, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom?" That 45th Psalm is unique among all the Psalms of David. It is the germ of the Song of Solomon. If there is a doubt whether the Song of Solomon refers to Jehovah in His covenant relation to His people, then it must likewise be doubtful whether this 45th Psalm refers to the Bridegroom, who is to be the divine Man, the Lord of Israel; and if not, it is impossible to explain how this psalm finds its way into a collection of hymns, whose great and constant theme is God as King and Lord of Israel and the nations. But we see from the opening verses that it is a mysterious psalm, and that here, as in all the Scriptures, we have to search and dig below the surface, that we may discover the hidden treasure of pure gold which rewards those who pray to behold the wonders of God's teaching. The author of the psalm is himself astonished at the wonderful, beautiful, and multitudinous thoughts which rose within his heart, and looks upon them as given to him by a higher power, he feels that he is carried away by a mighty afflatus, by a powerful tide, that he is only the pen of a ready writer; and he begins to consider the thoughts which are in him, but not of him. His heart is overflowing with the abundance of the revelation which the Lord God is giving unto him. Then he beholds in the Spirit one who is beautiful and fair, a true and real man, yet free from all imperfection and all defilement; in whom there is that true beauty of holiness and uprightness which manifests itself in words of truth and grace, poured into His lips. And this holy and lovely One, although He belongs to the human race, is yet not of them, but stands quite by Himself, and towers high above them, even as heaven is above earth. He is One with us, yet above all the children of Adam. He is also the mighty One, El Gibbor, the mighty God, who (compare Isaiah 9:6) subdues all enemies by that meekness and righteousness which He introduces into the world. And because He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, therefore God anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows; or, in New Testament language, "because He was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross, therefore God highly exalted Him." The Son of man is the Christ; He is anointed with the Holy Ghost, the oil of gladness, above all His equals. As He speaks also in the prophet Isaiah, "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me, because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to pro claim liberty to the captives; to give to them that mourn beauty for ashes, the oil of joy for mourning, the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness." The psalm thus reveals unto us the mystery of the Trinity - the Son, God and man in one person, "fairer than any of the children of men," obedient unto death, exalted by the Father, and anointed by the Holy Ghost. God the Father thus addresses the Son of man - "Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom."*(*Thereis abundant evidence to prove that the Jews applied this psalm to Messiah. Stier says: "We cannot enter into controversy with those who see in this psalm only a marriage song or hymn to an earthly king, without first discussing the general principles of Scripture faith. . . ." This psalm is not isolated in the Bible. (Comp.Isaiah 54:5; Isaiah 62:5;Jeremiah 3:1;Ezekiel 16:8; Hosea and Canticlespassim;John 3:29;Matthew 9:25;Matthew 22:25;Ephesians 5:32;2 Corinthians 11:2;Revelation 19:21.) Gibbor is a title of Messiah. He is mighty to save.

Compare also with verse 6 the Jewish tradition: "We have heard that Christ abideth for ever." [John 12:34.]) To which of the angels was ever language addressed as unto this One, who indeed is born of a woman, the Son of man, a descendant of David, who lived upon earth the servant of God, honouring the law of Moses, and obedient to all the commandments of God? But to Him the Father has given a throne and a sceptre for ever, and speaks to Him as His equal from all eternity unto all ages. But the apostle continues by quoting another psalm. Christ is in all the psalms; they speak of Him. The divinity and humanity of the Lord are set forth in all the Scriptures. It is the delight of the Father, in all the Word, to honour the Son, even as it is the delight of the Son continually to point to the Father that we may see His glory. The apostle refers to the 102nd Psalm - a psalm which, without apostolic teaching, I doubt if any of us would have had the boldness so to apply; for in many respects it is the most remarkable of all the psalms - the psalm of the afflicted One while His soul is overwhelmed within Him in great affliction, and sorrow, and anxious fear. He has been righteous, He has been holy; but men persecute Him. He is forsaken, His tears are His meat day and night, and yet God had exalted Him. God had shown unto Him that He was His chosen One; God had prospered Him up to a certain point; He upheld Him, carried Him through, sustained and honoured Him, caused His work to prosper and His word to bring forth fruit. But then, instead of entering into glory, He felt that His path was shut up, that all His people forsook Him and rejected Him; that instead of light there was darkness; that instead of a throne there was the cross before Him. God had lifted Him up, given Him power, given Him the hearts of His people. God had for thirty-three years continually said unto Him, "Thou art my Son. Thou art my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect, in whom my soul is well pleased;" and at last, in the middle of His days, before His work was completed, He was to be cut off. Persecution and dismay, and the unbelief of the people, met Him; and His soul was "exceeding sorrowful, even unto death." The shadow of the cross fell into His heart, and His soul was straitened within Him.

Thus, in the 12th chapter of the gospel of John, we read that His soul was sorrowful in the anticipation of that hour, for the sake of which He had come into the world. Thus it was in the garden of Gethsemane, and yet He knew and believed that God would deliver Him. And when this afflicted One pours out His heart He says, "Thou wilt arise, and have mercy upon Zion. The time to favour her, the appointed time, will come." He rests with firm faith on the promises of God, in which light and glory are secured to Israel. God’s counsel must stand, His counsel must be fulfilled. Then it is that God the Father replies to Him, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.* "Then it is that God the Father replies with this word of assurance to this afflicted, mourning, distressed One, reminding Him that although for a little season He has become a servant, and entered into darkness and sorrow, though He has humbled Himself, and feels like David, "I am a worm and not a man," yet is He none other but the Lord, the Word, the Creator of heaven and earth. He was in the beginning with the Father, when the word went forth from God to lay the foundations of the earth. By Him also the heavens were framed. He is the Eternal, the First and the Last, who shall remain the same forever. Although the elements shall melt away, and the heavens and earth be moved; although the world in its present phase shall pass away and be put off like an old vesture, yet this suffering One is the Lord; He is the same, and His years fail not.2(1Stier: The Messiah receives here the mighty answer of God, It is impossible for Thee to succumb; for Thou art the Living One with me from all eternity. Christ is here presented as Creator; He is Lord (Jehovah); the earth is His and the fullness thereof.

2InHorce Hebraicae, already quoted, interesting extracts are given (pp. 100-102) to prove that the ancient Jews referred this psalm to Messiah and His days. On verse 27, "But thou art He," the Jews say that Ani and Attah and Hu, I and Thou and He, are names of God denoting three persons; and their anthem, publicly sung on the last day of their feast of tabernacles, is, "For thy sake, O our Creator Hosanna; for thy sake, O our Redeemer Hosanna; for thy sake, O our Seeker Hosanna!" as if, says Bishop Patrick, they beseeched the blessed Trinity to save them and send them help.)

How marvellous is this! how incomprehensible this union of divine and human, of eternity and time, sadness and omnipotence! Do not wonder that such language of anguish, faintness, and sorrow, of agonizing faith, is attributed by the Holy Ghost to Jesus. Remember that the life of Jesus was a life of faith, a real, true, and earnest conflict; that "He is the author and finisher of faith;" and that, although He continually took firm hold of the promises of God, yet His feeling of sorrow, His sense of His utter dependence on God, His anxious looking forward to His last sufferings, all this was a reality. He gained the victory by faith; He knew that He was through suffering returning to the Father; He knew that as Son of man and Redeemer of His people He would be glorified with the glory which He had with the Father before the foundations of the world were laid. To which of the angels said God at any time, as He said to the meek and lowly Jesus, "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth "?*(*Kurtz sums up the contrast between the angels and the Lord Jesus: (1) The angels are servants in the kingdom; the Son has a throne, and is therefore Ruler. (2) They work in the shape or power of the lower elements (wind and fire); He by the moral power of righteousness. (3) Their work is changing and transitory; Christ’s rule immutable and eternal.) And lastly the apostle quotes the short but most comprehensive 110th Psalm. Of all the psalms it is most frequently quoted in the New Testament. Martin Luther says this is "Der Haupt Psalm" - the chief psalm, the head psalm, the psalm which was the greatest strength and consolation to him, as it ought to be to all God’s people. "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." The Jews in the time of Jesus all knew that this psalm referred to the Messiah. There was not the slightest doubt about this. Hence our blessed Saviour asks them this question - How is it that David, speaking of the Messiah, in the Spirit, by the Holy Ghost, calls Him Lord, if He is his Son? Here was a dilemma. The 110th Psalm refers to the Messiah; how then does David call Him Lord? In three of the gospels is this passage quoted; and the question of our Saviour is so important and so much a leading central one that all the (synoptic) evangelists reported it. Christ always referred the Scripture unto the Holy Ghost, and in this passage He does so explicitly - "David in the Spirit;" that is to say, when by the Holy Ghost there were revealed to him eternal truths. It was impossible for man’s mind, unassisted, to know what is declared in this psalm, to rise to this height, and to have the comprehensive view opened to us here. Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost (and it is to be noticed that that great model and typical sermon was nothing else but unfolding of Scripture), says to the Jews, "David did not ascend into the heavens." The Jews regarded David with the most profound veneration. They felt that Messiah was, in a peculiar sense, connected with their great king. The apostle is almost afraid to refer to David’s death and burial. And therefore he says, "Let me freely speak unto you of our father David; that he is dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day." But as a prophet, and knowing the promise of the Son of David - the Messiah - he said, "The Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand." This is the passage1 that the apostle Paul afterwards expounds so fully in our epistle, showing from it the peculiar glory of the priesthood of

Jesus as the true Melchizedec. On this psalm are based the expressions of the epistles on the ascension of Christ.2 What does it mean? That the Son of man, the Son of David, was to be exalted by God high above all things, and that He was to be placed upon the throne as His equal, endowed with all might and all dominion. And thus it is that our blessed Saviour says, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth;" and thus is it that He ascended high above all heavens, in order that in His humanity as well as in His divinity He might govern and fill all things. "Unto which of the angels said He at any time, as unto Jesus, Sit thou on my right hand?" (1"A Moonshee in India noticed that David, though himself a prophet and king, spoke here of another as his Lord. He was anxious to know who was meant. He afterwards read in Isaiah of One who suffered on account of our sins. He was anxious to know who was meant by this description. When some time after he read the creed of the Christian Church - ‘Crucified, dead, and buried; the third day He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, sitteth at the right hand of God,’ it flashed across his mind that Jesus is He of whom David speaks in the 110th Psalm." Quoted in RICHTER’S Hausbibel. (Ps. 110)2 Ephesians 1:20: "When He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand in the heavenly places." And again,1 Corinthians 15:27"For He hath put all things under His feet.") But now you may ask, Why does the apostle speak about the angels? He has shown from the 2nd Psalm, from the 97th Psalm, from 2 Samuel 7, from Chronicles, from the 110th Psalm, most clearly that this man Jesus is none else but God, Lord, of infinite and eternal Majesty; and that, therefore, in His humanity also He is highly exalted above all angels. But what is the point of this comparison? what is its importance and the inference to be drawn from it? The argument is simply this: the old dispensation, the law, was given by the mediation and administration of angels. I Jesus was above angels, then His dispensation, the new covenant, His priesthood, are high above that of the law. The Jews thought much about the angels. As Stephen said, and the apostle teaches in the epistle to the Galatians, the angels were connected with the giving of the law: "The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels. The Lord is among them, as in the holy place of Sinai." The chariots of God do not consist of anything that is material and inanimate. Intelligent living worshippers, loving and obedient spirits, are the chariots upon which God moves. Thus, in the ancient prayer of the synagogue, the angels are called the Ophanim, or the wheels. Stephen says, "You have received the law by the disposition of angels." In the epistle to the Galatians, Paul reminds them that "the law was given through the administration of angels."

Scripture speaks often of the angels. Let me remind you of some of the doctrines which the Bible contains concerning them. In the first place, human beings know nothing about angels, except what God pleases to tell them. Hence all that human poets have imagined about them is of no importance or value, unless it agrees with the record of the divine Scripture. With regard to the angels, I may notice three tendencies to error. The first tendency to error we see in the epistle to the Colossians, and we may call it "the Gnostic error," when men, following their own speculative reason, endeavour to penetrate mysteries which are not revealed to us, and form erroneous views of the angels as to their nature, and their relation to God and to Christ.

Secondly, the Romish error, according to which the angels are placed in a false mediatory position, and are invoked, when men rely upon their inter cession, or call upon their aid. The only case recorded in Scripture of the angels being invoked in any way is when David calls upon them to bless the Lord, and with His other creatures to exalt Him, their God and our God. And the third tendency is what I may call the Protestant one to think too rarely and in too isolated a manner

about them; not to consider sufficiently what is said about them in Scripture, and not to feel and remember vividly that they are constantly with us, that we and they are members of one great Family, and that the angelic worship and the worship of the church are harmonious.

Now Scripture tells us of the angels only, as it were, incidentally. It is as if someone who dwells in a great and vast realm, but who does not think it wise, necessary, or salutary to give us full and systematic knowledge of it, occasionally, as we require it, lifts the curtain, and gives us a glimpse of the perfect and harmonious whole of that world in which He is enthroned.

Notice the multitude of angels: "We have come to an innumerable company of angels." In the book of Revelation it speaks of "myriads, tens of thousands, and thousands of thousands," millions of angels. In the gospel of Luke "the multitude of the heavenly host" praise God, and announce in songs of gladness the Saviour’s birth to the shepherds. An immense, countless multitudes of angels! Let our minds expand to the idea. Let the innumerable company of angelic beings who have loved and served God for thousands of years show us how grand is that world in which we live, and in which this poor earth, on account of the blood of Jesus - the Son of God - which redeemed it, is the dearest spot. This in numerable multitude is a polity, a state. There are gradations in it, groups, orders, legions of angels. "Jacob called the name of the place Mahanaim." There are the cherubim and the seraphim; thrones and dominions. There is Michael the defender, the champion of God’s people, especially called forth in the latter days. We read of the archangel, whose voice shall be heard when the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven. There is a kingdom with gradations, with order. This kingdom is intimately connected with the kingdom of grace. Jesus tells us every day to think of this connection and harmony. He teaches us to pray, "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven." When a sinner is converted, the angels rejoice; and when Jesus comes again, the angels will come with Him. There is only one kingdom of angels and men; and all that God has created form one wonderful united whole. We cannot see the angels; not because they are invisible; for we could see them at this moment if God saw fit to open our eyes. The things which are true, substantial, lasting, and real, are things as yet in visible, and apprehended only by faith. They will last forever, though they are not yet seen by us; and when all that is unreal and shadowy shall disappear, then they shall be made visible at the appearing of our great God and Saviour. Whenever there is a crisis in the history of God’s kingdom the angels appear, as at the giving of the law, and at the incarnation of the Son of God. Thus we read of angelic manifestations before and after the birth of Jesus. The Son of man often speaks of and always beholds the angels. In the garden of Gethsemane an angel appears to strengthen Him, and angels appear to the disciples at the resurrection and at the ascension of the Saviour. When He comes again multitudes of angels shall come with Him and separate the evil from the good; before the angels Jesus shall confess His people.

Angels are connected not merely with salvation and with the spiritual kingdom of God, but with all the kingdom of God; with all physical phenomena. There was an earthquake at His resurrection. Why? Because angels had been and rolled away the stone. The Pool of Siloam had miraculous powers; "for an angel came down at certain seasons and troubled the water," and endowed it with healing power. The angels carry on every development in nature. God does not move and rule the world merely by laws and principles, by unconscious and inanimate powers, but by living beings full of light and love. His angels are like flames of fire; they have charge over the winds, and the earth, and the trees, and the sea. Through the angels He carries on the government of the world.

And these angels, whom God has made so glorious, who excel in strength, hearken to the voice of His commandment and obey Him, while they in worship continually behold the countenance of the Father. They are always ascribing glory and praise, and constantly adoring with joy and wonder the glory of God as it is revealed in the Lamb that was slain, and made manifest in the Church of Christ. For as Christ is the centre, so the church is exalted in Him, that in the church the manifold wisdom of God may be made known to principalities and powers.

Now, glorious as the angels are, they are in subjection to Jesus as man; for in His human nature God has enthroned Him above all things. Their relation to Jesus fixes also their relation to us. In a great house there may be many servants who are honoured, trusted, and beloved; but the position of the little child who is the heir is different, though as yet he is inferior in knowledge, strength, and attainments. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for those who shall be heirs of salvation?" You who are the children of God, begotten by the Holy Ghost, you are the brethren of Jesus; for "He took not hold of angels, but in His great love He took hold of the seed of Abraham." You are the future kings and rulers, and unto man in Christ all things are put in subjection, as it is said in the 8th Psalm: "Are they not all ministering spirits?" They love us. We know it, because they showed a most unselfish and tender interest in our salvation. When Jesus descended from heaven, and visited our earth, so far from being filled with envy, they rejoiced, and with great alacrity came down and brought the glad tidings to the shepherds. With joy they also announced that Jesus is risen, that He is exalted, that Son of man whom O mystery of mysteries! they had seen agonizing in the garden, who was then strengthened by an angel; whom they had beheld on the cross. How glad were they to roll away the stone; how rejoiced when they saw Him exalted above the heavens; how tenderly they expressed their sympathy with the sorrowing women; "for I know that ye seek Jesus which was crucified. He is not here: for He is risen, as He said." We know they love us; for they rejoice when a poor, fallen, degraded sinner turns from ungodliness and takes hold of salvation as it is in Jesus. They watch us in our dangers, in our difficulties. "God has given His angels charge over us, to keep us in all our ways, lest we dash our foot against a stone." They are astonished, and marvel when they see Lazarus in his poverty, in pain, in distress, despised and forgotten by man. Day by day they watch his patience, his faith, his trustful cleaving unto God, and eagerly they learn from him more and more of the mystery of suffering, and of man’s fellowship with Jesus; and lovingly they wait for the appointed hour, when, delivered from the body of pain and death, they carry him safely, and gently, and swiftly into Abraham’s bosom. And after having ministered unto God’s people to the end of this age, they shall rejoice when they hear His voice saying unto the children, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world." For Jesus’ sake, "are they not all ministering spirits?" Oh, how great is Jesus! How great is the covenant of grace! How great is the glory of the Son, and how wonderful is our position as children of the Father! And now, brethren, the apostle is not able to continue his argument without first giving vent to his feeling of solemn anxiety about our salvation, and exhorting us earnestly and affectionately. We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard. So great a salvation has been revealed to us; salvation which has its origin in eternal depths of love; salvation which is built upon the rock, even the sufferings and resurrection of Jesus the Son of God; salvation which is con summated in glory, greater and higher than that of the angels, by which the highest position is given to us among all creatures in the kingdom of God. If so great salvation is neglected - I do not say rejected or treated with contempt and unbelief; but if it is neglected; if we do not rise to the height of this

argument; if the love of God does not melt our hearts; if we do not think salvation the one thing that is necessary, important, essential; if we do not devote to it our whole heart, our whole soul, all our energies; if we do not strive to grasp it with all our might, concentrating all our earnestness and strength, how shall we escape? Jesus has Himself declared and brought it; God the Father has ratified it and sealed it; the Holy Ghost has confirmed it with His gifts and wonders. It is the ultimate revelation of God; it is the unspeakable gift of His love, according to His eternal purpose. Have we this first chapter? Is it ours? Do we possess it? Can we say, "I will go with this into eternity; "I believe it from my heart; it is a treasure to my own soul; I stand upon this rock; I hear His voice in the Son, and therefore I can go to Him with child-like confidence? Let me sum up, and apply the teaching of this chapter in four questions. Do we worship Jesus? In this chapter He is called by divine names, the Son, Lord, God. Divine works are assigned to Him; the creation of the world, the upholding of all things, the atonement upon the cross, and the government now from the right hand of the Majesty. Divine attributes are given to Him; He is omniscient, He is omnipotent, He is unchangeable, He is eternal. Divine worship is accorded to Him. God the Father Himself commands the angels to worship Him. Do you worship Jesus, Jesus the Son of David, who was crucified upon the cross? Have you learnt, like Thomas, to say unto Him, "My Lord and my God"? The second question is this: Do you know truth? Do you belong unto the generality, the majority of this world, who think that one religion is as good and true as another, one religious opinion not more valuable or certain than another? Have you the truth, the one truth? Do we know that God, who has spoken in times past by the prophets, has now spoken unto us fully, clearly, and finally in His Son? Jesus saith: "I am the truth;" we have received the true, real, full, perfect, ultimate revelation of the mind of God in Jesus Christ His Son. Oh, what a blessed thing it is when, instead of being tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, and instead of depending upon the wisdom and ingenuity of human reason, we have this rock - God hath spoken; in Jesus hath God spoken! The third question I ask - Are you free from all your sins? Are they all forgiven? Are you forgiven? Jesus has purged away our sins by one sacrifice upon the cross. "The blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin." Of Him all the prophets witness, all the apostles witness, and the angels witness, and God the Father, God the Son, and the Holy Ghost witness, that "Whosoever believeth in Him has," that moment, "the perfect absolution, remission, and forgiveness of all sins," and is pure and spot less in the sight of God. Do you believe that Jesus who died on the cross is now at the right hand of God? Oh, then, understand also the full meaning of David’s word - "With God is forgiveness of sins, that He may be feared!" As we were crucified together with Jesus, so, in consequence of our justification, Jesus was raised and we are accepted in the Beloved. We are now free from sin, and in the presence of God. In Christ we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. He hath taken away all our transgressions.

Lastly, Do you know that Jesus, your Saviour, your Lord, your God, is at the right hand of God, and that you are the brethren of Jesus and the children of the Father, and the heirs of the kingdom? Do you live in the hope that you will behold Him, that you will see Jesus as He is, and that then you will be like Him? And having this hope in you, do you purify yourselves even as He is pure? Oh, live in the love of God! Live on the love of God! Live from the love of God! Start with the fullness of God’s love in Jesus Christ! Never be tempted to go back again to the terrors or to the method of the law! Never be tempted to look again to anything else but the blood of Jesus, which taketh away all sin! And each time you go to the Lord’s Table and commemorate the dying love of Christ, say to yourself, "Now I am showing to all the world the death of the Lord; that He has finished the

work, that salvation is perfect, tint He has offered a complete, all-sufficient, and full atonement." Rejoice that Christ is here who was crucified; yea, rather, who is risen again, and that we who believe are the body of Christ, one with Him for evermore. Who is he that will condemn or that will separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus? He who died for us is none else than the Son of the Most High! May the Lord grant unto us "that we may know Jesus, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings; that we may be made conformable unto His death;" and that we may attain unto the glory of the first resurrection when the heirs of salvation shall be made manifest with Jesus Himself. Amen.

05 - Hebrews 2:5-10

CHAPTER V.

JESUS, THE SON OF MAN, MADE LOWER THAN THE ANGELS, FOR THE SUFFERING OF DEATH.

Hebrews 2:5-10. THE apostle now enters into the holy of holies. He approaches the great subject of the epistle - Jesus Christ exalted through sufferings; by death, even by His own blood, entering as a great High Priest into the heavenly sanctuary. He has reminded us already that Jesus as the Son of God hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than the angels. He now wishes to show us what humiliation and sufferings He endured upon earth, and that these did not merely not interfere with His glory, but are the meritorious cause of his exaltation.

"Unto whom hath God put in subjection the world to come of which we speak?" The world to come was a topic of instruction and conversation among all God-fearing Jews; and when they came to believe in Jesus, their attention was still more directed to the fulfillment of prophecy, and their affections more deeply interested in that future of which all the prophets had testified. Jesus Himself had spoken of the regeneration of the world, when the twelve apostles should "sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel." The world to come evidently does not mean heaven, because heaven is a present kingdom, in which the glory of God is manifested, and in which the worship of the angelic and the beatified hosts continually ascends to the throne of God. It is evident from Psalm 8, in which the world to come is described, that it has reference to earth and to the future dominion of Messiah, the Son of man. The world to come does not mean the gospel dispensation; for that began with the preaching of Jesus and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. But this world to come is something future, to which all the apostles were looking; for Peter testifies, "We look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness;" and again, that the heavens must receive Jesus until the times of the restitution of all things." The world to come, according to the opinion of the ancient synagogue, means the renovated earth under the reign of the Messiah; it means the time predicted in the prophets, when the kingdom shall be given to the Son of David, and Israel shall dwell in their own land in peace and righteousness, and all the heathen nations shall walk before Him and worship the God of Jacob; when abundance of food and raiment shall be for all the poor and needy; when oppression shall cease on the earth, and the voice of cruelty shall no longer be heard; when even the outward creation shall manifest the presence of the peace of God and of the blessing of the Most High; when from the river even unto the great sea the King shall reign; when war shall be learnt no more by the nations; when the will of God shall be done upon earth as it is done in heaven. This world to come, which is so fully described in the prophets, must be under subjection, under the government, and under the rule of some one. It has not been put in subjection unto the angels; but, as the word of God teaches us continually, it has been put in subjection under the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of God. He it is who is to be the beloved of God, to reign upon earth, fulfilling the whole counsel of God; in whom all the promises given unto the fathers were to

be "yea and Amen."

Now the testimony of one concerning this reign upon earth in the world to come is given in Psalm 8, and in speaking of it the apostle does not say " David said;" for, as we have already noticed, all his quotations in this epistle are given in this impersonal way, and reference is immediately made to the source of all Scripture, even the Lord God Himself. Although it is very instructive for us to know what David saw, and what Isaiah thought and felt, and in what peculiar circumstances they were placed historically when the predictions were given to them, yet it is important for us to see the higher truth, that these men were the medium and channel of a higher revelation which they themselves did not fully understand. The apostle Paul reminds us that these things happened and were written for our instruction. The apostle Peter reminds us that the prophets enquired diligently into the things they were enabled to write, and that they described them not for themselves, but for us, to whom the gospel is now preached in clear fullness. Scripture is thus spirit-breathed and eternal; and it is for us to enter in faith and reverence, and meditate on the breadth, and length, and depth, and height of the counsel of God. How marvellous, when we remember that David and Isaiah did not understand fully what through their inspired lips was uttered! How wonderful when we think of it, that all the great periods of the church, from the first to the second coming of Jesus, were to a very large extent hidden from them, so that they saw the first coming in suffering and the second in glory, as if they were two continuous events, scarcely separated by any interval, and that they beheld at Messiah’s coming, Israel on the restored earth in peace and blessedness. And the Gospels, and Acts of the Apostles, and the Revelation, fill up that great and wonderful interval, during which Christ gathers from Jews and Gentiles a body for Himself. And, notwithstanding this great distinction between the prophetic and apostolic writings, there is such a harmony of truth and of sentiment, such, a oneness of spirit, such an interpenetration of the two portions of Scripture, that, wherever we go in this grand and spacious temple of God s word, we see the one central idea and the one pervading thought; we feel that the Builder is the Lord of ages, who was, and is, and is to come. What is it that we see? The glory of God Himself. In the morning of the world’s history, in the early dawn, all was mysterious, dark, and dim. The truth was only given in a fragmentary manner, yet the manifestation of the glory was continually assuming more distinct features. Glimpses are given unto us of a wonderful human countenance, like the son of Abraham, Isaac, suffering in meekness; like Joseph, entering through humiliation unto glory; like David, ruling in lowliness, beloved, though persecuted. We behold a heavenly, divine One, appearing as the Messenger of the covenant; the Angel, in whom is the Name, the Rock that followed them in the wilderness; the Captain of the host of Israel; the Son of David; until in the gospel of Matthew we see the glory of God "in the face of Jesus Christ" - the same countenance and the same character; all these various luminous streaks breaking through the darkness; all these various and occasional approximative manifestations; all these beams of light, if I may so speak, condensing themselves at His appearing, and showing themselves at last in perfect distinctness and brightness; so that what many prophets and kings desired to see and to look into is, in God s great condescension, come unto us. We behold unveiled, what they beheld afar off.

If such is the unity of Scripture, it is a very important subject to dwell upon. We can easily understand the difficulties which outsiders find in perceiving how thoroughly convinced we are of the truth of Scripture; how no shadow ever crosses our minds about the divine authority of the word of God; how the objections and discrepancies which science and criticism bring forward, and

the difficulties in the interpretation of the word of God do not affect our faith; how we have an inward perception and conviction of the inspiration by beholding the perfect unity of the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. "One" - whether David, or Zechariah, or king Solomon - one in a certain place "testifies." He is a witness to what God has revealed.

Now, what is the testimony of Psalm 8? Look at the psalm. What does it mean? David praises the goodness of God, and the condescension of God to man. The name of God is known all over the earth; the glory of God is high above the heavens. He who has made the heavens, and the moon, and the stars, condescends to frail and feeble man, and to the son of man. He is mindful of him, only placed a little below the angels, but crowned with glory and honour. He has given him power over all things in the world, over the beasts, and over the cattle, and over the fowls of the air. This psalm is evidently responsive to the original investiture of man with power when first created by God. God created him in His image, and appointed him to be the ruler upon earth. But does this explain the psalm? Let us look candidly, and say if this key is sufficient to open it. God’s name is not now known over the whole earth; and this man, of whom the psalmist speaks as ruler, is it Adam? It cannot be Adam, because he does not speak of man, but the "son of man." He speaks evidently of the descendants of Adam. "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." Is it fallen man? True, he is lower than the angels, inasmuch as he inhabits a mortal body, and is limited and finite in many ways. But where is his power over creation? As it says in the epistle to the Hebrews, "We do not see all things yet put under him." But the apostle gives to us the key, that the psalmist speaks of the world to come, and of Jesus the Son of man; and when we think that this psalm is written by the Holy Ghost, and when we take in connection all the passages referring to it in the word of God, we shall understand that this is one of the most comprehensive and far- reaching predictions that the word of God con tains.*(*Luther: "This psalm speaks entirely of the sufferings of Christ, and the glory which He obtained through suffering, asHebrews 2:9clearly testifies." It is quoted as referring to Christ: (1)Matthew 21:16; (2)1 Corinthians 15:27; (3)Ephesians 1:20-22; (4) Heb. 2. Luther has beautiful remarks on the spiritual teaching and consolation of this psalm. On verse 3 he adduces1 Corinthians 2:1; 1 Corinthians 1:21-23; on verse 6 the glory and honour of Christ. (Isaiah 53, 61; Psalm 45.) The designation "son of man" is given, with the exception of Ezekiel, to none but Messiah. InDaniel 7:13the expression is Ben-Enosh, which brings before us more vividly that He who was crucified through weakness is now exalted and glorified. In this psalm Ben-Adam is more appropriate "the Adam above," "the Adam on high, who has dominion over all things," an expression occurring in the Talmudic writings and the Zohar. Compare also Rom. 5 and 1 Cor. 15.)

God created man to be the ruler of the earth; he was to be the representative of God and king here below. All things were to be subject to him. This is the very idea of a king, as we find in the book of Daniel. "Thou, O king, art a king of kings: for the God of heaven hath given thee a kingdom, power, and strength, and glory. And wheresoever the children of men dwell, the beasts of the field and the fowls of the heaven hath he given into thine hand, and hath made thee ruler over them all. Thou art this head of gold." (Daniel 2:37-38.) The idea of kingship is that it is not an authority entrusted to man by man. It does not come from below. It is a power and sovereignty given by the supreme Lord of heaven and earth Himself. And the kingship of Nebuchadnezzar, as it comes from God direct, so it involves everything upon earth. Not merely are all peoples and nations and languages to render allegiance to him, but the beasts of the field and the fowls of the air, which move on and

over his territory, are also subject to him. He is invested with power by God Himself, and over all things is his dominion. Now this kingship which Adam lost by his sin is to be given unto one who is called the "Son of man." Jesus our Lord evidently referred to this passage also, when He called Himself the Son of man. It is in this expression that the passages in Daniel are rooted. "From henceforth ye shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven." He is called the Son of man because He is the sum and substance of the human race, the representative and restorer of humanity - the man Christ Jesus. He is the second Adam; in Him there is a new commencement of humanity given unto us. He is the Son of man not merely in that He is a partaker of flesh and blood, and that, born of a woman and appearing in the likeness of sinful flesh, He has become one with our race; but because it is given to Him to be the head of the new humanity: He is to be Lord and Ruler, the King of the earth. This Son of man, made a little lower than the angels, is to be the King; and through Him the knowledge, love, and life of God shall be brought to the ends of the earth. All people that on earth do dwell, all people to the furthest islands of the sea, shall know and worship the God of Israel. God s name shall be excellent on the earth while He has exalted His glory above the heavens; that is, the whole earth shall see the manifestation of grace in the church which is to the praise and glory of His name; the manifestation of salvation-glory, which is above all angels and all things belonging to the first creation.

"Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise." This was fulfilled at the time when the children sang "Hosanna" to the Lord; it is a symbol, and it is fulfilled now continually when out of the mouth of babes are declared the mysteries the Father reveals to them (Matt. 11); and it shall be fulfilled when it shall be found that by the foolishness, and weakness, and nothingness of believers, God brings to nought the wisdom of the wise, and the power and glory of the world. But this Son of man whom God chose for Himself was made a little lower than the angels that He might taste death; for through this death was He to enter into the glory and honour with which the Father decreed to crown Him for His obedience and humiliation.

Let us consider what it is that the Son of man, humbling Himself for us, has endured. There are two expressions used - to suffer death, and to taste death. Let us remember that between Jesus, as He was in Himself, and death there subsisted no connection. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost, and born of the Virgin Mary. He was without sin, without spot and blemish. He had never transgressed the law. In Him Satan could find nothing. Death had no personal or direct relation to Him. Do we look upon death as being the punishment of the transgression of the law? Christ fulfilled all righteousness. The Lord Jesus Christ, as far as His humanity was concerned, was free from the power of death. No power could kill the Lord Jesus Christ. "No man taketh my life from me; but I lay it down of myself." The Lord Jesus Christ, the Prince of Life, of His own power and will, laid down His life. The death of the Lord Jesus Christ in this respect is different from the death of any human being; it was the free, voluntary, spontaneous act and energy of His will. When the Lord Jesus Christ died He put forth a great energy. He willed to die. And so in one sense we may say that His death was a great manifestation of His power.

Let us consider that the Lord tasted death. A man may die in a moment, and then he does not taste death. John the Baptist was beheaded; it was in the twinkling of an eye that the severance took place between body and spirit. Men may die in a moment of excitement, and, as extremes meet, almost in unconsciousness, or with calmness and intrepidity, with lion-like courage, as many a warrior; but that is not tasting death. The death of our Lord Jesus Christ was a slow and painful

death; He was "roasted with fire," as was prefigured by the Paschal Lamb. But it was not merely that it lasted a considerable time that it was attended with agony of mind as well as pain of body; but that He came, as no other finite creature can come, into contact with .death. He tasted death; all that was in death was concentrated in that cup which the Lord Jesus Christ emptied on the cross. During His life time He felt a burden, sorrow, grief; He saw the sins and sorrows of the people; He had compassion, and wept. In the garden of Gethsemane He realized what was the cup which He would have to drink upon Golgotha. He was in great agony, not instead of us, but because He shrank from that impending substitution on the accursed tree. There is no substitution and expiation in the - garden the anticipation of the substitution was the cause of His agony; but on the cross He paid the penalty for the sins of men in His own death. But what was it that He tasted in death? Death is the curse which sin brings, the penalty of the broken law, the manifestation of the power of the devil, the expression of the wrath of God; and in all these aspects the Lord Jesus Christ came into contact with death, and tasted it to the very last. He tasted it as the consequence of sin, though He knew no sin in Himself personally; but He, as the perfect, pure, and spotless Son of God, and Son of man, had an infinite appreciation of the evil of sin in its loathsomeness, in its cruelty, in its apostasy from God, in its contrariety to the will of the Holy One. He saw the true nature of sin Godwards and manwards; upwards to the throne of holiness, and downwards to the bottom less abyss; in its depths, and in its everlasting consequences, did He perceive it. We do not see the real consequences of sin, not knowing the exceeding sinfulness of sin. We find it difficult to realize that such awful infinite results should come from it; but He saw sin in all its mystery, in all its reality.

Death is the penalty of the transgression of God s law. He had magnified the law and fulfilled the law all the time that He was upon earth. In His heart the law was written as upon the tables in the Ark of the Covenant. He delighted in the will of God, not as something external to Him, but as something that lived within Him, the music and rhythm of His soul. He saw death as the result of the transgression of the law, and the curse and punishment of the law. He was made under the law, and now He was made a curse for us.

Satan has the power of death. Jesus says, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness;" and it was Satan, the prince and the power of darkness, whom Jesus vanquished upon the cross. He came into contact with the prince and the power of darkness, whose right it was to insist upon the hand-writing of ordinances, which is against the transgressors, and who can fix the sting of death by applying it with the strength of law. (1 Corinthians 15:56.) And last of all, and most fearful of all, it was the expression of the wrath of God. The just displeasure and indignation of God against sin makes itself felt in death. Death is being forsaken of God; it is the expression of the withdrawal of God’s favour and strength Death is to be left without God. The Lord Jesus Christ came into contact with death as the wrath of God. He tasted death with full and perfect consciousness. Therefore He said, at the end of the three mysterious hours during which the Sun lost his light,* "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" With fullness of faith He continued clinging to God; for in all this He acknowledged the truth, the righteousness, and the faithfulness of God, and called Him "my God." Thus did He taste death. Thus did He who was life itself come into contact with death; thus did He who was holiness itself come into contact with sin; and thus His love to God and to man was sublimated, as it were, to the highest perfection. Thus He satisfied the holiness, justice, truth, and faithfulness of God; and thus He took away the sting of death as the penalty of sin and the

strength of Satan. (*"These were three mysterious hours. The time of this desertion corresponds with the 4th verse of Psalm 8 (Psalms 4:8), in which the Sun is not mentioned (Matthew 27:45)." BENGEL,Gnomon.)

Christ was made a curse for us; He was forsaken of God, and left alone with the power of darkness. But though He emptied the cup of wrath, though all the billows and waves of death live, to trust, to love, to pray: He gained the victory in the lowest depth of His agony. His love was stronger than death, and in His death He brought life to all those whose sins He bore. He tasted death by the grace of God. It was the grace of God that gave Him up unto death. "It pleased the Lord to bruise Him." The ultimate reason of Christ's death is the love of God to Jesus and the children given to Him; its ultimate purpose, the manifestation of God to angels and to men. "That He, by the grace of God, should taste death for everyone." Scripture throughout refers to the sacrifice of Jesus as the consequence of the love of God; and as the manifestation of divine love God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself." It is only the enemy, the unbeliever, who represents the Scripture doctrine to be that the anger and the wrath of God the Father had to be appeased by Jesus, in whom there is greater clemency and mercy than in the Father. This is a false witness. It is the love of God that Jesus revealed; nay, it is God's love that Jesus died for the guilty. Christ did not die in order that God might love the world; but it was because God loved the world that Jesus died. Through Christ crucified we behold God as Father. But what love would it be if Christ s death was only an example? What if there had been no necessity for that unspeakable gilt - for that stupendous sacrifice? What if sin could be forgiven without the character of God being vindicated? without the manifestation of His justice, truth, and holiness? if the law could have been set aside, and its penalty and condemnation passed over? if the favour of God could rest immediately on the sinner who recognizes the love of God, and the real obstacles between God and the transgressor remain as they were, untouched, unremoved? And these objective obstacles are the hatred of God against sin, the wrath of God against evil - wrath as a necessary and essential manifestation of love, which is in perfect holiness and justice - the condemnation of God's law, which is holy, just, and good, the power of death, and Satan, the prince of darkness. The subjective obstacles (in man) are not less real - his hardness, hatred against God, and death in trespasses and sins. If Jesus died only as a martyr and example, or as manifesting the love of God, who was willing to receive repentant sinners, we cannot understand the reason of agony and sacrifice so awful and of miracle so transcendent as the incarnation. Nor would such a death bring us nigh unto God. There would still be the in finite distance between God and the conscience; and the mountains of our guilt, the condemnation and curse of the law, and the righteous displeasure of God, would still separate between Him and us. Christ would be no mediator; for He would, on this supposition, never have entered into our real position, difficulty, and death. The lost sheep would still be in the wilderness, and the Good Shepherd would have only shown His willingness to rescue it, His compassion, self-denial, love, but would not actually have found and saved it. Only when we believe the Scripture testimony, that He laid down His life for and instead of us - that He became sin and a curse in our stead - that His blood was shed as a ransom for the remission of our sins - only then do we see that in Jesus we have the love, favour, and blessing of God, that in Him we have redemption, and are brought nigh to the Father. And notice, He tasted death by the grace of God for everyone. We speak about the pardon of sins. We are pardoned; but all our sins have been punished. God forgives us, but our sins He never forgives, never pardons, in the sense of remitting their punishment. All our sins were laid upon

Jesus, everyone was punished. "God condemned sin in the flesh." He executed judgment upon all our sins, for every one of us, for all the children of God. For each of them Jesus tasted death. Here there is not merely the forgiveness of sin, but there is the actual putting away of all our sins; and the apostle explains to us that this great and marvellous mystery of the death of Jesus as our Substitute, bearing our sins, bearing our curse, enduring the penalty of our sins, and overcoming all our enemies (that is the law, and Satan, and death), that this is in order to manifest unto us the fullness of the perfection of God.

"For it became Him, of whom are all things, and by whom are all things, to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings." What a marvellous declaration! "It became Him." It is in accordance with the divine perfections. All divine attributes are harmonized here - His wisdom and His mercy, His justice and His holiness, His power and His truth. "It became Him because of His love, it became His justice, it became His wisdom that thus it should be. There was in it no triumph of one attribute over another, no prodigality which infinite wisdom could reprove, no facility which infinite holiness could challenge; there was a common rejoicing of all God’s attributes in their common and harmonious exercise." God’s attributes (we speak humanly and with great imperfection) are all simultaneous. They all move together, because they are all-perfect and all-glorious. In His mercy He must be righteous, in His justice merciful; in His wisdom there is strength, in His power patience. Everything that is in God is beautiful and perfect. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things;" and that in which He has concentrated the revelation of Himself must become Him. The more we look upon Jesus as our Redeemer, and contemplate the atonement upon the cross, the more do our thoughts expand, and the more do we see the image and glory of the Most High; the more do we dread sin, the more do we enter into the knowledge of God and into fellowship with Him. Who brings out the perfection of God but the Lamb slain? Well then may it be said, "It became Him to make the Captain of our salvation perfect through sufferings."

If I may so say, God is never so Godlike as when He reveals Himself in Jesus crucified for sins. Oh, how did the Jews shrink from the mystery of the Crucified One! How did every thought in them rebel against the idea of their King being hanged upon the tree! How hard is it for them to believe that the Messiah was the Crucified One! They turn away from the cross of Jesus, and rest, in what they believe a spiritual faith, in the one incomprehensible, invisible, glorious God. They forget that throughout the Old Testament times God revealed His glory, and that the promise is the appearing of the glory, the manifestation of Jehovah. They do not understand the mystery - God revealed and glorified in the death of His Son. It became Him, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. He brings many children to glory. We use the word glory often in a superficial and thoughtless way. What is glory? What glory do we possess? Are our bodies glorious? Soon they will be in the grave, the food of worms. Are our minds glorious? We may, in a moment, lose the light of reason, and forget all the information we have acquired, and be unable to think connectedly. Are our hearts glorious? They are polluted with sin. Are our souls glorious? We have no strength or life in ourselves. Then what is the glory? What glory is ours? What do you expect when you are laid in the grave? You remember that Jesus said to Martha at the grave of Lazarus, when the signs of corruption were so evident and repulsive, "Only believe, and thou shalt see the glory of God" Ah! God’s glory. Not the glory of Lazarus. Not our glory, but His own glory. "We rejoice in hope of the glory of God." Now see how easy it is to

believe that there is no other righteousness but God’s righteousness. A mortal, sinful, and weak creature, I expect glory, though my body is laid in the grave, and mind and heart fail me. The glory I hope for is Christ’s - to be glorified together with Him. It is divine glory. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. What righteousness have I? I have no righteousness but Christ’s righteousness. Just as God will give me His glory, so He hath given me His righteousness; not the righteousness which is by the works of the law, the fruit of my own endeavours, not partly mine, and partly the result of looking to the Lord Jesus Christ. The sinner is guilty, lost, and imperfect; but, clothed in the righteousness which is from above - God’s righteousness - he is perfect, glorious, beautiful. Then I understand what the apostle Paul says - "Whom He justified, them He also glorified." If He has given me Jesus as my righteousness, then He has also given me Jesus as my glory. It is His purpose to bring many children unto glory, and it was necessary to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. The apostle touches here only briefly on what forms one of the chief themes of the epistle to the Hebrews - the connection between Christ’s sufferings and glory.

Without entering now on this truth, I conclude with this remark: Most of us last Lord’s-day commemorated the dying love of Jesus. The Lord’s Supper is the connecting link between the first and second coming of Christ. Looking back we see the finished work of Jesus, the sacrifice which He has made; by which one sacrifice, once for all, He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. By faith we are sanctified, separated unto God; our sins are forgiven, our righteousness is divine, we are complete in Christ. Looking forward, we expect the world to come; we show the death of the Lord till He come. That same Jesus whom now, in His personal absence, though we see Him not, we love and trust, in whom we rejoice, and who is specially with us while we commemorate His dying love, shall return to take the kingdom and the power. Now during the interval we live by and on what Jesus has done for us when He died upon the cross. We are always celebrating the Lord’s Supper. And this is His wondrous love, that day by day He gives us His body to eat, which is meat indeed, and His blood, which is drink indeed. This is outwardly expressed at the Lord’s table. The daily, hourly, secret but most real life of the Christian, which is nothing else but eating Christ and living by Him, even by Him who gave His body and shed His blood for us; this is manifested to ourselves, the Church, and the world, by the ordinance of the Lord’s Supper, in which the union between Christ and the believer is renewed, confirmed, and sealed. The spiritual Lord’s Supper is for every day and all the day; for this is our life, to feed on Jesus, who died for us. This is the glorious consequence of His death "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." And this is, if I may so speak, His blessed occupation now - to feed and strengthen the children until He shall come again in glory. He continually renews and imparts to us that love which died for us upon the cross.

Oh that we may know what it is to be justified and what it is to be glorified! that we may be clothed with God’s righteousness now, and that we may be glorified together with Christ at His coming! Let us take the cup of salvation, behold Christ crucified, but now exalted, our righteousness and glory. Amen.

06 - Hebrews 2:11-18

CHAPTER V I.

JESUS, IN ALL THINGS LIKE UNTO HIS BRETHREN, - THROUGH SUFFERINGS AND DEATH OUR

HIGH PRIEST.

Hebrews 2:11-18.

JESUS CHRIST as the Son of God, and according to that glory into which in His humanity He has entered through His sufferings and death, is high above the angels. It was necessary for Him to pass through sufferings and through death; it was in accordance with the divine plan, and in harmony with all the divine attributes and perfections. Through His sufferings and death He glorified the Father. He put away sin; He abolished death; He destroyed the power of the devil; and for Himself, and for all those who are His, He has obtained that high position in which, as the 8th Psalm testifies, all things are put under His feet; and not merely this, but He Himself has become a merciful and faithful High Priest, able to succour us who are tempted, and to sympathize with us in all our sorrow and in all our trial.

Now, the first truth which is brought before us in the verses which we have read is, that Jesus, who is not ashamed to call Himself brother, and us His brethren, is one with us. We who are sanctified by Him, and He who sanctifies, are of one. Christ is He who sanctifies. The source and power of sanctification are in Jesus the Son of God, our Saviour. We who were to be brought into glory were far from God, in a state of condemnation and death. What can be more different than our natural condition and the glory of God which we are awaiting? Condemned on account of our transgression of the law, we lived in sin, alienated from God, and without His presence of light and love. We were dead; and by dead I do not mean that modern fancy which explains death to mean cessation of existence, but that continuous, active, self-developing state of misery and corruption into which the sinner has fallen by his disobedience. Dead in trespasses and sins, wherein we walked; dead while living in pleasing self. (Ephesians 2:1-2; 1 Timothy 5:6.) What can be more opposed to glory than the state in which we are by nature? And if we are to be brought into glory, it is evident we must be brought into holiness; we must be delivered and separated from guilt, pollution, and death, and brought into the presence of God in - which is favour, light, and life - that His life may descend into our souls, and that we may become partakers of the divine nature.

Christ is our sanctification. "By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified." By the offering up of His body as the sacrifice for sin He has sanctified all that put their trust in Him. To sanctify is to separate unto God; to separate for a holy use. We which were far off are brought nigh by the blood of Christ. And although our election is of God the Father (who is thus the author of our sanctification, Jude 1:1), and the cleansing and purification of the heart is generally attributed to the Holy Ghost (Titus 3:4-5); yet as it is in Christ that we were chosen, and from Christ that we receive the Spirit, and as it is by the constant application of Christ’s work and the constant

communication of His life that we live and grow, Christ is our sanctification.

We are sanctified through faith that is in Him. (Acts 26:18.) By His offering of Himself He has brought us into the presence of God. By the Word, by God's truth, by the indwelling Spirit, He continually sanctifies His believers. He gave Himself for the Church, "that He might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the Word." (Ephesians 5:26.) "Sanctify them through thy truth." (John 17:17; John 15:3.) Through sanctification of the Spirit unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ, (1 Peter 1:2.)

Christ Himself is the foundation, source, method, and channel of our sanctification. We are exhorted to put off the old man and to put on the new man day by day, to mortify our members which are upon earth. But in what other way or method can we obey the apostolic exhortations, but by our continually beholding Christ's perfect sacrifice for sin as our sufficient atonement? In what other way are we sanctified day by day, but by taking hold of the salvation which is by Him, "the Lamb that was slain"? Jesus is He that sanctifieth. The Holy Ghost, the Comforter, is sent by Christ to glorify Him, and to reveal and appropriate to us His salvation. We are con formed to the image of Christ by the Spirit as coming from Christ in His glorified humanity.

"He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one;" namely, of God the Father. And here we are reminded of the teaching of Scripture, that all things are of the Father, and to His glory. Christ is the vine, we are the branches; but the Father is the husbandman. Christ is the bridegroom, and we are the church, the bride; but it is the Father who is the King, which made a marriage for His Son. Christ is the head, we are the members; but as we are Christ's, so Christ is God's. "The head of Christ is God." (1 Corinthians 11:3.) "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Christ is of the Father; we are of the Father. As the Lord Jesus Christ Himself says, "Thine they were, and thou gavest them me;" and as in the epistles of John, we are taught that we are of God, and the seed of God abideth in us. What a wonderful brotherhood is this, rooted in the mysterious election of eternal love! Christ, the only begotten of the Father, and we who by nature are children of wrath and disobedience, are eternally and indissolubly united with Him. Therefore He is not ashamed to call us brethren. As it is said also in the 22nd Psalm, in which the sufferings of Jesus upon the cross and His exaltation are described: "I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee." Notice how literally that was fulfilled; for it was immediately after His resurrection, and in reference to this Psalm, that Jesus said, "Go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God." The risen Saviour, as the first-born among many brethren, hastens to declare the name Father unto His disciples, and to assure them, that He who sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are both of one.

Christians, if Jesus is our brother; if Jesus and we are both of one; it Jesus says, "I will sing thy praise in the midst of the congregation;" if He is the leader of our prayers and praises before the throne of God, then we may approach the Father without fear and without doubt! Christ's peace is our peace, and our worship is the worship of perfect acceptance, of perfect trust and love in union with the Head of the Church, Jesus crowned with glory after His sufferings. Thus do we praise and pray in the name of Christ; thus does Christ Himself praise and pray in the midst of the congregation. Where is doubt now? For is Jesus in doubt of His acceptance with the Father? Is not His atonement upon Golgotha most glorious in the sight of God? It is Jesus who is our

representative and spokesman. As on that night on which He was betrayed He sang the hallelujah with His disciples, so now He presents to the Father our sacrifice of thanksgiving, our adoration, our petitions, and the Father hears the voice of Jesus in the voice of the church. The apostle illustrates the relationship which subsists between the Lord Jesus and His people by another typical prediction. The prophet Isaiah is not merely an eminent evangelist of the Old Testament, but his position in the important crisis of Jewish history is typical. The judgment which was then threatening Israel, the judicial blindness and hardness of heart which fell upon the great majority of the nation, was a type of that culminating sin and obstinate rejection of Jehovah which is described in touching and solemn words in Matthew 13:13-15, John 12:37-41, and Acts 28:25-27. But Jehovah promises protection and grace to those who trust in Him. The prophet by faith has his refuge in God, and looks with confidence to the future. He and the children whom God has given unto him are types of the Redeemer and His people. The children of the prophet are signs and wonders. The application of this typical prediction by the apostle to Christ and His people is bold, but beautiful, and in harmony with the whole spirit and scope of the prophecy. The Lord Jesus all the time He was on earth exercised faith in the living Father. Even His enemies bore witness at the crucifixion, "He trusted in God." All His lifetime He was one of those peculiar people who, instead of being guided by what is called "common sense," instead of being influenced by public opinion, prudence, and the power of the world, was always beholding Him who is invisible; was always walking with God, and doing His will. "I am not alone, because the Father is with me." He was continually leaning upon the Father. Thus we understand these two quotations: "I will trust in Him," and "Behold I and the children whom thou hast given me." Christ is represented as Brother and as the everlasting Father. The promise was given, to the Messiah: - "He shall see His seed. Who shall declare His generation?" Christ who sanctifies and we who are sanctified are both of one - the Lord Jesus, who is not ashamed to call us brethren, who hastened to declare to us the Father’s name after His resurrection, who during His lifetime exercised to the fullest extent faith in God, at the last shall acknowledge us as the children given to Him of the Father. Brotherhood is now the relationship subsisting between Him and us, a relationship which can never be altered. We may lose friendship; but brotherhood is fixed and unchangeable. Thus our Lord Jesus and we are rooted and united in God the Father.

Christ is the Elect of God, and we are chosen of the Father in Christ Jesus. In Him we are predestinated unto the adoption of children. Of God are we in Christ; and of God Christ is made unto us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. God the Father gave us to Jesus, even as the Father gave Jesus to us. And because Jesus and the Father are one, the union between the Lord Jesus, given unto us by the Father and the children, given unto Jesus by the Father, can never be broken. The Son of God being appointed to be the Captain of our salvation, it was necessary that He should become partaker of flesh and blood. "Inasmuch as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same." What is the meaning of "flesh and blood"? The human race, in its creature dependence and weakness, is described in Scripture by "flesh." "O Thou that hearest prayer, unto Thee shall all flesh come." Christ said in His prayer, "As Thou hast given Him power over all flesh." "Flesh and blood" describe us in our present earthly condition. "Flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God." A change must take place to fit us for the heavenly region. The flesh and blood which the Lord Jesus Christ took shows that He became truly and really man. "The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us." This seems a wonderful contrast. The Word, eternal, all-perfect, all-glorious, the

Son of the Most High, who was with God from the beginning, and was God, He became flesh, He was born of the Virgin Mary. "The flesh" shows the weakness of which the Lord Jesus Christ became partaker. It is written that He was crucified through weakness; that He came in the likeness of sinful flesh. When people saw Him, they did not notice in His outward appearance anything superhuman, glorious, free from earthly weakness and dependence. He did not come in splendour and power. He did not come in the brightness and strength which Adam possessed before he fell. "In all things He became like unto us." In everything; in His body, for He was hungry and thirsty; overcome with fatigue, He slept. In His mind, for it developed. He had to be taught; He grew in wisdom concerning the things around Him; He increased, not merely in stature, but in mental and moral strength. In His affections, He loved. He loved the young man who came unto Him, and was not willing to give up his riches. He loved Lazarus, Mary, and Martha - the disciple who leaned on His bosom. He was astonished; He marvelled at men’s unbelief, and said to the Syro-Phoenician woman, "O woman, great is thy faith." Sometimes He was glad, and "rejoiced in spirit;" sometimes angry and indignant, as when He saw the hypocrisy of the Jews, who accused Him of having broken the Sabbath. Zeal, like fire, burned within .Him: "The zeal for the house of God consumed me;" and He showed a vehement fervour in protecting the sanctity of God’s temple. He was grieved; He trembled with emotion; his soul was straitened in Him. Sometimes He was overcome by the waves of feelings when He beheld the future that was before Him. In all things He was made like unto us. Do not think of Him as merely appearing a man, or as being a man only in His body, but as man in body, soul, and spirit. He exercised faith; He read the Scriptures for His own guidance and encouragement; He prayed the whole night, especially when He had some great and important work to do, as before setting apart the apostles. He sighed when he saw the man who was dumb; tears fell from His eyes when at the tomb of Lazarus He saw the power of death and of Satan. He wept over Jerusalem, as He foresaw the fearful results of their grievous sin. His supplications were with strong crying and tears; His soul was exceedingly sorrowful; He was sorely pressed, and He agonized in Gethsemane.

"He suffered being tempted." The temptation was a reality to Him. He felt most keenly and painfully the weight and the pressure of the test. His soul was full of love to Israel, and eager to gather children of Jerusalem. The broad road, easy and attractive to the flesh, would have led to immediate recognition and reception by Israel; the way of humility and obedience, of faith and suffering, was narrow to Jesus also. He felt hunger, reproach, hatred; Satan was permitted to test Christ’s most sensitive heart, with the most penetrating and painful trial. When His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground, His soul was shrinking from the awful cup of Golgotha; and to strengthen Him in this most real, and to us un fathomable, conflict, an angel from heaven appeared unto Him. The world also was a temptation to Him. The spirit of the world was enmity against Him, and came into collision with Him every moment. His own brothers said, "Why do you not go up to the feast and shew yourself?" His own disciples said, "Far be it from thee to suffer, Lord." But He saw Satan in all this; and said, "Get thee behind me, Satan." Not for a single moment did He yield - erect He stood. But, nevertheless, and by this very perfection of His victory, He felt every moment all the burden of the weight. If He had given in, that very moment the pressure would have been relieved. Because He remained without sin, He suffered being tempted. Jesus, as Messiah, felt the sorrow of love rejected, of instruction refused, by the people to whom He came in mercy infinite; He felt keenly the pain of being called a blasphemer in His own beloved city. As the prophet describes it, He mourned and wept before God, that He had spent His strength

and labour in vain. He felt that Satan could give unto Him the allegiance of the nations, if He would only yield to him on one point. The narrowness of the path He chose was a reality to Him. "He suffered being tempted;" and His suffering was again a temptation to Him. "This," He said, "is your hour, and the power of darkness." In the garden of Gethsemane, and on the cross, He saw in His sufferings the power of Satan’s temptation He felt the fearful strength of the adversary, endeavouring to make Him swerve from His loyalty to God. "He that sanctifieth, and they that are sanctified, are one." Mysterious brotherhood! "He became in all things like unto His brethren." "He suffered being tempted," and was tempted in all His sufferings.

Now we advance a step further. By death He took away the power of him who has the power of death, that is, Satan. We considered the expression, Christ tasted death, - that He did not merely die, as it were, in a moment of enthusiasm, as many a warrior has lost his life courageously. But, laying down His life, He came into contact with the whole sting of death; measured its length and breath and intensity, the power of Satan, the wrath of God, the condemnation of the law. How clear it is from this passage what Jesus Christ suffered in death! But which death did He die? That death of which the devil has the power. Satan wielded that death. He it was who had a just claim against us that we should die. There is justice in the claim of Satan.* He stands upon the justice of God; upon the inflexibility of the law; upon the true nature of our sin. But when Christ died our very death, when He was made sin and a curse for us, then all the power of Satan was gone. It was of the grace of God that He tasted death for everyone. This is often set before us in Scripture, lest we should imagine that the Lord Jesus loved us more than the Father loves us, or that the Father did not love Him with the most intense love at the very moment He hid His face from Him as our Substitute. In the expiatory death of Jesus all the attributes of God are in sweetest harmony; but grace shines brightest through all. "By the grace of God He tasted death." (*It is quite true that Satan is only a usurper; but in saving men God deals in perfect righteousness, justice, and truth. According to the Jewish tradition the fallen angels often accuse men, and complain before God that sinful men obtain mercy. Our redemption is in harmony with the principles of righteousness and equity, on which God has founded all things. The prince of the world isjudged; he is conquered not merely by power, but by the power of justice and truth. That Messiah is to vanquish the angel of death was held by the Jews, according toIsaiah 15:8: "When Satan saw Messiah he was afraid, and fell upon his face and said, He is the Messiah, who shall cast me and all nations into hell; as it is written, The Lord will swallow up death forever.") And now what can Satan say? The justice, majesty, and perfection of the law are vindicated, more than if all the human race were lost forever. In the sufferings of Christ there was not merely punishment endured, but there was faith and love; the highest and deepest obedience; the law was magnified. There was a burnt-offering in this sin-offering. The penalty due to the broken law Jesus endured, and now, as the law is vindicated, sin put away, death swallowed up, Christ has destroyed the devil. In connection with this word, I must refer to the extraordinary delusion of supposing that "destroy" means to annihilate. Christ did not annihilate the devil; Satan still exists, and will exist forever and ever. But the Lord has taken his power from him: He "bruised his head." Satan, we are taught here, has the power of death, even as Satan introduced sin into the world. While we are without Christ we are under the power of darkness (Colossians 1:13); we walk according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that now worketh in the children of disobedience. (Ephesians 2:3.) But when we come to believe, by Jesus we are delivered from the power of Satan, and brought into the liberty of the children of God. (Acts 26:18.) Only through the death of our Lord Jesus Christ

upon the cross can men be de livered from Satan. As we are delivered from the dominion of Satan, who has the power of death, we are also delivered from the fear of death. And this is to some extent the special privilege of believers living in the new covenant. Now, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, we may serve God without fear. The children of God in the old dispensation had faith in God and the Messiah, and lived in the hope of everlasting blessedness. They enjoyed the peace of God, yet it was natural they should be afraid of the darkness and gloom of the grave; and many passages in the Psalms and prophets, referring to the realm of death before the advent of Messiah, appear sad and mournful. This is natural; but when Messiah comes, they expected God would put all things under Him: joy will come in the morning, and Israel will then see the salvation of God. But the intermediate period was to them a time of great darkness. But how different is it now that the true light shineth. Jesus has abolished death. He has the keys of death and of hades. In His resurrection we have obtained the victory. The Christian can look death in the face, and say, "O death," and ask the question: "Where is thy sting?" We know that to depart and to be with Christ, to die, is gain. Absent from the body, present with the Lord. "Are you afraid of death?" said a friend to a German pastor. "Which death do you mean?" replied the dying man. "Jesus my Saviour saith, 'He that believeth in me hath eternal life. He that believeth in me shall not see death.' Why should I be afraid of what I shall not even see? The real death is past. Outward death, separation of body and soul, we have to endure, and God gives us grace and strength in this last trial; but the sting of death has been taken away." The apostle now states the result and fruit of the Lord's condescension and work. The Son of God became man; He took hold of the seed of Abraham; He became in all things like unto us, He was tempted, He suffered, He died, He saved us; and now, by virtue of His incarnation, obedience, sufferings - through all the experiences of His earthly life, and perfected in His death - He has become "a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people." In no book of the New Testament is our Saviour called the High Priest, except in the epistle to the Hebrews; not even in the book of Revelation, where the heavenly sanctuary and its worship are disclosed to us. How precious is this epistle to us in revealing the whole rich cluster of truths and consolations which gather round this central word, High Priest. In the 110th Psalm it is said, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek;" and in the prophet Zechariah, Messiah, the Branch; that is, Jehovah's servant, who shall build the temple, is called a priest upon the throne. But the full exposition of the fulfillment of Levitical type, and of the eternal Melchizedek priesthood of the Lord Jesus, we possess only in this profound and precious portion of Scripture.

Believe then that Jesus, by His experience, by His sufferings, and above all by His death, has become a merciful and faithful High Priest. We are now on earth, in the flesh, sin around, and alas, within us. How can the Holy God look on us, and grant us blessings? How can there be communion between heaven and earth? Jesus is ascended, and having put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself, presents us to the Father; and we are holy and unblameable before Him; and Father, Son, and Holy Ghost are able to send down the fullness of blessings, of grace and strength; to have communion with us, notwithstanding all our sin and defilement. Christ is a merciful High Priest; not merely full of pity, compassion, and grace, but full of sympathy. He knows what is in man, He understands fully all our sorrows, and is able to measure the strength of all our temptations. He is most lovingly and earnestly anxious that we should always obtain the victory and suffer no injury; for having gone through all the conflict Himself, without a single moment's wavering or surrender, He wishes us to be found continually in Him, and to conquer continually.

He is faithful in bringing down to us all the gifts of God; all the counsel, will, and blessings of the Most High; faithful in taking up to God all our need and trial; all our petitions, fears, and tears; all our sufferings and all our works. What deep and infinite sympathy is in Jesus! And how much we should dwell upon it, and strengthen ourselves in the Lord. For He wishes to succour us; to take us by the hand when we are sad, weary, and exhausted; to help and encourage us; to cheer and gladden us who are still in manifold temptations and sufferings. He is Immanuel, God with us, as the Man Christ Jesus. We are comforted and upheld when we remember the humanity of Jesus now enthroned in glory, even as He in His dealings with us re members what He endured upon earth. And thus we can say to Him, " O Thou, who art not ashamed to call us brethren, who Thyself didst suffer in being tempted, fulfill in us the good pleasure of Thy will, that in nothing we may yield to the adversary; however heavy our trials, however overwhelming our afflictions, and however painful our experiences in a world of sin and unbelief, O do Thou grant of Thine infinite faithfulness that through it all we may be kept looking unto Thee and following Thee, that we may always have peace and joy in Thee, and never waver in our childlike confidence in the Father!"

Now, dear friends, what else can I say in conclusion but what the apostle says, "Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." Think of Him; gaze steadfastly on the Lord Jesus. Consider; ponder. Let your mind be filled with Christ. Make not your sanctification the object of your contemplation, the theme of your meditation. What is it? Do you wish to ornament yourselves, and to come before God beautiful, or as a sinner? Do you wish to say from time to time, I have made great progress; I have advanced many steps in my heavenward journey; I have got into the higher Christian life, as people call it? Do you wish to come before God beautified? or do you wish to humble yourself, and ascribe glory unto the Lamb that was slain? . . . Where do we see Christ? Are we beholding the image of Christ reflected in our own hearts, in our own dispositions, states, and phases of faith? Then it will be reflected in troubled and muddy waters; and unstable and uncertain shall be the features which meet our eye there. Or shall we behold Jesus in the glory of His excellence, in the perfection of His holiness, in the beauty with which God has adorned Him? Are we not to look off unto Him in heaven, and to know that we are seated together in heavenly places, and complete in Him? Shall we say, "Oh, if I was only more holy, less selfish, more patient! if I could only see more of Jesus reflected in me!" Or shall we say, "Oh, if I could always behold the Man who died upon the cross! if I could always see Jesus, the Lamb of God that was slain! if I could always remember that I am bought with a price; and that He was wounded for my transgressions, and bruised for my iniquities!"*(*Gossner, in Berlin, wrote a beautiful tract:Mir ist’s, als ob’s Charfreitag wär- I feel as if it was Good Friday; in which he shows that the one thing we ought to desire and aim at is, to behold constantly Christ crucified for us.)

I will ask you still further, Why do you wish to be holy? Is it to depend more on Christ, or to be less dependent on Christ? To think more of the sacrifice which Jesus made upon the cross, and to know and feel - "Nothing in my hand I bring, Simply to Thy cross I cling!" Have you not detected it in yourself, that sometimes, when you have given way to temptation, fallen into sin you wished to avoid - when you have in the performance of duty stumbled over the same difficulty as before, that a feeling of distrust, disappointment, and despondency comes over you, a feeling of wounded pride, and vanity, of impatience and irritation, and you say, "I am not making progress; it is really too bad; I am always falling into the same low state?" And then the lowest depth of self-abasement

and humiliation is to go to God and to find no change in Him; the same Fatherly love, the same High Priestly compassion and grace, the same Comforter patient and gentle, and you discover, that in your best moments as well as in your worst, you depend exclusively and entirely on the grace of God, which saves the chief of sinners. In fact, you have only stood by grace through the bloodshed for vile sinners. How much we need to avoid the snare of cultivating vanity and self-seeking even in our sanctification! How apt we are to make a Saviour of self! I am anxious and troubled about the unscriptural view of the Christian life, of which we hear. Look at it. What was it in the Church of Rome that for so many centuries made the cross of Christ of none effect? They did not wish to ignore or reject Christ's salvation, and to make Christ of none effect. Do not imagine that grievous errors and heresies began as it were in a bad and wicked purpose. How was it for centuries in the Church of Rome? Christ was put in the background, and the Reformers had to dig very deep, and put away a great amount of rubbish that had accumulated - the gold and silver and precious stones lay buried among wood and hay and stubble till at last they found that Christ in whom alone we must rejoice. Look at the theology of such a book as, for instance, Thomas á Kempis, in which there is much that is excellent, but which suffers from the radical error of not distinguishing Christ for us, and Christ in us. These good men began to be exclusively thinking of Christ in them. All their attention was centered in that aspect of truth. They said, "It is true, Christ died for us; but now we must go higher; and according as we realize Christ in us, we rest and have peace." It was by this well-meant praising of Christ in us that they forgot Christ for us. They saw that a hypocritical and superficial trust in the merits of Christ was a dead thing, which brought forth no fruit, which gained no victory over sin and the world. They therefore were anxious to see life and power. But they did not perceive clearly that our only power, peace, and life are in Christ, who died for us, and in whom we have perfection. By looking to their love to Jesus, to their imitation of His perfect example, to their resemblance to His holy image, they never could have true, perfect peace. As a Christian never loses comfort but by breaking the order and method of the gospel, looking on his own and looking off Christ's perfect righteousness, so he that sets up his sanctification to look at, sets up the greatest idol, which will ultimately strengthen his fears and doubts, though at first it may soothe his feelings and please his imagination. The young Christian is especially apt to fall into error. After his first zeal and love, after the spring and dawn of his spiritual life, when he is full of praise and strength, when prayer is fervent, when joy and praise abound, when love to the Saviour is ardent, when work for Christ seems refreshment, there generally succeeds a period of languor and of darkness, when he is led into the experience, painful but salutary, that even after his renewal, the old man, the flesh, is enmity against the Spirit, and that our all-sufficiency is of God. Now it is for him to enter more deeply into the valley of humiliation, to see more clearly the need and the preciousness of the blood of Christ, to ascribe more cordially and with greater contrition all glory to the God of salvation. He is, however, tempted to choose the path of what appears progress, victory, strength, and beauty; whereas God's saints say - Christ must increase; I must decrease. Christ is comely; I am black. Christ is strength; I am weakness. In Christ is all good; in me, that is, in my flesh, there is nothing good. The saints of God find, that instead of progressing from one degree of perfection to another, they discover in themselves daily more that sin which is exceeding sinful; they behold themselves vile, and cling with all intensity of faith to Jesus, who saith unto them, "My grace is sufficient for thee." They are saved by grace; they know Christ only as their righteousness and perfection; and even at the end of their earthly journey, of their labours and sufferings, they grasp "the faithful saying, worthy of all

acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, of whom I am chief."

Rest in the Lord, and in Him alone. Consider the Apostle and great High Priest, Christ Jesus. Place your confidence and have your joy only in the Lamb slain. Call Jehovah, Jehovah-Tsidkenu. Day by day you are a burden to Jesus, and His grace alone upholds you, while you stand only in His perfection. You would not have it otherwise. And while you are looking off unto Him, you will run with patience the race set before you. You will fight the good, but real and painful, fight of faith; you will crucify daily the old man, who to our last breath is enmity against God; you will have no confidence in the flesh, but rejoice in Christ Jesus; and your life will be hid with Him in God. And at last Christ will present His children unblameable in body, soul, and spirit. Then shall we be like Him; then shall we have no more conflict, and no more sin. Faithful is He who hath promised, who also will perform it. Amen.

07 - Hebrews 3:1-6

CHAPTER V I I.

CHRIST THE LORD, AND MOSES THE SERVANT.

Hebrews 3:1-6.

WE commence the second section of the epistle to the Hebrews. It extends from the beginning of the third chapter to the fourteenth verse of the fourth chapter. The contents of this section may be stated briefly thus: That the Lord Jesus Christ, the mediator of the new covenant, is high above Moses, the mediator of the old dispensation, inasmuch as Jesus is the Son of God, and Lord over the house; whereas Moses is the servant of God, who was faithful in the house. And upon this doctrinal statement is based the exhortation, that we should not harden our hearts lest we fail to enter into that rest of which the possession of the promised land was only an imperfect type. This section consists of two parts a doctrinal statement, which forms the basis, and an exhortation resting upon it. The doctrinal statement, contained in the first six verses of the third chapter (Hebrews 3:1-6), is the subject of our meditation this morning.

Before the apostle advances in the argument, and shows the glory of the great High Priest by contrasting Him with the glory of Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, he recapitulates in an exhortation the teaching of the preceding chapters, and he admonishes the "holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling," to be continually, perseveringly, and earnestly looking unto "the Apostle and High Priest of their profession, Christ Jesus." He does not say my brethren, because in this epistle he keeps himself in the background; and when he speaks of them as "brethren," he evidently refers to the blessed truth just announced, that Jesus, the Son of God, is not ashamed to call us brethren. He means therefore those who by the Spirit of God have been born again, and who can call God their Father. He addresses those who of God are in Christ Jesus, who were quickened together with Him; for when He rose from the dead He was "the first-born among many brethren." He calls them "holy brethren," because upon this fact of brotherhood is based their sanctification. "He that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one." Set apart by the blood of Jesus unto the service and love of God, they are sanctified forever by that one sacrifice which Jesus offered upon the cross. He reminds them of the "heavenly calling" which they have received now, and of which the earthly calling unto Canaan was only a type; "heavenly because God the Father and Jesus the exalted High Priest are in heaven, and because the Holy Spirit who brought the glad tidings of salvation came down from the heavenly sanctuary to dwell among men; "heavenly" because the end of their calling is, that as the many children of God they shall be brought unto glory; "heavenly" because while waiting upon earth their citizenship is in heaven, and the whole spirit, character, and aim which characterize them is not according to this world, but according to that sanctuary and city where is their hope.

It is therefore for us to "consider" or (as the very expressive word implies), to look carefully unto "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession." This is the only Scripture in which Jesus is called

the apostle, yet, though the word is not used, the thought is of frequent occurrence. Often Jesus testified that the Father sent Him, that He came obedient to the mission and will of His heavenly Father, that His whole life was only a fulfillment of the mission entrusted to Him; and as He was called in the Old Testament times "the Angel or Messenger of the Covenant," so it is in accordance with the whole teaching of Scripture that He is called here by the name "apostle."1 Of Christ the Head are all energies and ministrations in the body. If there are bishops, it is because Christ is the Bishop; if there are pastors or shepherds, it is because Christ is "the Shepherd of the flock;" if there are evangelists, it is because Christ came and brought to mankind the glad tidings; if there are apostles, it is because He is the Apostle, the head of all apostolic dignity and work. He is the Apostle sent by God to us men; the High Priest, as representing us before the Father.2 Him we are to consider in faith; for herein is all our safety: looking unto Jesus, we have peace and joy; for this is the joy of our life, that all perfection is in Christ. And in prayer; for can we see Him in His holiness without the petition rising in our hearts, "O that I might be conformed unto Him!" We are to look upon Him as a painter looks upon a model, with the full intention and desire of imitating Him. We are to keep constantly in sight of Him, as our only infallible Guide upon earth. All this is included in that one word, that one expression, "consider." Gaze upon, meditate upon, "the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus." [1CompareHebrews 2:3, where Christ is likewise represented as the Messenger, the Proto-Apostle:α■ποστε■λλεινis applied to Christ's coming inMatthew 10:40; Matthew 15:24;Luke 4:18;John 3:17; John 4:9-10. Christ is the Messenger of the Covenant,Malachi 3:2;Exodus 23:2-3. The remark already quoted with reference toHebrews 2:3-4(Introductory Remarks) is applicable to this passage also. The apostle Paul, if, as we think, he is the writer,'sinks his own apostleship, and points the Hebrews to the One Lord and Head.2According to Bengel's simple distinction■π■στολος, qui Dei causam apud nos agit;■ρχιερε■ς, qui nostram causam apud Deum agit. But notice also the essential connection between the two ideas; He who was sent,Κατ■■ξοχ■ν, was sent in order by His sacrifice to become the High Priest. Lo, I come (■π■στολος) to do thy will (■ρχιερε■ς)].

Let us look at the word "profession." We are very apt to undervalue things with which abuse and danger are connected, and which may be easily counterfeited. There is such a thing as a mere outward, empty, hypocritical profession; but is that a reason why we should not attach importance to confessing Christ? Jesus says, "Whoso ever shall confess me before men, him will I Confess before my Father, and before the angels. And whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny." With the heart we are to believe unto righteousness, and with the mouth we are to confess that Jesus is the Lord. It may be merely an outward thing, a mere lip-utterance, to say, "I believe in Jesus;" it may be only a form to sit down at the Lord's table;" but as the outward expression of an inward reality, it is a great and blessed fact. Let us not be secret disciples; let us not come to Jesus merely by night, ashamed to bear testimony to the gospel. Let us not despise the outward and visible, church, although, alas! there is much error and sin connected therewith. Our confession of Christ in the outward church, in the congregation of professed disciples, in the ordinances of Christ's institution, let us not under value it! Remember with gratitude that you have publicly professed Christ; that into the Church of Christ you have been received by baptism, and acknowledged at the Lord's Supper as a brother and partaker of the heavenly calling. Let the remembrance of this be to us continually helpful, and stimulate us to adorn the doctrine of the gospel by a Christ-like life and walk. The Hebrews are exhorted to look unto the Apostle and High Priest Jesus, to Him of whose glory (chap. 1) and of whose sufferings and death (chap. 2) they

had been reminded; they are to look unto the Man Christ Jesus, the Son, who through His self-humiliation on earth became the merciful and faithful High Priest, having finished the work which the Father sent Him to do. And in order to show to the Hebrews the exceeding great glory of Jesus, who was faithful to Him who appointed Him1 Mediator of the new covenant," he contrasts the Lord with Moses, the servant of God.2(1ποι■σαντι, literally made. But not in the sense of created, but who appointed, ordained and furnished Him with all that was necessary to carry out His great mission. "A body hast thou prepared for me." (Hebrews 10:5.) Comp. alsoMark 3:14, original.2"The servant of Jehovah, the King Messiah, will be greater than Abraham, more exalted than Moses, higher than all the angels of ministry." - Ancient Synagogue's Comment onIsaiah 52:13.) To speak of Moses to the Jews was always a very difficult and delicate matter. It is hardly possible for Gentiles to understand or realize the veneration and affection with which the Jews regard Moses, the servant of God. All their religious life, all their thoughts about God, all their practices and observances, all their hopes of the future, everything connected with God, is with them also connected with Moses. Moses was the great apostle unto them, the man sent unto them of God, the mediator of the old covenant; and we cannot wonder at this profound, reverential affection which they feel for Moses. You read in the gospels and in the book of the Acts with what joy and pride they said, "We are the disciples of Moses." It was their glory and boast; and we cannot wonder at this when we think of Moses, of his marvellous history, of his grand character, of the unique position assigned to him in the history of God's people, and the wonderful work given him to perform.

Think of the history of Moses. It was wonderful from the very commencement. Sheltered in his tender infancy from the cruelty of Pharaoh, courageously tended by his God-trusting parents, watched over by the angels and rescued from the persecution of his enemies, he was brought up at the very court of Pharaoh. Trained and educated by the Egyptian sages, he became learned in all the wisdom of the most advanced nation of the age. When he was a young man he was the only free man of his people; and of his own voluntary choice, by faith, he esteemed the reproach of Israel greater riches than the treasures of Egypt. And afterwards, when his fiery zeal, not yet chastened by the grace of God, brought him into conflict with Pharaoh, he was led into quiet and obscurity for forty years, that, leading a shepherd's life, he might learn the wisdom and patience of the saints. Then, called by the mysterious appearance of God in the burning bush, he was appointed to be Israel's deliverer, and endowed by God with power, he went forth. By faith he led his people out of Egypt, and through the Red Sea; and after ruling over the children of Israel for forty years, after a life of prayer and self-denial, of unparalleled trial and suffering, and of heroic patience and strength; after forty years of divine manifestations, blessings, and miracles, see him at last ascending mount Nebo; his eye was not yet dim, nor his natural force abated. He beheld the land, and died, and the Lord buried him, so that no man knoweth of his sepulchre. No doubt the angels who had watched him in his cradle on the waves of the Nile were there, ready to carry him into his place of rest, and with awe witnessing the conflict between Michael the arch-angel and the great adversary. (Jude.) What a marvellous history is the life of Moses! And look at his character. There is no man in the whole history of the Jews to compare with him, until you come to Him who is Lord of all, the Lord of glory, and to that chief of apostles, who was able to say, "Be ye followers of me, as I am of Christ." How wonderful is his faith in God! his zeal for the glory of God, and for the honour of Jehovah! his importunate prayer and wrestling with the Most High! his love for his nation, which makes him willing to die, and be blotted out of the book of life, rather than that

Israel should be destroyed! his never-wearied patience and meekness! His whole life was a sacrifice of love and of obedience to the God of his fathers' Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, who appeared to him in the burning bush; a life of self- denial and affection to the people of his choice.

Look at his peculiar position. He was mediator of the covenant, the ambassador (apostle) and plenipotentiary (as it were) of God. All God's dealings with Israel were transacted through him. He was a prophet, priest, and king in one person, and united all the great and important functions which had afterwards to be distributed among a plurality of persons. As a prophet he was different from all other prophets; for God spake to him face to face; and therefore he said, "A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me." Jesus in His prophetic office is foreshadowed by all the prophets; but none of them except Moses could describe Jesus as a prophet like unto me. Through Moses the whole of the Levitical dispensation was instituted. The learned Bengel says - "While two chapters in Genesis are given to tell us how the world was created, there are sixteen chapters to tell us how the tabernacle was to be built. For the world was made for the sake of the Church; and the great object of all creation is to glorify God in the redemption and sanctification of His people." It is frequently and emphatically stated that Moses obeyed God fully, and made all things as he saw the pattern on the mount. As a prophet, arid in the priestly spirit of love and meekness, he ruled over Israel, and showed them God's mighty wonders.

Look again at the work Moses accomplished, at the great things which the grace of God performed through him. Through him God brought Israel out of Egypt, and led them through the Red Sea; He gave the Ten Commandments and the whole law by him; by him the whole national life of Israel was organized; through him God laid the foundation of the theocracy, and all subsequent revelations of God have their root in the work which was wrought by Moses. Even in the future, restored Israel will remember and honour him, and be guided by the law given through him. God bears witness to His servant that he was faithful in all God's house. In every department of this great and complicated building Moses obeyed the Lord implicitly and fully; according to everything that God told him, he performed it. Faithfulness is what God marks, loves, and honours; a perfect, sincere, and constant desire to obey the will of God in all that is entrusted to our care. But after admitting fully the grandeur and excellence of Moses, the apostle proceeds to show the still greater glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. It must have struck you that in many respects Moses was a type of Jesus. Both were as infants threatened by cruel rulers, and both were marvellously sheltered by the living God. So in after life Moses was in some respects like Christ. Moses was the only freeman who espoused the cause of the nation; and Jesus was the only Free and Holy One who could take up the cause of the leper. But yet, what a difference! The zeal of Moses was not free from earth-born elements, and had to be purified. But there was nothing in Jesus that was of the earth earthy; no sinfulweakness of the flesh was in Him who condescended to come in the likeness of sinful flesh. His love was always pure, His zeal holy, His aim single. Moses spake face to face with God, and was the mediator between God and Israel. The Lord Jesus is Prophet, Priest, and King in one person, but He is perfectly and eternally the true Revealer, Reconciler, Ruler, as the Son of God. Moses was willing to die for the nation; the Lord Jesus actually died, and not for the nation only, but to gather all the children of God into one. Moses brought the law on tables of stone; the Lord Jesus by His Spirit, even the Holy Ghost, writes the law on our hearts. But notice the imperfection of Moses as a servant. The one sin of, his life, which is mentioned as the

cause of his not being permitted to enter the promised land, seems at first sight not to merit such a severe punishment. Moses was doubtless guilty of other sins; but why is this one sin singled out? Not merely because he was impatient, but because he did not sanctity the name of God among the people. Whereas God was willing to show pure mercy, Moses was not able to rise to the height of this great argument, and showed the vehemence of his anger and displeasure. How different was Jesus! He declared the full, perfect, and free love of God. He exclaimed on the cross: "Father, forgive them: for they know not what they do." And the message He now sends is nothing but salvation for the lost and guilty. The house, the building, means the children of God, who by faith, as lively stones, are built upon Christ Jesus the foundation, and who are filled with the Holy Ghost; in whom God dwells, as in His temple, and in whom God is praised and manifested in glory. The illustration is very simple and instructive. We are compared unto stones, and as every simile is defective, we must add, not dead stones, but lively stones, as the apostle in his epistle to the Ephesians speaks of the building growing. The way in which we are brought unto the Lord Jesus Christ and united with Him is not by building, but by believing. The builders rejected the "chief corner stone" (Psalms 118:22); but "coming unto Christ" (1 Peter 2), simply believing, "ye also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house." When we go about the works of the law we are trying to build, and as long as we build we are not built. When we give up working, then by faith the Holy Ghost adds us to Christ, and grafts us into the living Vine, who is also the Foundation. We are rooted and grounded. The house is one, and all the children of God are united in the Spirit. Some are strong and are pillars, others are weak and rest upon those whom God has appointed to be strong, and to support and encourage the feeble. "None liveth unto himself;" and "if one member suffer, all the members suffer with it." If one grows and rejoices, it is for the good of the whole. The glory of the Lord is to show itself in the whole church, thus united by the indwelling Spirit. But not merely does God dwell in the church as a whole, it is the peculiarity of everything spiritual that every part of it is again a whole.* Not only is it true, that "wheresoever two or three are gathered to gether" in Christ’s name, He is in the midst of them; but if a single person loves Him, the Father will love him, and will come and make His abode with him. An individual is thus also a temple, a habitation filled with the Holy Ghost. The Father and the Lord Jesus Christ dwell in him. Israel could understand this because it was symbolized by the temple, and the reality and substance of the symbol was also promised to them in the days of the Messiah. For what was the promise of the new covenant? "I will dwell in them, and they in me." What a marvellous idea is here presented to us! A Christian is like the tabernacle; he is a sanctuary. There is the holy of holies, the holy place, and the outer court. But in all the glory of God is to be revealed; the holiness of God to be shown forth. His body is the Lord’s; the members of his body are Christ’s members. His eyes, his lips, his feet, all the physical energies which God has given unto him, are a part of the house in which the Father and the Lord Jesus, through the Holy Ghost, take up their abode. His reason, memory, imagination, affections, will, conscience, all that is in him, behold, it is a house where God is to dwell. God is to walk in it, to dwell in it, to rest in it. He is to be not merely a visitor, but an indwelling guest, "abiding in him." Sometimes God will convert this wonderful dwelling-place into His temple, and there will be heard the voice of prayer and praise. Sometimes He changes it into a banqueting-hall, and there will be heard the voice of rejoicing and the melody of thanksgiving, the assurance of that love which is better than wine. Sometimes it becomes a battle-field, and the Lord is a man-of-war, and conquers the enemies of the worm Jacob, and succours the saint who is tempted. (*Oetinger.)

How manifold are the mansions in which He dwells! As there are many mansions in the Father's house above, as there are many mansions in His Church below, so also are there many rooms in the spiritual house of the individual believer; in various manifestations of grace, strength, and love, does God dwell in us.

You who believe in Jesus are His house, His own; for as the Father appointed Him to be Mediator, as the Father laid the foundation in Zion, so Jesus the Lord bought you with His own blood, and sent into your hearts His own Spirit. We are emphatically Christ's. This is of God, and by the Spirit; but Christ dwelleth in us; we are His own house. But the apostle adds - shall I call it a condition? shall I call it an encouragement? Oh, there is nothing hard in the exhortations of Scripture! - "If you hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of your hope unto the end." I do not look upon it as a condition in the sense of contingency. If it were possible that we who have come unto the Lord Jesus Christ, and who have loved and served Him, or rather let me say, have experienced His grace and faithfulness - if it were possible that, after all, we should forsake Him, and turn away from the faith, oh, of all things this would be most fearful and of all prospects this would be the most wretched! What is the one thing which the Christian desires? What is the one great thing which he does? What is the one great secret which he is always endeavouring to find out with greater clearness, and grasp with firmer intensity? Is it not this: "My Beloved is mine, and I am His"? The inmost desire of our heart and the exhortations of the word coincide. To the end we must persevere; and it is therefore with great joy and alacrity that we receive the solemn exhortations: "He that endureth unto the end shall be saved;" "No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God." We desire to hear constantly the voice which saith from His heavenly throne, "To him that over-cometh will I grant to sit with me in my kingdom, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne." And with the exhortation is the word of promise: "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." "They that trust in the Lord shall be like mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but standeth fast forever." "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give unto them eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any one pluck them out of my hand. My Father, which gave them me, is greater than all; and no man is able to pluck them out of my Father's hand. I and my Father are one."

Oh, blessed word and promise of God, that He will keep us unto the end! But how is it that we are kept? Through faith, through watchfulness, through self-denial, through prayer and fasting, through our constantly taking heed unto ourselves according to His word. "Hold fast," if you desire it to be manifested in that day that you are not merely outward professors, not merely fishes existing in the net, but the true and living disciples of the One Master, "Hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of your hope firm unto the end." Faith is the mother of hope; but how often is the mother strengthened and cheered by the daughter! There is first faith - "By faith are ye saved, not of works" - then hope. "For we are saved by hope," looking forward to the recompense of the reward. Do not imagine that hope is in any way inferior to faith and love. Some seem to think hope is of nature, a feature of our natural character, an element in our natural disposition. They would not be ashamed to say they had little hope, although they would not like to confess they had little faith or little love. Why? Because they take a perfectly erroneous view of what hope is. It is a gift and fruit of the Holy Ghost just as much as faith and love. As hope is an essential feature of the Christian character, so it is of grace, and not of nature. The lively hope which God by the Spirit gives unto

us, comes through the resurrection of Jesus from the dead. It has not its root in the first creation, and is not strengthened by that which is of the flesh. The same apostle who teaches us that we are saved by faith, declares that we are saved by hope. (Romans 8:24.) For though the grace of our Lord is exceeding abundant with faith and love which are in Christ Jesus (1 Timothy 1:14), yet we are still in conflict with sin and temptation, in a body of death and a world of evil. We hope for the full and perfect salvation; we shall see Christ as He is, and be like Him; we wait for the redemption of the body, and the regeneration of the world. Hence hope refers to the future, even to the coming of the Lord Jesus; and yet it possesses already the substance and earnest of the inheritance. For is not Christ, who is our hope, ours even now by faith and in love? But hope, looking to the glory of Christ and to the transfiguration of our body, is the very strength, essence, and impulse of heavenly-mindedness. In proportion as we hope, we rise above the sins and vanities of earth.*(*Apostolic teaching on hope is both copious and unanimous.Romans 5:1-5; Romans 8:15-39; Romans 12:12; Romans 15:13;Ephesians 1:12-14; Ephesians 1:18;Colossians 1:5; Colossians 1:23; Colossians 1:27;1 Thessalonians 1:3;2 Thessalonians 2:16;1 Peter 1:1; 1 Peter 1:3; 1 Peter 1:9-12;1 John 3:13. Beside the passages in this epistle,Hebrews 6:11; Hebrews 10:23; Hebrews 11:1, etc.)

Cherish the hope which in Christ Jesus is given unto you who believe in the Saviour. Look forward to the coming of the Lord, to the joy and glory which He will bring unto His disciples. Be not afraid, for He will sustain you during all your difficulties and trials, and you will surely be kept unto that day. And be not afraid that the glory and brightness will overwhelm you; for Christ the Lord will be glorified in you, and thus be your strength, and you shall shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of your Father. Hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of your hope. In calm and humble assurance, looking only unto Christ crucified for sinners, you cannot but rejoice in hope of the glory of God. As you trust in Jehovah your righteousness, to you look forward to Jehovah your glory. The God of hope (the source and object of hope) fill you with joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Ghost. (Rom. 15)

What more suitable encouragement could we have at the beginning of the year than these words of the apostle? The end spoken of is nothing else but the appearing of the Lord Jesus, when hope shall be changed into sight. The day is approaching (Hebrews 10:25), and with it our glory. We look back on the years through which we have been led. On a day like this we feel as if we had come to a milestone, on one side of which we can read the inscription, telling us how many years and stages of our journey have been completed. But on the other side, where curiosity expects to find the number of years yet before us, what do Faith and Love and Hope read? What else but this - "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." And again - "Unto them that love God all things work together for good." And again "Whose house are ye, if ye hold fast the confidence and rejoicing of your hope unto the end." We know how many years have elapsed since the First Advent; but on the other side of the milestone we read, no date, but the words - "Watch, for ye know not the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man doth come." And we can also testify, "If you believe in Jesus, if you love and follow Him, if you abide in Him, then when the Lord comes again you will have confidence, and stand before Him."

Look unto Him, and be ye saved, all ye ends of the earth; and you, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, oh, consider, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession - Jesus! Amen.

08 - Hebrews 3:7-19

CHAPTER V I I I.

UNBELIEF IN THE WILDERNESS.

Hebrews 3:7-19. THE apostle has compared and contrasted Moses, the servant of God and the mediator of the old dispensation, with the Lord Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of the Father, and the mediator of the new and everlasting covenant. Great was the glory of Moses, and whether we think of his marvellous history, of his unique position as prophet, priest, and king in Israel, of his grand and deep character, or of the fundamental and mighty work which was accomplished through him, we can easily understand why it is written, that there arose not a prophet like unto him until He came who is above all, the Lord from heaven. We judge of magnitude by comparison. It is because the Jews had some idea and appreciation of the greatness of Moses that the apostle avails himself of this, to point out to them the far higher glory of the Lord Jesus. Though in the life and character of Moses there are many striking excellencies and virtues, the faithfulness of Moses is the feature on which the apostle dwells. It is, indeed, the most important feature in our character as servants of God. This is the one thing required of us, to be faithful. And well were it for us if we laid more stress on faithfulness, and thoughtless of gifts and talents, or of success and results. For while it belongs to God to appoint unto each of us severally our position, to distribute gifts according to His wisdom and good pleasure, and to reward us with results and harvests, hundredfold, sixtyfold, or thirtyfold, it belongs to us to be faithful to God wherever He has placed us, and in the gift and task which His love assigns. We see the summary and result of the true disciple’s life in the decisive words of the Master: "Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things." Moses was faithful in all God’s house. In every branch of the work with which he was entrusted he carried out the commandments of God. He added nothing of his own to the instructions which he received; he left out nothing, but ordered all things as he was commanded. And though sorely tried by Israel’s ingratitude, rebelliousness, and stubbornness, his faithfulness never wearied nor wavered. But while Moses was faithful as a servant, Jesus was faithful as the Son. Moses, sinful and imperfect, was himself part of the house; Jesus the Holy One, the Son of God, is Lord over the house. The dispensation of which Moses was mediator was temporary, preparatory, and typical of the new covenant, in which all things are eternal, substantial, and heavenly. Moses, as the Saviour testified, wrote of Christ. The whole law pointed to the Messiah. Jesus fulfilled the law, because He was the Perfect Man, in whom alone the law in its depth and breadth was realized and manifested, and because He bore the curse and the condemnation which the law pronounces against transgressors. All the promises of salvation which the typical (or gospel) part of the Mosaic dispensation contained, all sacrifices, festivals, and priestly mediation, found its substance and fulfillment in Christ. How much greater then is He than Moses!

God spake with Moses face to face, yet is Jesus only The Prophet, for as the only begotten He declared the Father: we see the Father when we see Jesus. Moses was full of love and the priestly

spirit; but Jesus was not merely willing to die for Israel, but actually laid down His life, and not for the nation only, but that He might gather in one all the children of God. Moses ruled as king in Jeshurun; but Jesus is the true King, who by the Spirit can make His people willing in the day of His power, and renew their hearts into living obedience. Moses is the servant, but Jesus the Son is Lord."*(*"Moses was a type in the world. If any should say, What is the fulfillment and consummation? I answer, King Messiah: through Him such perfection will be produced as never existed hitherto throughout all generations." (Zohar.) Many passages in the Talmudic writings teach that the law shall be abolished in the days of Messiah, and that the light and wisdom of the Messianic age far exceed that of the law of Moses.) The glory of Christ that excelleth is described by the apostle Paul (2 Corinthians 3:6-12), a passage which should be studied in connection with our chapter. On this contrast between the Lord Jesus and Moses the servant of God, the apostle builds his earnest exhortation. Again he interrupts the course of his massive and sublime argument by most solemn and pathetic admonition. His great aim in this epistle is to exhort. He is bent, with all intensity of purpose and of watchful love, to beseech the Hebrews to be steadfast. He is moved with fear; his heart trembles with anxiety, while he points to the glory of the great High Priest; he is continually giving vent to the pent-up feelings of affection and solicitude with which he regards the dangerous condition of the Hebrew believers. Oh, it is so like Paul, the apostle of love! He seems to me to have had a thousand hearts. He loved each church as if it was the only one he possessed. He felt their burden, he rejoiced over their order, steadfastness, and gifts; he ceased not to give thanks for them, and to pray for the blessing and help which each of them needed; he remembered the names of their saints, he watched over them with the affectionateness of a tender mother and nurse. While he seems lost in the contemplation of divine truth, soaring like an eagle far above vale and mountain-peak, and gazing with steadfast eye into the brightness of the sun, he is always like his blessed and dear Lord, who in homely but most touching language compares Himself to a hen gathering her chickens under her wings. In all Paul’s epistles we feel the warm breath of affection; we hear the voice, tremulous with emotion, we see the earnest and loving countenance of the fatherly man. Even when he writes to the Romans, whom he had never seen, he says, "I long to see you, that I may impart unto you some spiritual gift, that ye may be established; that is, that I may be comforted together with you by the mutual faith both of you and me." What can exceed his tender love to the churches of Thessalonica and Philippi? or the soul-stirring expostulations which in anguish of mind he addresses to the Galatians, of whom he travails again in birth, that Christ may be formed in them? How fatherly, how considerate, how exquisitely delicate and sensitive is he in his treatment of the Corinthian church. In all his epistles he continually interrupts the doctrine with the expression of his love, his anxiety, his joy and sorrow; we see his heart bound up in the churches. So in this epistle he constantly exhorts and beseeches the Hebrews (and us also) to abide in Christ, to take heed unto ourselves, to be faithful unto the end.

Thus is it in all Scripture. The love of God, seeking our salvation, pervades all its teaching. Do we not throughout the whole Scripture hear God, as it were, sighing, "Oh that they were wise; that they hearkened unto my voice!" Do we not hear the tearful voice of Jesus saying, "If thou hadst known?" Do we not throughout behold the loving arms of God outstretched to receive us? May we return love with love, so that Christ’s joy may be full in us. The thought of Moses naturally suggests the Israelites in the wilderness. Faithful was the Mediator, through whom God dealt with them: but was Israel faithful? God spake: did they obey? God showed them wonderful signs: did

they trust and follow in faith? And if Israel was not faithful under Moses, and their unbelief brought ruin upon them, how much more guilty shall we be, and how much greater our danger, if we are not faithful unto the Lord Jesus? The history of the wanderings of Israel in the wilderness is most instructive. No Scripture is of private interpretation, but is catholic and eternal. Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning. Of this history especially, the apostle Paul, who dwells on it in his epistle to the Corinthians, tells us that all these things happened unto them for ensamples; and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come, (1 Cor. 10) According to the solemn words addressed by the glorified Saviour to the church of Thyatira, Israel's experience is to be a warning to all the churches. The books of Moses are thus of permanent importance to God's children. Israel's history in the wilderness is typical throughout. It is a marvellous history from beginning to end. The exodus out of Egypt, the passage through the Red Sea, the giving of the Law at mount Sinai, the manna, the pillar of cloud and fire, the victory over Amalek, the rock that followed them, the garments that never became old; all is miracle, full of the wondrous love and power of God, who is Israel's redeemer. Consider the Messenger, the Angel of the Covenant, Christ, who led them. Their whole life and history was a life and history by the word of God. Do you know this as a pre sent experience?

It was a history of solemn and glorious privilege. God separated Israel unto Himself. They were shut up to God. Their daily need, their absolute dependence on divine help and bounty, the constant gift of manna, guidance and defense, which so visibly descended from the Lord, the giver of all; the daily beholding of God's mighty and gracious works - all this was a marvellous privilege, the life of faith was made near and easy. Dependence on second causes is a great snare to man; for since the fall the tendency of man is to forget the Creator. Israel in the wilderness had to live daily and exclusively by God's power and goodness. How solemn, yet how glorious, to be thus constantly depending on God and constantly beholding His omnipotent love. Is this not a picture of the Christian's life?

It is a sad history from beginning to end: continual murmuring, doubt, ingratitude, idolatry, sin; looking back unto Egypt and its pleasures, for getting its degradation and bondage, doubting God's goodness and power, yielding to the temptations of lust and tempting the Lord Jehovah, the faithful and merciful Christ."*(*Comp. 1 Cor. 10, specially verse 9 [1 Corinthians 10:9])

It is a sad history, full of fearful judgments. Long, dark years, of most of which we know nothing but the ominous allusions in the prophetic books to the worship of Moloch and Remphan. And yet the Lord was with them all the days, and every day, ready to bless and to gladden them. Do you understand the parable?

Yet was there in Israel also faith and love; and God remembers the time of their espousals, when they followed Him in a land that was not sown. There were not merely murmurings, but hymns of praise and thanksgiving; there were willing offerings unto the Lord of gold and silver, there was victory over the enemies, there were Joshua and Caleb, ho followed the Lord fully. In the book of Psalms, which is to a certain extent a response to the five books of Moses, as well as the starting-point of the subsequent prophets, frequent reference is made to the history of the wilderness. It is remembered, first in order to ascribe glory to God, and to give thanks unto Him for His mercy and for His marvellous works. And secondly, to hold up the mirror to man, and especially Israel, that we may learn humility and faith. The apostle quotes Psalm 95, in which the

exhortation, based upon Israel's disobedience and punishment, .is peculiarly solemn and emphatic. You must have noticed how frequently the Psalms are quoted in this epistle. Our Saviour also singles them out as a special portion of Scripture. The church in all ages has honoured and loved the Psalms. David was chosen to be the sweet singer of Israel, not merely the old covenant Israel, but the whole Israel of God. Here is perfect sympathy with all our weakness and fluctuating experience, and at the same time faithful and sure guidance; here we find a perfect expression of feeling and soul-experience; here are the deepest and truest utterances of repentance and of faith - of the soul's mournful complaints in darkness and sorrow, and of jubilant rejoicing and thanksgiving in the sunshine of divine favour; here is a true analysis of the heart; here we behold the doubts and conflicting thoughts, the fear and tumult of the soul - all that ever moves and agitates the saints of God. But the Psalter is not merely an expression of our feelings; it guides, corrects, and elevates us. David prays with us according to the mind of God. He is not merely our brother, but he is also a type of Christ. In the Psalms we learn the mind of Messiah in His union with His people. Hence the Psalter is the incomparable and comprehensive manual and hymn-book of the saints.*(*As Johann Arndt says: "The Psalter is a necklace, consisting of the gold of doctrine and salutary instruction, of heart-reviving gems of consolation, and precious stones of beautiful prayers; a theatre of the unveiled great purposes and works of God; a cheerful meadow end extensive garden of roses, in which the most beautiful and fragrant flowers delight us; an infinite ocean, in which those who experience many tempests of affliction find precious pearls; a heavenly school, where we converse with God Himself, our great Teacher; a mirror of divine mercies, in which the glorious countenance of our most compassionate Father shines forth; the most perfect anatomy of our souls, showing not merely our inmost thoughts and passions, but their corrective and medicine.") The quotation is introduced (like all Scripture quotations in this epistle) as the word of God, "as the Holy Ghost saith." Even the subjective lyrical portions of Scripture proceed out of divine depths, as well as depths of the human heart. Holy men spake and not merely spake, but sang with human, real music, in joy, in sorrow, in gladness and in tears, and yet as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. But in this quotation it is possible that the reference to the Holy Ghost has a special meaning and propriety; for it is the office of the Spirit (in the divine economy of grace) to glorify the Father and the Son, to direct us to Christ's word, to cause us to listen to the Father's voice. As the Father says of Christ, "Hear Him;" and as the Son always magnifies the Father's word, so the Holy Ghost testifies not of Himself, but of the Father and the Son. The psalm begins with an exhortation to praise God. Joyous and festive is the tone in which it commences. It describes God in His greatness and power. It starts with the assurance that He is the Rock of our salvation. The Lord the Creator is also the Shepherd of His people. David calls on us to sing; and song is the expression of joy, peace, and love: "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the Rock of our salvation. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker. For He is our God; and we are the people of His pasture, and the sheep of His hand." But with a sudden transition the psalmist, or as the apostle Paul prefers to say, the Holy Ghost, exhorts us most solemnly not to harden our hearts as Israel did in the temptation.

Notice, (1) when we hear God's voice - and, oh, how clearly and sweetly does He speak to us in the person of His Son Jesus, the Word incarnate, who died for us in Golgotha! - the heart must respond. The assent of the intellect, the admiration of the understanding, the fervour of the imagination, and even the conviction of the con science, do not suffice. God speaks to the heart of Jerusalem. (Isaiah 40, original.) By this expression is meant the centre of our spiritual existence,

that centre out of which thoughts and affections proceed, out of which are the issues of life, that mysterious fountain which God only can know and fathom. Oh that Christ may dwell there!

God’s voice is to soften the heart. This is the purpose of the divine word - to make our hearts tender. Alas! by nature we are hard-hearted; and what we call good and soft-hearted is not so in reality and in God’s sight. God wishes us to be delivered from hardness of heart, that is, from dullness of perception of His love and beauty, from ingratitude and lukewarmness towards Him, from pride and impenitence, from self-seeking and unrest. When we receive God’s word in the heart, when we acknowledge our sin, when we adore God’s mercy, when we desire God’s fellowship, when we see Jesus, who came to serve us, to wash our feet, and to shed His blood for our salvation, the heart becomes soft and tender. For repentance, faith, prayer, patience, hope of heaven, all these things make the heart tender. Tender towards God, tender towards our fellow-men, tender - think it not paradoxical - towards ourselves; I mean that state of gentleness and meekness which David describes - "Lord, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty. . . . Surely I have behaved and quieted myself as a child that is weaned of his mother." We live in the atmosphere of forgiving and merciful love, we become also tender and loving to our own true life, freed from that restless and feverish spirit of the worldly man who, indulgent to self, which is not his true and real self, rules harshly and impatiently over the desires and sorrows of the imprisoned spirit. Can we be hard - thinking much of ourselves, discontented with our lot, envious or unforgiving, worldly and restless - when we hear the voice of God: "I am the Lord thy God; I have loved thee with an everlasting love; thou art mine." "As I have loved you, love one another"? The road may be narrow, and the sun nearly set, but hearing the voice of Jesus, the heart burns within us in love and hope.

Notice, (2) all sin begins in the heart. In the epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 10) the apostle describes the rivers, the corrupt branches; there he speaks of Israel’s murmuring, idolatry, and lust. Here the Spirit speaks of the fountain and root: "They do err in their hearts" And what is the error of the heart? What else but unbelief? God speaks, and the heart is to believe. If the heart is hardened, it believes not; and regarding neither the threatenings nor the promises, it leans not on the strength and love of God: unbelief is the mother of all sin and sorrow. For (3) unbelief is departure from the living God. How simple is this! As long as you trust God, you are near Him. The moment you doubt Him, your soul has departed into the strange country. Faith is the link between God’s fullness and strength and our emptiness and weakness. If the soul cries out, Abide with me, or Nearer to Thee, the answer of Jesus is, Only believe!

Unbelief cannot see and understand God.* Forty years Israel had seen the works of the Most High. Every day they beheld the manna and the pillar of His guiding presence. How many miracles they witnessed! At the end of this long period and these daily visitations the Lord says (in sorrow and disappointment, to speak humanly), "They do always err in their heart, and they have not known my ways" They do not understand me. They have no eye to see my face, no perception, no sympathy; they do not understand my meaning, my thought, my character, myself, though I have been constantly speaking, revealing, manifesting, yet do they not perceive; it is hidden to them. (*To know God is the source of life and the very substance of blessedness. All the gracious purposes of God are to this end, that we may know Him. Hence when the apostle John writes to fathers in Christ, he describes them thus: "Fathers, because ye have known Him that is from the beginning." (1 John 2:13-14.)

They tempted God. By fear and murmuring, by presumption and lust, by disobedience and idolatry, ten times their evil heart of unbelief manifested itself in tempting the Lord. (Numbers 14:22) Although they had seen the mighty works of God, and were continually experiencing His mercy, they doubted both His power and love; they cherished bitter thoughts against Him, they challenged Him, and demanded signs, as if He had never shown unto them the wonders of His goodness.*(*The following are the ten temptations according to the Jews: (l)Exodus 14:11, from fear; (2)Exodus 15:24, murmuring; (3)Exodus 16:2-3, murmuring; (4)Exodus 16:19-20, disobedience; (5)Exodus 16:27-28, Sabbath-breaking; (6)Numbers 20:3, chiding; (7)Exodus 32:1-35, idolatry; (8)Numbers 11:1-3, complaining; (9)Numbers 11:32, lust; (10)Numbers 14:1-45, unbelief. The root of all sin is unbelief, as, beginning with Gen. 3, is taught throughout all Scripture. The two manifestations of unbelief are in opposite poles - presumption and distrust. The world is the wilderness; Israel's history a mirror of ours. The decision and victory must be in the heart.Christ dwelling in the heart by faith, we have peace and strength. Then can we imitate Jesus. (Matt. 4) The Lord was grieved, and after the tenth temptation - so great is His patience swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. Doubtless many of those who died in the wilderness turned to God in repentance and faith. We cannot but believe that many of them joined with heartfelt contrition in the prayer of Moses: "We are consumed by thine anger, and by thy wrath are we troubled. Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance . . . O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days." But the generation as such, a warning for all ages, died in the wilderness.

Again the apostle asks emphatically, Why did they not enter into rest? And the answer is, Because they believed not. He does not single out the sin of making and worshipping the golden calf; he does not bring before us the flagrant transgressions into which they fell at Baal-peor. Many much more striking and to our mind more fearful sins could have been pointed out; but God thinks the one sin greater than all is unbelief. We are saved by faith; we are lost through unbelief. The heart is purified by faith; the heart is hardened by unbelief. Faith brings us nigh to God; unbelief is departure from God. Does it seem strange? By faith we draw near and worship God; by faith we receive God's love; through faith the Holy Ghost is given unto us; by faith we obey and follow Christ. Yet is it so natural and so like the goodness of God that all should be by faith. For the Lord is our God; He is all. He is willing to be, to give, to do all; to be God for us, to us, in us. All He asks of us is to trust Him, to receive Him; to open our empty hand to His kind and bountiful hand, and our cold and dead heart to His heart, that spared not His own Son, but gave Him up unto death. By grace are we saved through faith; and even this trust is the gift of His blessed Spirit. (Eph. 2)

Unbelief prevented Israel's entering into the promised land. Then it follows that faith enters into rest. Believe with thy heart is the great lesson of the chapter. If we trust in God, then the wilderness will be converted into the garden of the Lord. See the true Israel, Jesus our Lord, who was tested in the wilderness. God proved and tried the Righteous One; Satan tempted Him. Then it was made manifest what was in Him, even a meek and lowly heart, strong in faith, tender and loyal towards His heavenly Father, learning obedience because He was Son. And though the wild beasts were with Him, and His body was exhausted and weary, and the tempter's voice cunning and subtle, yet no evil came nigh unto Him; for He dwelt in the secret place of the Most High, and abode under the shadow of the Almighty. The wild beasts dare not touch Him, the exhausted frame is upheld by the indwelling spirit; the Scripture is both the weapon with which He fights and

a tent in which He dwells; the very angels of God come down and minister unto Him. Thus the Son of Man by faith converted the wilderness into paradise. He entered into rest, He enjoyed peace with God; and there was given Him power to tread upon the lion and adder, and to trample the dragon under His feet. Worshipping the Father He conquered; and the angels of God refreshed and gladdened His heart with their heavenly converse.

Such is to be your life. Only believe, only worship, only harden not your heart, when in the Scripture and in the Spirit's teaching and in God's daily dealings you hear God's voice, and though wild beasts, hunger and privation, weakness and temptation beset you, you are safe, you are blessed. God is with you; who can be against you? Angels are around you, and you can give thanks; for you are more than conquerors, through Him that loved you, and gave Himself for you.

Looking unto Jesus, I return to the commencement of the psalm, and end in praise. I will listen to its solemn admonition, I will stand in awe, when I see the carcasses of them that fell in the wilderness through unbelief; I will humble myself when I think how often like Israel I have murmured and doubted, how often I have grieved and tempted the Lord; but I will believe, I will cleave to Jesus, I will remember that oath which the Lord sware by Himself; As I live, saith the Lord, I have no pleasure in the death of the sinner, but rather that he should turn and live. And again, willing more abundantly to show unto the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, He confirmed it by an oath, saying, "Surely, blessing I will bless thee." Let us whom God hath redeemed out of Egypt, not with gold and silver, but with the precious blood of Christ as of the true Paschal Lamb without blemish and without spot; let us who have been rescued out of death and the power of Satan by the resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ; let us who have received the law of God, not as a letter which killeth, but by the outpouring of the Spirit and in the renewal of our hearts - oh, come, let us, remembering our pass-over, our resurrection-day, our Pentecost, let us sing unto the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. But let us listen to the solemn exhortation of the Spirit. To-day harden not your hearts. Yesterday is the past of sin and misery. To-day is the present of divine grace and man's faith. Tomorrow is eternity, full of joy and glory. To-day is the turning-point, the crisis, the seed-time. To whom can we go but unto Jesus Christ, with the past of our transgression, with the yesterday of the first Adam, with the to-day of our weakness and need, with the forever of our endless destiny? He is Jehovah, the Saviour God, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. Cleaving to Him we rest in mercy, which is from everlasting to everlasting. The apostle warns us: Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief. He is anxious that not one single member of the professing Church should be lost; as he expresses it in another Scripture - he preaches Christ, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. (Colossians 1:28.) The same spirit ought to animate the whole congregation. Each member has to take heed to himself and the whole community, to care anxiously and earnestly for each member, that none may be lost.

Exhort one another daily; encourage, help one another by counsel, by example, by sympathy, by brotherly aid, by united prayer and praise. Walking together in peace and harmony, keep before your eyes and hearts the end of the journey. Let us hold the beginning of our confidence stedfast to the end, let us keep our first faith, our first love, our first hope (1 Timothy 5:12; Revelation 2:4; Hebrews 3:6), that which was given unto us when the .grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant (1 Timothy 1:14), even when we were made partakers of Christ.* In humility and fear, in

self-abasement and self-distrust, let us during our wilderness journey cry out of the depths, and yet rejoice and be at peace; for we are in Christ, and the Lord for whom we wait is our light and our salvation. (*Μ■τοχοι γεγ■ναμεν. We have become by grace, what we were not by nature, partakers of Christ; since we have part in all that Christ is and has, at present by faith, and afterwards in actual possession, as joint-heirs with the Son. ■π■στασις, confidence means sometimes substance (Hebrews 1:3); sometimes, as undoubtedly in2 Corinthians 9:9; 2 Corinthians 11:17, confidence and assurance. In Heb. 11, the objective and subjective aspects are combined.)

09 - Hebrews 4:1-11

CHAPTER I X.

FEAR AND REST.

Hebrews 4:1-11. THE two words which claim our special consideration in this section are, fear and rest.

I. We know only in part, in fragment. It is difficult for us to combine different aspects of truth. When doctrines apparently contradictory are presented to us, we are apt to attach importance to one, and to leave the other in the background, treating it with indifference and cold neglect. We cherish some portions of truth; we look but rarely and hastily on others. In our choice we are influenced by our natural temperament and conformation of mind, by preconceived notions, by the type of religious teaching in which we have been trained, and sometimes by our sinful tendencies, which shrink from some portions of Scripture and some aspects of divine truth, which avoid and hide themselves from the corrective and rebuking influence of some part of God’s message.

It is part of our imperfection here that we cannot see the whole truth simultaneously, that we see truth in fragments, and that, while our eye rests on one phase or side of the revelation of God, the other portions are comparatively hid from our view. In eternity we shall see and know the Lord as He is. We shall behold at a glance the whole counsel of God; our light and love shall be perfect, (1 John 3:2; 1 Corinthians 13:12.)

It is salutary to remember our tendency to partiality and onesidedness in our spiritual life, in order that we may be on our guard, that we may carefully and anxiously consider the " Again, it is written;" that we may willingly learn from Christians who have received different gifts of grace, and whose experience varies from ours; above all, that we may seek to follow and serve the Lord Himself, to walk with God, to hear the voice of the good Shepherd. Forms of godliness, types of doctrine, are apt to become substitutes instead of channels, weights instead of wings. Here is the most subtle danger of idolatry. Doctrines and systems of doctrine are like portraits more or less faithful and vivid of a beloved and beautiful countenance. But they are necessarily imperfect. They recall some aspects, expressions, characteristics; they are helpful to recall the reality and fullness of which they are incomplete representations. But we must not substitute them in our minds and imaginations for the living face. Doctrines and circles of religious thought and experience are like channels; but we must not breathe the limited air of an enclosed space, but keep our hearts in communion with God, that out of the ocean of light and life, out of the living fountain, we may receive constant renewal and revival. The exhortations of this epistle may appear to some difficult to reconcile with the teaching of Scripture, that the grace of God, once received through the power of the Holy Ghost by faith, can never be lost, and that they who are born again, who are once in Christ, are in Christ forever. Let us not blunt the edge of earnest and piercing exhortations. Let us not pass them over, or treat them with inward apathy. "Again it is written." We know this does not mean that there is any real contradiction in Scripture, but that various aspects of truth are

presented, each with the same fidelity, fullness and emphasis. Hence we must learn to move freely, and not to be cramped and fixed in one position. We must keep our eyes clear and open, and not look at all things through the light of a favourite doctrine. And while we receive fully and joyously the assurance of our perfect acceptance and peace, and of the unchanging love of God in Christ Jesus, let us with the apostle consider also our sins and dangers from the lower yet most real earthly and time-point of view. The earnest counsel of the apostle in this chapter, Let us fear, may seem to be incompatible with his frequent and emphatic teaching that we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; that he is persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus; that we are to rejoice in the Lord, and that alway.

Yet a most superficial glance at the epistles, and at the Sciptures in general, will show that fear is an essential feature of the Christian. The worldly man neither fears nor loves God. He sometimes imagines he loves God, because he is not afraid, because he is not awed by the holy majesty of God, and does not tremble at the righteous condemnation of the law. He mistakes his feeling of ease for a feeling of love to God, of whose character he has a false and shallow view. Absence of fear he mistakes for presence of love. The soul which is roused and convinced of sin fears God, His displeasure and punishment; fears the future, with its darkness and misery. This fear, created by the Spirit, has in it already elements, though concealed and feeble, of trust and affection. There is in it, as there is in repentance, a longing after the peace of God, a desire to be brought into harmony and fellowship with Him. There is in this fear, although dread and anxiety about self may predominate, reverence, conviction of sin, sorrow, prayer. When Christ is beheld and accepted, there is peace; but is there not also fear? "With thee is forgiveness of sin, that thou mayest be feared." Where do we see God’s holiness and the awful majesty of the law as in the cross of Christ? Where our own sin and un worthiness, where the depth of our guilt and misery, as in the atonement of the Lord Jesus? We rejoice with fear and trembling.

Thus the apostle Peter says, "If ye call on the Father, who without respect of persons judgeth according to every man’s work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear. Forasmuch as ye know that ye were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers; but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot."

It is because we know the Father, it is because we are redeemed by the precious blood of the Saviour, it is as the children of God and as the saints of Christ, that we are to pass our earthly pilgrimage in fear. This is not the fear of bond age, but the fear of adoption;* not the fear which dreads condemnation, but the fear of those who are saved, and whom Christ has made free. It is not an imperfect and temporary condition; it refers not merely to those who have begun to walk in the ways of God. Let us not imagine that this fear is to vanish at some subsequent period of our course, that it is to disappear in a so-called "higher Christian life." No; we are to pass the time of our sojourn here in fear. To the last moment of our fight of faith, to the very end of our journey, the child of God, while trusting and rejoicing, walks in godly fear. (*The patriarchs are often commended because theyfearedGod. (Genesis 31:42; Genesis 31:54; Genesis 22:12; Genesis 42:18.) Theirs was especially a dispensation of faith and love. There was as yet no law, and they walked in simplicity before God, trusting in His goodness, and depending on His guidance. It is never said in Genesis that they loved God; but theirfear of Godis mentioned, their reverential and confiding sense of the holy and loving presence of God.)

Likewise does the apostle Paul say, "Because God worketh in you to will and to do, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling." Not the fear of the self-righteous, who are under the law, without peace and strength, but the fear of those in whom the Holy Ghost dwells with His light and energy. Fear is therefore compatible with faith and assurance. The children of God, who cry Abba, who praise the Lamb, who are sealed by the Holy Ghost, rejoice with fear and trembling.

Fear which is rooted in unbelief is evil; for it drives away from God. If we fear that God will not be faithful and fulfill His promises, if we doubt the efficacy of Christ's atonement, or the immovable firmness of His gracious word, we are sinning against God, and forsaking the Rock of our salvation. Looking to God, our loving Father, our gracious Saviour, our gentle and indwelling Comforter, we have no reason to be afraid. The only fear that we can cherish is that of reverence and awe, and a dread lest we displease, offend, and wound Him who is our Lord. But when we look at ourselves, our weakness, our blindness, our sinfulness; when we think of our path and our work, of our dangers and enemies, we may well fear, we may well feel that the time for repose and unmixed enjoyment has not come yet, and that, though sure of our ultimate triumph, we must watch anxiously and constantly; we must dread our own sinfulness and our temptations; we must fear worldly influences and estrangements; we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling. But even this statement is not sufficient, and does not cover the Scripture teaching. It is true the Spirit witnesses with our spirits that we are God's children. It is true the Saviour assures us that His sheep shall never perish; and, as the very expression implies, they who are born of in corruptible seed possess life eternal; they abide for ever; they dwell in God, and He dwelleth in them. But why are there so many warnings and exhortations addressed to those who profess to believe in the Saviour? Why does the Lord say, "Every branch in me that beareth not fruit He taketh away"? Why does the apostle teach, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die"? Why does the apostle Peter say, "Give diligence to make your calling and election sure; for if ye do these things, ye shall never fall"? Some of the reasons are obvious; and if we are sincere and honest with ourselves, we must have discovered them. The absolute safety, the fixed and unchanging position of the chosen people of God, can never be doubted. From the eternal, heavenly, divine point of view saints can never fall; they are seated in heavenly places with Christ; they are renewed by the Spirit, and sealed by Him unto everlasting glory. But who sees the saints of God from this point of view? Not the world, not our fellow-Christians. They only see our character and walk. Not we ourselves, except in the moments when the Spirit beareth witness with our spirits that we are the children of God. True, we trust in Christ, we rejoice in His love, we lean on Him; but to make our calling and election sure, to hear the voice of the Saviour, "Thou art mine;" to see the seal, "The Lord knoweth them that are His;" this is the secret, hidden, constant prayer, the concentrated work of the Christian. From our point of view, as we live in time, from day to day, our earnest desire must be to continue stedfast, to abide in Christ, to walk with God, to bring forth fruit that will manifest the presence of true and God-given life. Hence the apostle, who says to the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ," adds to a similar thought in another epistle, "If ye continue in the faith grounded and settled, and be not moved away from the hope of the gospel." In the one passage Paul's point of view is the heavenly, eternal one; in the other he looks from earth heavenwards, from time to eternity. And in what other way could he think, speak, exhort, and encourage both himself and his fellow-Christians but in this manner, which appears conditional, and as if it contradicted the fixed and eternal election, while to the conscience and heart of the saint there is

no discord? For it is by these very exhortations and warnings that the grace of God keeps us. It is in order that the elect may not fall, it is to bring out in fact and time the (ideal and eternal) impossibility of their apostasy, that God in His wisdom and mercy has sent to us such solemn messages and such fervent entreaties, to watch, to fight, to take heed unto ourselves, to resist the adversary. The fight of faith is good; that is, beautiful (kαλ■ν), according to God's will, in God's strength, and of no uncertain issue: it must lead to victory. But it is a real fight. The enemy, the dangers, the wounds, the difficulties, the insidious and constant attacks - all are real. And can there be such a fight without fear? No: and even the fearful destruction which would follow, on our yielding to the enemy and forsaking our Lord, must be contemplated, that we may cleave to God. My soul followeth hard after thee; to keep within sight of my Guide, nay, leaning on my Beloved, this is my desire.

Yet the man who feareth alway is blessed; for in the fear of the Lord, as the wiseman saith, there is strong confidence. Strong confidence! For if you think that the Bible doctrine of the Christian's fear favours the notion that the child of God is not to have the knowledge of salvation, that he is not to be filled with joy and peace through believing, you are mistaken. All Christian life starts from faith, trust, thanksgiving; not from doubt and suspense. Because Jesus the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us, we live unto Him and serve Him. Moved with fear, like Noah, we enter into the ark, and we are safe, adoring the goodness and the holiness of our Lord and Redeemer. The fear which hath torment is that fear which turns its face from the light and love of God. And if any element of torment enters into our fear we are to turn to the Lord, and look at that perfect love which casteth out fear. Whatever time I am afraid, I will trust in the Lord, said David. When we feel our weakness, danger, and sin, we look unto the Lord Jesus, and hear His voice, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

II. But the believer has rest, now on earth, and hereafter in glory. Resting in Christ, he labours to enter into the perfect rest of eternity. The apostle returns to the quotation from Psalm 95, feeling that he has not yet exhausted the meaning of this important testimony of the Spirit. On account of unbelief Israel entered not into rest. The promise was theirs; they heard it, but they believed not what they heard. (Isaiah 53:1)* The word of God is addressed to the heart, and the heart receives it by faith. The understanding assents, the imagination admires, the memory retains, and yet there is no reception of the Word, no inward appropriation, and hence no life or growth. The rain which falls on a roof produces no real and lasting effect; but when it falls on good ground, it maketh it bring forth and bud. (*Comp.Romans 10:16-17. "Report," or literally that which is heard, is the same as preaching; the word of God heard is to produce faith. The prophet asks, Who hath believed that which through us was heard?)

Israel received the Word only superficially, and not mixing it with faith, the word did not profit them. The application is obvious. We have received the word of promise; unless by faith we appropriate and assimilate it (mark and inwardly digest it), it will be of no use to us. By faith, then, we do enter into rest. But what did God mean by calling it His rest? Not they enter not into their rest, but His own. Oh, blessed distinction! I hasten to the ultimate and deepest solution of the question. God gives us Himself, and in all His gifts He gives us Himself. Here is the distinction between all religions which men invent, which have their origin in the con science and heart of man, which spring up from earth, and the truth, the salvation, the life, revealed unto us from above, descending to us from heaven. All religions seek and promise the same things: light,

righteousness, peace, strength, and joy. But human religions think only of creature-light, creature-righteousness, of a human, limited, and imperfect peace, strength, and blessedness. They start from man upwards. But God gives us Himself, and in Himself all gifts, and hence all His gifts are perfect and divine. Does God give us righteousness? He Himself is our righteousness, Jehovah-tsidkenu. Does God give us peace? Christ is our peace. Does God give us light? He is our light. Does God give us bread? He is the bread we eat; as the Son liveth by the Father, so he that eateth Me shall live by Me. (John 6.) God Himself is our strength. God is ours, and in all His gifts and blessings He gives Himself. By the Holy Ghost we are one with Christ, and Christ the Son of God is our righteousness, nay, our life. Do you want any other real presence? Are we not altogether "en-godded," God dwelling and living in us, and we in Him? What more real presence, and indwelling, awful and blessed, can we have than that which the apostle described when he said: "I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me"? Or again, "I can do all things through Christ which strengthened me"? Or as the Lord Himself in His last prayer before His crucifixion said to the Father, "I in them, and thou in me"?

Thus God gives us His rest as our rest.

It is written in the book of Genesis that God rested on the seventh day, and that tints (in His rest)* all His works were finished. The rest of God is the consummation aid crown of the creation. Without it the creation would not have been complete. In great condescension the loving God, by the Word and the Spirit, went out of Himself into the "all things" which He called forth. But they were created for Him and unto Him. Hence He returns unto Himself on the seventh day. Heaven and earth are to be filled with His glory. The rest of the seventh day declares the sovereignty, majesty, and blessedness of God, which all things according to their capacity are to show forth and to rejoice in. Hence, if you will think of it, this Sabbath of God is the substratum and basis of all peace and rest - the pledge of an ultimate and satisfactory purpose in creation. Without this idea the world is nothing else but constant motion without progress, journey without end, toil without reward, question without answer. "Sabbathless Satan." In this word Milton expresses a great thought. (*In considering the "rest of God" in Gen. 2, we should dismiss from our minds the questions concerning "Sabbath and Lord’s-day," which are apt to narrow and cloud our view of this great subject.) But this rest of God in creation was disturbed and marred by sin. For the rest of God means not cessation from exhausting exertion - "He fainteth not, neither is weary." It does not mean cessation from work - "My Father worketh hitherto, and I also work" - but the joy and delight of God in His good and perfect work. God’s rest is no longer in the first creation. It is in redemption’s new creation, of which redemption Israel’s deliverance out of Egypt and entrance into Canaan was a type. God said unto Israel, "Ye are not as yet come to the rest and to the inheritance, which the Lord your God giveth you. But when ye go over Jordan, and dwell in the land which the Lord your God giveth you to inherit, and when He giveth you rest from all your enemies round about, so that you dwell in safety, etc."1 And referring to this promise, Joshua said unto the two and a half tribes, "Now the Lord your God hath given rest unto your brethren, as He promised."2 David said, "The Lord God of Israel hath given rest unto His people, that they may dwell in Jerusalem forever." In this beautiful expression David refers to God’s rest, as it is written: "For the Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."3 When David looked back upon the past history of his people, full of vicissitudes and troubles, war and conflict, bondage and chastisement, and now contemplated

the prospect of peace and quiet, worship and praise, his soul was filled with gratitude and joy. Now the ark was deposited in a permanent abode. Solomon was to be a man of peace. God would rest in His people and they in Him. But these were only types. For if Joshua had given them true rest, if the rest which God gave to Israel was not a mere imperfect shadow and type of the future, why should the Holy Ghost say by David, "To-day if you hear His voice, harden not your heart"? Why should God speak of entering into His rest? (1 Deuteronomy 12:9-10;2 Joshua 22:4; 31Chron. 23;Psalms 132:13-14.)

God rests in Christ as the Redeemer and Restorer of fallen man. The Father was pleased in Jesus His beloved Son, and the Lord de lighted in Him as His elect Servant. Jesus was the Tabernacle where God dwelt and found His rest. For our sins this Temple, holy and true, was broken; because of our justification it was built again. Now in the risen Jesus, the first-begotten from the dead, Head of the church, Heir of all things, the Father beholds His glory and the fulfillment of His counsel. In Him, as our risen Saviour, dwelleth the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and where God’s rest is, there also is ours. Hence Jesus promises to give unto all who come to Him rest and peace. (Matt. 11; John 14)*(*The Hebrew word for peace (Shalom) implies restoration to perfection, to the state of normal and complete being.) Our souls long for rest. "Oh, that I had the wings of a dove! Then would I fly away and be at rest!" is the sigh of every soul. And this rest is only in God’s rest. Death brings no rest to our souls. It is Jesus Christ who alone can give rest to man; for only in Him we are re stored and brought into communion with God. The reason of our unrest is nothing else but our fall, our abnormal condition, our alienation from God. The centre of our life is not fixed in God, and therefore there is no harmony and no peace; there is no health in us. For rest is not in sloth or unconsciousness, or in a life of half-roused energies. When we have no light for our mind, no peace in our conscience, no love in our heart, then are we disturbed; then there is no worthy central aim and guide of life. When we are wandering in the wilderness, without knowing the end or beholding the light to direct, then are we without rest. The great promise of Christ is rest. For He is the Restorer. He gives us light. Men of brilliant genius, extensive information, acute and penetrating intellect, have often no rest, because they see not the Light of the world, in whom alone God, immortality, and the way of peace and holiness are revealed. Men of piety and self-denial, who possess a high standard of morality, are not at rest, because they have not Christ, and in Him, the holy and righteous, yet merciful and loving forgiveness of God. The whole spiritual nature of man is without its centre until Christ is loved, and our life is a waiting for Him, and going forth to meet the Bridegroom.

We enjoy rest in Christ by faith. But the perfect enjoyment of rest is still in the future.1 There remaineth a sabbatism for the people of God.2 Believers will enter into rest after their earthly pilgrimage, labour and conflict, and the whole creation will share in the liberty and joy of the children of God. The substance and fore taste of this rest we have even now in Christ. In Him, as the glorified Head of the Church, the Father and the believers meet even now, and we have perfection and complete peace. But as Christ has entered into glory, we are to be glorified together with Him at His coming. Then will be perfectly satisfied the great and deep-seated desire of our heart for rest. By rest is not meant inactivity, but peace and harmony within and with all that is around us. We cannot conceive of God’s children in eternity in a state of inactivity; for by reason of their union with Christ and with all angels, by reason of the central position given to the church, the glorified believers not merely behold and praise, but serve God day and night. Work is not

opposed to rest. If we possessed perfect light, so that we saw clearly the end and the method of labour; if we possessed a perfect medium of work, so that mind and body were perfect and efficient tools for the directing will, so that reason, affection, and all our energies, soul and body were willing, adequate servants of the spirit; if we were endowed with sufficient and unfailing strength, so that there could be no painful exhaustion or disproportion between the design and the power of execution; and if the material to be worked upon was plastic and impressible, responsive to our thought, then work would be the greatest enjoyment, and in work would be a continued renewal of strength and an uninterrupted repose of thanksgiving. But all these conditions will be fulfilled in the renewed earth. The saints will be in light; seeing and knowing as they are known, they will possess minds and bodies, energies and powers, perfect and adequate instruments of their God-filled volitions, they will never be faint and weary, and all curse and obstructions will be removed. Thus while they praise and rejoice they will work, while they exe cute God's commandments they will behold His countenance. They will both reign and rest with Christ. (1In like manner salvation and adoption are spoken of as future. (1 Peter 1:5;Romans 8:23-24.2Sabbatismos (in our translation rest) is used here, and not■ατ■παυσις, as inHebrews 3:11; Hebrews 3:18; Hebrews 4:1; Hebrews 4:3; Hebrews 4:5; Hebrews 4:10-11. Into God's rest we enter by faith when we trust in Jesus; into the Sabbatismos we enter when our day-work is finished and we rest from our labours (Revelation 14:13), and still more fully when Christ shall make all things new, and rest in the full enjoyment of His redemptive work. But the great contrast between the sabbatism we wait for and the present period is this. In the present life we are to work out according to God's energy within us; we are to sow, to lay up treasure, to grow, and make increase. We have talents entrusted, and we are to trade with them. Death stereotypes our character and ends our labours. It is here on earth that through sufferings and discipline we are conformed to the image of Christ. At we have been faithful, so shall we be rewarded. As we have been faithful, so are we; whatever meekness, patience, love, humility, we have learned on earth, we shall possess throughout eternity. It is true of all God's saints, from the least to the greatest, that, delivered from the body of death, they are also freed from sin and the old man; beholding the glory of Christ, they become like Him whom they see. Yet, without contradicting this comforting truth, the Scriptures constantly connect our faithfulness, obedience, and discipline on earth with our eternal condition and blessedness, with the reward which sovereign grace will assign to the heirs of life. They who sow sparingly reap sparingly; they who sow abundantly reap abundantly. There is no sowing after death, no more laying out our talents on usury; no more development or growth. According to our life in the body is our glory; work therefore while it is day. (2 Corinthians 5:10; John 9:4.)

While this is a very solemn truth, stimulating us to diligence and watchfulness, we must ever hold fast the blessed assurance that all believers will be glorified with Christ. Believers differ in glory, and in this diversity and gradation there will be harmony and the exercise of love and enjoyment of communion. For they who are nearest Christ, and possessed of the highest glory, are most fully conformed to the image of Him who is meek and lowly in heart, and their delight is to enrich all their brethren out of the abundance of their knowledge and joy. Have I brought before you apparently contradictory doctrines? Fear and the assurance of God's salvation, rest and labour? In Christ Jesus all contradictions are solved. Let us learn Christ. Look unto Him, and you will fear lest you displease and grieve Him, lest the heavenly Bride groom should discern in you the heart of unbelief and the love of the world. And this very fear will draw you to lean on Him and to abide in

Him, who is your only life and strength. Rest in Jesus, and resting in Him you will labour, you will serve Christ in the Church, you will look upon duties and trials as heavenly discipline to make you Christ-like, as precious seed which will bring plentiful harvest. We can take nothing out of this world but Christ formed in us. And whatever may have been our calling and occupation, the only question is, Has it been made subservient to the formation of the Christ-man? Earthly things are to be viewed in their relation to spiritual and eternal realities. The sum and substance of all our experiences, actions and trials in time must needs be the character, the attitude of the heart, the strength and affection of the soul. If a Christian is in business, if he has many and complicated transactions, many difficult and important duties in which the welfare of others is concerned, large and complicated responsibilities, the question is, Has he learnt faithfulness, justice, kindness, self-restraint, generosity? has he been a steward of God's gifts? has he been heavenly-minded, fervent in spirit while not slothful in business? Then all his earthly work has been spiritual work, and his labour in time has wrought out eternal results.

Whatever our duties, trials, social position, our mental attainments may be, the Christian's one aim is, that through them all Christ should be formed in him. Thus the Christian is always feeding upon Christ, he is always eating and drinking spiritual nourishment; all things work together to promote his growth and his conformity to the Saviour. As we speak of making flesh, so we may speak of the Christian making Spirit; doing all things to the glory of God and in the name of Christ: he is continually labouring for the meat which endureth forever. Though engaged in what is secular, temporal, and apparently transitory, his spiritual, eternal man is forming; he is preparing his everlasting and peculiar mansion and harvest. Christ is the Vine, and we are the branches; but the object, fruit, and glory of the vine is to produce wine. No emblem can set forth the truth fully; for as Christ is the Vine, so the love of Christ abiding in the heart and transforming the soul is also the ultimate blessedness and glory of believers. Even now we possess and enjoy this love; hence our labour is full of rest; and when at last we enter into the perfect rest, we shall be satisfied with His likeness when we behold His face in righteousness.

10 - Hebrews 4:12-16

CHAPTER X. THE WORD OF GOD, JUDGING THE CHRISTIAN BELOW; THE GREAT HIGH PRIEST'S SYMPATHY AND HELP ABOVE.

Hebrews 4:12-16.

RESTING by faith in Jesus, and labouring to enter into that perfect rest which remaineth to the people of God, the Christian, during his pilgrimage through the wilderness, is guided by the word of God, which is in his hand, and upheld and encouraged by the intercession and sympathy of the great High Priest above. The apostle, having based his earnest exhortation on the Scripture, on what the Holy Ghost saith in Psalm 95, naturally confirms it by reminding the Hebrews of the majesty and power of the word of God. They who are under the influence of the divine word must be decided, earnest, whole-hearted. For God's word is perfect; it enters into the inmost depths of the heart, it searches out every secret thought, and judges our life from its hidden root to all its manifestations. You who are in contact with the word of God, with the mind of Christ, with the depth- searching Spirit, are you more real and thorough than others? Does God find in you the truth He desires in the inward parts?

We are familiar with the word of God. Like Israel, we possess this treasure in our country, in our families. It is in our homes and schools. We know it from our childhood. The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth. How often have our lips uttered the very words of the living God. But, thankful as we ought to be for this great privilege, do we know also the majesty and the power of the word of God? Do we know that, in possessing, reading, and knowing the Scripture, we are under a mighty, solemn, and decisive influence, and that this word judges us now, and will judge us at the last day? Do we tremble at the word of Jehovah? Does the word judge and decide, mould and govern, guide and comfort? What are and do ye more than others, who know only human words and opinions, to whom Scripture also is but the word of man? Is it evident, from the effects the word has produced in you, that it is the word of the living God? Oh. blessed are they who, like the author of Psalm 119, can give to the word more than a hundredfold praise! The expressions which are used here of the word of God are all applicable to Christ Himself; for He is living, He is the power of God, He came for judgment into the world, He is the Searcher of hearts, His eyes are like a flame of fire. But the reference is to the spoken and written word. For in this epistle the Lord is never called the Word, as in the gospel of John and in the book of Revelation. We know how intimate and essential is the connection between the eternal, living, personal word and the Scriptures. The Son is the Word, the revealer of God, the expression of His thought, the manifestation of His light and love. Christ is the Word of God, and therefore Christ is the sum and substance of Scripture. Of Him testify Moses and the prophets. The Spirit of Christ did signify, both in the types of the law and the prophecies, of His sufferings and glory. The Scripture, as the written word, is according to Christ and of Christ; and by it Christ is heard, received, and formed in the soul. Of this written Word, of which Christ is centre and end, as well as author and method, which is inspired by the Holy Ghost and sent by God, the gospel message is the kernel. And hence it is

this gospel which especially is called the Word. "All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower of grass. The grass withereth, and the flower thereof falleth away; but the word of the Lord endureth forever. And this is the Word which by the gospel is preached unto you." And is not all Scripture gospel? For even the law, convincing of sin and declaring condemnation, is only sent to prepare the heart for the reception of Christ's grace and salvation. And blessed are they who are wounded by Moses, for Jesus shall heal them. The Word is living (ζ■ν). (Revelation 1:18, Greek. John 5:26; John 5:21; John 5:24; John 6:63; John 6:68.) God is called the Living One; and Christ the Lord calls Himself the Living One. He is the life, He has life in Himself, and He came to quicken and to give unto us life abundantly. And the Word which proceedeth out of the mouth and heart o God, the Word of which Christ is the substance, and which is given and watched over by the Spirit, is also living; for God's words are spirit and life. The Word is the seed, which appears insignificant, but which if received in good ground shows its vitality. Hence it is by this Word that souls are born again unto eternal life. They who receive the word of God (not texts and sermons) experience that this Word does not remain within them as a dead and inert mass, a mere addition to their previous knowledge, but that it produces within them life. All words, to a certain extent, may be compared to seed; but they cannot produce new, spiritual, divine, eternal life. They may add to the knowledge, excite the emotions, stimulate the energies, rouse the conscience of the old man; they cannot create the new life. The word of God quickens the dead. As the Word, applied by the Spirit, produces, so it also sustains and promotes life. "As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the Word, that ye may grow thereby." The Saviour, who is life, calls Himself not merely bread, but living bread; so the word of God. by which our life is sustained, is a living Word. The living Word is powerful or energetic (■ν■■γ■■). It is compared to the seed which possesses vitality and power. It springs up and grows while men are asleep and unconscious of its operation. First comes the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. The word of God is continually active; it grows and energizes in our thoughts and motives, it brings forth fruit in our words and actions, it impels to exertion, it sustains in trial. We can see the power or energy of the Word when it fills those that hear and receive it with strong emotions, filling; them with fear and terror, with grief and contrition; we can see its power in the sudden and striking changes it produces, when the thoughtless and worldly, the selfish and depraved, are arrested and quickened by its mighty power. But while the earthquake and the fire declare the approach of the Lord, it is in the still small voice that the Lord at last appears to take up His permanent abode. There are the hidden flowers of humility, of forgiving love, of patience and meekness; there are the unseen and unknown daily conflicts and victories; there is the crucifixion of the old man, and the constant renewal of the resurrection-life; and these are especially the triumphs of the power of the Word. The Word cannot be loving and energetic without being also a sword, dividing and separating with piercing and often painful sharpness that, which in our natural state lies together mixed and confused. The Word of God, by which all things were called forth, divided and separated darkness from light, the waters above from the waters below, the dry land from the sea. The Word of God, which came unto the fathers, tried and proved them; it was a heart-searching Word, which called forth conflict, and commanded separation from all ungodliness and all trust in the flesh. The Word of God, incarnate, was declared from His infancy set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel, that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed. For before life enters into the soul, there is no separation, division, warfare; all things are chaotic, without form and void. The soul, or the lower intellectual and sentient life, is not distinguished from the spirit and the

higher Godward and eternal life. We do not discern the inner man delighting in the law of God and the other law striving in our members. We call evil good, and do not know that there is only one good, even God. We savour the things that are of man and not of God; and while we think ourselves disciples, Jesus calls us Satan. We do not know nature and grace, flesh and Spirit, earth and heaven, self and Christ, Adam and the Lord, the quickening Spirit. We sing, but it is not the melody of the heart; we pray, but it is not in faith; we read the Scripture, but it is not hearing the voice of God; we preach, and visit, and work, as we call it, for Christ, and it is not as the servants who do not their own will, seek not their own glory, and rely not on their own strength. We imitate Christ, but not the real Christ, who sought only to please and honour God, who walked in love, who came not to do His own will. Oh, when the whole life of Jesus stands before the eyes of our heart, when we behold ourselves in this mirror, how deeply humbled do we feel! I think of the singleness of His aim, "I came to do not my will, but the will of Him that sent me;" I think of the uninterrupted calmness and fervour of His faith in God; I think of His absolute and inexhaustible love, which gave expecting nothing again, which was always ready to forgive and to bless; I think of Him as walking in love, love surrounding all His footsteps, love (and that in a sinful world which hated Him) the atmosphere in which He breathed, the constant manifestation of His heart, "And when mine eye seeth Him, I abhor myself. (Job 42:5-6.) The word of God comes as a sword, and separates and analyzes; it comes not to flatter and to soothe; it comes not to encourage us with half-true, half-false encomiums; it does not call the flesh Spirit, but condemns it as flesh and enmity against God. It leads you into the lowerChristian life (John 3:30); it discerns the thoughts and intents of the heart, the hidden self-complacency, the hidden ambition and self-will; it enters into the very joints and marrow, the energies and sentiments, the motives and springs of our actions, the true character of our rejoicing and mourning, our elevations and depressions; and then you say with the apostle: I have no confidence in the flesh, in my old nature, in me, body, soul, and spirit as I am of Adam. I dare not trust the sweetest frame. I cannot call my "holy things" holy, for they are full of sin. The word of God enters into my inmost soul and heart-life, and as a judge both unveils and condemns; what hitherto was hidden, is un covered; what was disguised, unveiled; what was falsely called good and spiritual, appears now in the bright light of God’s countenance; the thoughts and intents of the heart are discerned. Thus am I brought into God’s presence, as when I first was convinced of my sin and my guilt; but I feel more abased, and with a deeper knowledge and sorrow I exclaim: I am vile, and abhor myself in dust and ashes. Oh, where is Christ? I wish to be found in Him. I wish Him to live in me. What is there in me pleasing to God? Oh that Christ would sing, pray, love, live in me! When the Word thus dwells in us, we give glory to God, and we are spiritually-minded. We live not on mere notions and impressions; we begin to apply our knowledge to our actual state and to our daily walk; we are delivered from hypocrisy, which is since the fall the great disease of mankind, especially those who enjoy the privilege of belonging to the congregation of God. What is hypocrisy but as the word signifies, living in a vain show, the semblance of things? As actors on a stage, who pretend they are kings, and possess power and large armies, who speak and demean themselves with great dignity; so men professing faith and godliness rest satisfied with a form and outline, without substance and fullness. The word of God suffers not such a semblance and shadowy deception. It brings us into the presence of Him who desireth truth in the inward part. The Christian, who is judged, chastened, and corrected, who is wounded and killed by this living and powerful Word, prays: "Search me, and try me, and see if there be any wicked thing in me, and lead me in die way everlasting."

Here alone is peace. Without this solemn awe and trembling at the word of God, there is no true rest in Christ. There may be much talk about peace and assurance, expressions which are exuberant, but proceed not out of a full heart, which sound strong and courageous, but are not of the Spirit, in whom alone is might. He who has confidence in the flesh does not rejoice in Christ Jesus. And to have no confidence in the flesh is the result of the pain-inflicting judgment of the Word. When we judge ourselves, we are not judged. When we confess our sin, He is faithful and just to forgive our sin. When we admit that we have denied Him thrice, we can say: "Lord, Thou knowest that I love Thee."*[*The expression, "two-edged sword," is usedProverbs 5:4;Psalms 149:6;Revelation 1:16; Revelation 2:12. In the prophet Isaiah the Messiah saith: "He hath made my mouth like a sharp sword" (Isaiah 49:2); and in the days of His flesh He declared, "The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day. (John 12:48.) They who are pierced by the word, and wounded in their inmost heart, are also healed and comforted, and shall not enter into the judgment of condemnation. The sword is bitter, but the hand that wields it is sweet and loving. The dividing asunder of the soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow:μ■■λοι, organs of thought and sensation;■ρμο■, those of motion and activity;ψυχ■andπν■■μα, according to the Scripture, refer to the lower and higher spiritual life of man. This thought is more clearly expressed:κριτικ■ς; that is, discerner and judge of the desires (soul) and thoughts (spirit) of the heart, in which both soul and spirit centre. Thus the heart by the word is brought into the presence of God, with whom we have to do, and before whom all things are open (τραχηλ■ζεινmeans here, expose to view). The intimate relation between the personal word of God and the written word is evident. Now what is said of the latter always points to its source and fountain, the Lord Himself. The following remarks of ■tinger are practical: "The word of God in the Spirit separates soul and spirit out of a state of confusion; as often as I conquer myself by recollection of Scripture passages, by spiritual thoughts, which lie already prepared in my mind, this separation takes place; the affections, prejudices, and complicated departures from the truth, which arise from below, are corrected and judged by the spirit above. Our lower mind has many preconceived ideas, which are full of distrust, doubt, and hypocrisy, as regards the gospel. To distinguish these from the enlightened thoughts of the heart is the redemption throughfaith. Spiritual we call the mind, which is planted in us through the heavenly doctrine of the gospel; when this mind is established in us and confirmed, the apostle Peter calls it the incorruptible essence of a meek and quiet spirit. It expresses itself in thoughts which are true, and which continue solid and stedfast, and in a wisdom which pervades all our actions, not in optical, unsubstantial thoughts (that is, mere theoretical, shadowy notions and images). As soon as by grace this mind is planted in us, the separation spoken of in Hebrews 4: commences. To know this is a matter of experience. If we find that we ourselves experience the effects of the word which we expect it to exercise on others; if I know from Rom. 7: that there are two wills in me, the one out of the truth, the other out of the imagination (God-estranged), the one of God, the other of self, the Holy Ghost assists me in an indescribable manner to discern what is in me, to distinguish between the spiritual inner man and the lower carnal. Thus the Spirit leads me into truth. To be spiritually-minded is life eternal and liberty. If I allow the word of God to exercise its separating power (according to the true method of the Scripture and the sacraments), I am brought into the true spiritual condition and understanding; the more faithful and patient I am in my reception of the most delicate words and operations of the Spirit, of all the sayings and commands of Jesus, the clearer and freer becomes my mind, and flesh and spirit are separated, so that I am no longer in the flesh (Rom. 7:), but in the

Spirit (Rom. 8; Gal. 2:), although I still live in the flesh. (2. Cor. 10)"] The Word judges us on earth, and we are humbled; the Lord Jesus represents us in heaven; He intercedes for us, He sympathizes with us. We look from earth and self to the sanctuary above, and find there nothing but love, grace, sympathy, and the fullness of blessings. He is our great High Priest. Israel in the wilderness, though full of sin, was brought nigh to God through the priesthood, and especially through the High Priest. We have the substance, of which tabernacle and priests were types. Christ is our great, eternal and all-sufficient High Priest in heaven. We must lift up our eyes and hearts to heaven in order to find peace and consolation. Jesus the Son of God (Hebrews 1:2), who by His sufferings and death became a merciful and faithful High Priest (Hebrews 2:17), has, according to the will and word of the Father (Hebrews 1:3; Hebrews 1:13), passed through the created heavens, and sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high. He, as our Lord and High Priest, is in heaven itself (α■τος ■ ο■■αν■ς Hebrews 10:24); He is called great, for Aaron and Melchisedek are but types, while He is the true and eternal Priest. The throne on which He is seated is the same throne which is called the throne of the majesty. But unto us it is now a throne of grace. The Father, the Lamb, and the Spirit, are One, the God of salvation. We who are justified by the blood of Christ are now in the presence of the Father. All divine attributes and perfections are now full of peace and consolation; we behold the throne of God as a throne of grace. As forgiven, accepted, nay, as the righteousness of God in Christ, we are before God. Beholding Jesus as our great High Priest, we shall have strength to hold fast our profession, notwithstanding all our difficulties and sins, and we shall have boldness to go to the throne of grace, to obtain mercy and help in the time of need.

Judged and humbled by the word on earth, we are strengthened and comforted by the great High Priest in heaven. Through suffering and temptation, through infirmity and conflict, the Son of man ascended high above all principalities and powers, thrones and dominions; high above all heavens, into the very presence and glory of God. He has entered into the holy of holies; He possesses now, as the Son of man, the glory which He had with the Father from all eternity. Far above all created heavens, far above all created angels, we behold now Him who first descended into the lower parts of the earth. Our Lord Jesus, who hungered and thirsted, who lived in the weakness and infirmity of the flesh, who sighed and wept, who prayed and agonized, who was tempted of the devil, who died on the cross, who was buried and descended into Hades, He is now in the most excellent glory, and He is there as our High Priest, Representative, and Head. "Glory to God in the highest," sang the angels; and in that highest region - if we may so call that which is above space as eternity is above time - lives now our Lord, with whom we are one.

Think not of the quiet resting-place of the saints who, free from sin and toil, are asleep in Jesus - think not of the heavens of angels, who in strength and love execute God’s commandment - but high above them, in the sanctuary, in the palace, in the very throne of the glorious and ever-blessed Godhead, is the Man Christ Jesus. And we who were co-crucified with Him are there in Him. The Father beholds us in Christ; we are whiter than snow, and the beauty of the Lord shines on us. In that sanctuary of blessedness and glory Jesus, who was tempted in all things as we are, apart from sin, is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. He remembers His earthly experience. He knows our frailty, the painfulness of the conflict, the weakness of the flesh.

"Where high the heavenly temple stands, The house of God not made with hands, A great High Priest our nature wears, The Guardian of mankind appears.

"He who for men their surety stood, And poured on earth His precious blood, Pursues in heaven His mighty plan, The Saviour and the Friend of man.

"Though now ascended up on high, He bends on earth a brother's eye;

Partaker of the human name, He knows the frailty of our frame.

"Our fellow-sufferer yet retains A fellow-feeling of our pains; And still remembers in the skies, His tears, His agonies, and cries."

He knows our danger, and that Satan hath desired to have us, that he may sift us as wheat. While the Saviour thus regards us with compassion and with sympathy, He has no lower standard for us, no lower aim, than He had for Himself. We are to be in the world as He was, to overcome as He overcame, and to end even where the Lord is; it is Christ's will, that where He is we who believe in Him should be likewise. As He was in heaven, even while He lived on earth, so He desires that, even while in the wilderness, we should have our citizenship in heaven. And as He overcame, and is set down on His Father's throne, so He desires that we should overcome and share His throne and dominion.

Remember both the tenderness of the High Priest's heart, and the comprehensive scope of His intercession. This indeed is true sympathy, not with the sin, but with the sinner. The perfectly holy and victorious One alone can give true sympathy, seeking our real, our highest good. Sympathy comes to us from the "very highest" heaven. His intercession is perpetual, unceasing; it is sovereign, and part of the divine covenant-gifts. Even as He died for us, and rose again, and ascended into heaven for our salvation, so He ever liveth to intercede. It is not in answer to our prayer, it is not according to our works and merits, that He died for us. Even so is His intercession His own divine, gracious, sovereign gift. As His infinite and inexhaustible love brought Him from the throne of His glory to live and die upon earth, so the same love is now the source of His constant care and faithfulness, and of His never-ceasing intercession. We are upheld according to His loving-kindness, according to the multitude of His tender mercies. Justified by His blood, we are now much more abundantly saved by His life. And having such a High Priest in heaven, can we lose courage? can we draw back in cowardice, impatience, and faint-heartedness? can we give up our profession, our allegiance, our obedience to Christ? Or shall we not be like Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully? Let us hold fast our profession; let us persevere and fight the good fight on earth. Our great High Priest in the highest glory is our righteousness and strength; He loves, He watches, He prays, He holds us fast, and we shall never perish. Jesus is our Moses, who in the height above prays for us Jesus our true Joshua, who gains the victory over our enemies. Only be strong, and of a good courage; be not afraid, neither be thou dismayed. In that mirror of the Word in which we behold our sin and weakness we behold also the image of that perfect One who has passed through the conflict and temptation, who as the High Priest bears us on His loving heart, and as the Shepherd of the flock holds us in safety for evermore. Boldly we come to the throne of grace. In Jesus we draw near to the Father. The throne of majesty and righteousness is unto us a throne of grace. The Lord is our God. In one aspect Christ tells us that He does not pray to the Father for us, because the Father Himself loveth us. We behold in Christ's intercession the Father's love, even as in the death of Christ we recognize the love of God. Our God then is enthroned in grace. There is not merely grace on the throne, but the throne is altogether the throne of grace. It is grace which disciplines us by the sharp and piercing Word; it is

grace which looks on us when we have denied Him, and makes us weep bitterly. Jesus always intercedes; the throne is always a throne of grace. The Lamb is in the midst of the throne. Hence we come boldly.

Boldly is not contrasted with reverently and tremblingly; boldness is not contrasted with awe and godly fear. It means literally "saying all," with that confidence which begets thorough honesty, frankness, full and open speech. "Pour out your heart before Him." Come as you are, say what you feel, ask what you need. Confess your sins, your fears, your wandering thoughts and affections. Jesus the Lord went through all sorrows and trials the heart of man can go through, and as He felt all affliction and temptation most keenly, so in all these difficulties and trials He had communion with the Father. He knows, therefore, how to succour them that are tempted. How fully and unreservedly may we speak to God in the presence and by the mediation of the man Christ Jesus. The Lord Jesus is filled with tender compassion, and the most profound, lively, and comprehensive sympathy. This belongs to the perfection of His high-priesthood. For this very purpose He was tempted, He suffered. - Our infirmities, it is true, are intimately connected with our sinfulness; the weakness of our flesh is never free from a sinful concurrence of the will; and the Saviour knows from His experience on earth how ignorant, poor, weak, sinful, and corrupt His disciples are. He loved them, watched over them with unwearied patience; prayed for them that their faith fail not; and reminded them the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak. He remembers also His own sinless weakness; He knows what constant thought, meditation, and prayer are needed to overcome Satan, and to be faithful to God. He knows what it is for the soul to be sorrowful and over whelmed, and what it is to be refreshed by the sunshine of divine favour, and to rejoice in the Spirit. We may come to Him expecting full, tender, deep sympathy, and compassion. He is ever ready to strengthen and comfort, to heal and to restore. He is prepared to receive the poor, wounded, sin-stained believer; to dry the tears of Peter weeping bitterly; to say to Paul, oppressed with the thorn in the flesh, "My grace is sufficient for thee."

We need only understand that we are sinners and that He is High Priest. The law was given that every mouth may be shut, for we are guilty. The High Priest is given that every mouth may be open, for Jesus receives sinners. He saves and upholds all who put their trust in Him. It is by reason of that secret pride and self-righteousness, which Satan as a subtle poison infuses into the human heart, that when we feel our sinfulness and transgression we do not go boldly to the loving and compassionate High Priest, to the throne of grace. And this latent self-righteousness often expresses itself in such regretful phrases as, Well, I must just depend on the mercy of God; as if the mercy of our God and Saviour was a last resource when other and better things have failed, as if it was not our only peace, joy, and glory, as if it was not the best robe and the unspeakable gift, as if Jesus was not all in all, as if our song in time and eternity were not - "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain. He loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood."

We come in faith as sinners. Then shall we obtain mercy; and we always need mercy. As pilgrims on earth we always need mercy, to wash our feet, to restore to us the joy of salvation, to heal our backslidings, and bind up our wounds. We shall obtain help in every time of need. For God may suffer Satan and the world, want and suffering, to go against us; but He always causes all things to work together for our good. He permits the time of need, that we may call upon Him, and, being delivered by Him, may glorify His name. He will send timely (■■καιον βο■θ■ιαν) help before we succumb to the infirmities and temptations which beset us. For He, who will not suffer us to be

tempted above that we are able, will send deliverance at the right moment, when all the purposes of grace and chastening discipline have been secured. All the help we need - wisdom, patience, strength, daily bread, all is treasured up for us in the heavenly places; the sanctuary is also the treasury; the High Priest is also King. From the throne of grace God will send it. Come boldly.

Jesus belongs to the sinner. From His infancy in Bethlehem's manger to the garden of Gethsemane, and from His agony on the cross to His ascension high above all heavens, He belongs to us, poor, guilty and helpless sinners, who trust in Him. He is altogether ours. He came to seek and to save us who were lost. His obedience, His life of sorrow and love, His prayers and tears, His sacrifice on the cross, His resurrection, all is ours, because we are the wayward and help less sheep who went astray, and whom He found. And in the heavenly glory He is ours, and His love, sympathy, faithfulness and power, give unto us in our need and misery, all things which pertain unto life and godliness. It is with us sinners that the glorified Saviour is now constantly occupied. We are His thought, His care, His work, and - oh that it were so more abundantly! - His joy, His garden, His reward. In Jesus God is ours. In the ocean of His love, in the fullness of infinite covenant -grace, we can rejoice. The God with whom we have to do seeth and knoweth all things; He is a consuming fire - and yet is He our God, Father, Saviour, indwelling Spirit; His throne is the throne of grace; nay, our very life is hid with Christ in God; we are in the bosom of Jesus, who is in the bosom of the Father. Hold fast, brother, and come boldly. Amen.

11 - Hebrews 5:1-10

CHAPTER X I CHRIST, AS SON OF MAN, CALLED AND PERFECTED TO BE OUR HIGH PRIEST.

Hebrews 5:1-10.

WE enter now on the third section of our epistle, which extends from chapter 5 to chapter 10:39, and which sets before us the Lord Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the everlasting covenant, greater than the Aaronic priesthood. Twice already the apostle has referred to Christ as our High Priest, and he now enters on the development of the central theme of his epistle, Christ a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek. But in order to explain the priesthood on which Christ entered after His death and resurrection, and of which not Aaron but Melchizedek was the type, it is necessary for him to show how the Lord Jesus fulfilled all that was typified of Him in the Levitical dispensation, and possessed in perfection all the requirements which, according to divine appointment, were needed in the high priest, and which could not be possessed in perfection by sinful men like the Aaronic priests. The High Priest in Israel possessed these two qualifications: First, He was one of the people, taken from among men for men. Secondly, He was appointed expressly by God Himself. The Lord Jesus was accordingly man, and appointed by the Father to be High Priest. But in His case a third element is added. As our Lord is not only the High Priest, but the sacrifice, on the foundation of which He exercises in heaven the functions of the High Priest, it was necessary for Him to suffer and to enter into the lowest depth of agony and death. And after having in perfect obedience and faith endured all, He entered into heaven, to be the High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Before Israel was redeemed out of Egypt, sacrifices and offerings were brought unto God by the fathers of families, and the paschal lamb was offered in every household. The whole nation, redeemed by the blood of the lamb, was called to be a nation of priests; that is, they were separated unto God, and called to worship Him, and to offer unto Him sacrifice. It was only when the people became deeply conscious of their sins, guilt, and pollution, when the law revealed to them more fully the awful majesty and holiness of God, that the priesthood was appointed, typical of the true mediation between God and man. The priests were appointed by God, separated unto Him, or holy, to bring the people’s sacrifices and offerings before God; they were permitted to draw near to God, and this as representatives and mediators. Arid they brought to the people God’s gifts, viz., reconciliation and blessing.

Now it is evident that the priesthood suffered from two essential defects, and that it was only a shadow and type of our Lord. In the first place, the priests were as sinful as the people whom they represented. It was on account of sin that Israel felt the need of a mediator. But Aaron and the priests were only officially holy, they were not in reality spotless and pure. Hence they had to offer sacrifices for their own sins and infirmities, as well as for those of the people.

Secondly, the mediator ought not merely to be perfect and sinless man; he ought also to be divine, in perfect and full communion with God, so that he can impart divine forgiveness and blessing. Only in the Lord Jesus therefore is the true mediation. And now that He has come and entered into the heavenly sanctuary as our High Priest, the word priest in the sense of sacerdotal mediator dare never be used any more. Through Jesus the whole congregations of believers have boldness to enter into the holy of holies. He who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, hath made us kings and priests unto God. The two qualifications of the Aaronic high priest, that he was from among men and that he was appointed by God, were fulfilled in a perfect manner in the Lord Jesus. But in considering these two points, we are struck not merely by the resemblance between the type and the fulfillment, but also by the contrast.

First, Aaron was chosen from among men to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. Jesus was true man, born of a woman and made under the law; "He became in all things like unto His brethren. But whereas the Jewish high priest had to offer for himself, as he was a sinner, the Lord was harmless and undefiled, pure and spotless. His mediation was therefore perfect. - The Aaronic high priest was able to have compassion on the ignorant and on them that were out of the way. The expression ignorance refers here to the great distinction which was made in Israel between sins for which there were sacrifices, and the sin of determined and presumptuous defiance of God's authority for which there was no sacrifice but judgment: "That soul shall utterly be cut off; his iniquity shall be upon him." (Numbers 15:22-31.) The Aaronic high priest could have compassion* on fellow-sinners, knowing and feeling his own infirmities and transgressions, and knowing also the love of God, who desireth not the death of the sinner, but that he should turn and live. (*The expressionμ■τριοπαθ■■ν(translated in the margin can bear with) seems to have originated in Greek literature as the contrast to the apathy of the stoic, and apparently means that feeling of kindness and tenderness towards the sufferer, in which due regard to justice and rectitude is not forgotten.) But this compassionate, loving, gentle, all-considerate, and tender regard for the sinner can exist in perfection only in a sinless one. This appears at first sight paradoxical; for we expect the perfect man to be the severest judge. And with regard to sin, this is doubtless true. God chargeth even His angels with folly. He beholds sin where we do not discover it. He setteth our secret sins in the light of His countenance. And Jesus, the Holy One of Israel, like the Father, has eyes like a flame of fire, and discerns everything that is contrary to God's mind and will. But with regard to the sinner, Jesus, by virtue of His perfect holiness, is the most merciful, compassionate, and considerate Judge. For we, not taking a deep and keen view of sin, that central essential evil which exists in all men, and manifests itself in various ways and degrees, are not able to form a just estimate of men's comparative guilt and blameworthiness. Nay, our very sins make us more impatient and severe with regard to the sins of others. Our vanity finds the vanity of others intolerable; our pride finds the pride of others excessive.* And again, blind to the guilt of our own peculiar sins, we are shocked with another's sin, different indeed from ours, but not less offensive to God, or pernicious in its tendencies. Again, the purer and higher the character, the quicker its penetration and the livelier its sympathy, discovering and loving any element and tendency heavenward and godward. Again, the greater the knowledge of divine love and pardon, the stronger faith in the divine mercy and renewing grace, the more hopeful and the more lenient will be our view of sinners. And finally, the more we possess of the spirit and heart of the Shepherd, the Physician, the Father, the Brother, the deeper will be our compassion on the ignorant and wayward. (*Fenelon.) The Lord Jesus was therefore most compassion ate, considerate, lenient,

hopeful in His feelings toward sinners and in His dealings with them. He was infinitely holy and perfectly clear in His hatred and judgment of sin; but He was tender and gracious to the sinner. Beholding the sinful heart in all, estimating sin according to the divine standard, according to its real inward character, and not the human, conventional, and outward measure, Jesus, infinitely holy and sensitive as He was, saw often less to shock and pain Him in the drunkard and profligate than in the respectable, selfish, and ungodly religionists. Again, He had come to heal the sick, to restore the erring, to bring the sinner to repentance. He looked upon sin as the greatest and most fearful evil, but on the sinner as poor, suffering, lost, and helpless. He felt as the Shepherd towards the ignorant and erring, the wayward and foolish, the helpless and perishing; He felt as the Physician towards the guilty and sin-stricken; He felt the yearning of parental love and pity toward the children of Jerusalem; and even on the cross, when their sin appeared in its most fearful intensity, the Lord prayed - "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do!" Again, He fastened in a moment on any indications of the Father’s drawing the heart, of the Spirit’s work. He loved the rich young man; for, though his words sounded most self-righteous, Jesus beheld Him, and saw he was not peaceful and calm in his soul. He knew how to stir up the hidden remnant, however small it was, of religious know ledge in the woman of Samaria, so that she asked Him about worship, and said, "I know that Messiah cometh!" He rebuked Peter as Satan, and yet He knew and loved him as a true and sincere disciple. And thus, while Jesus, in His perfect holiness, judges most truly, lovingly, and tenderly of us, He knows by experience the weakness of the flesh, and the difficulty and soreness of the struggle. What a marvellous fulfillment of the Priest’s requisite, that he should be taken from men! one to whom we can look with full and calm trust, our Representative, the man Christ Jesus, possessed of perfect, divine love and compassion.

Secondly, the High Priest is appointed by God. No man taketh this honour unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron. The High Priesthood of Christ is identified here with His glory. Christ glorified not Himself to be made a High Priest. Blessed truth, that the glory of Christ and our salvation are so intimately connected, that Christ regards it as His glory to be our Mediator and Intercessor! This is Christ’s glory, even as it is the reward of His suffering, that in Him we draw near to the Father, and that from Him we receive the blessings of the everlasting covenant. He rejoices to be our High Priest.

God called Him to the Priesthood. In Psalm 110 it is written: "Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." When Jesus entered into the Holy of Holies, when He sat down at the right hand of God, then He actually entered on the exercise of His priesthood. But the calling of Jesus to the High Priestly dignity is based on His Sonship. For, as we have already seen, the true Priest or Mediator must be divine as well as human. Because Jesus is Son, He is the Prophet, perfectly revealing God; because He is Son, He is the true Sacrifice and Priest; for only the blood of the Son of God can cleanse from all sin, and bring us nigh unto God; and only through Christ crucified and exalted can the Fathers love and the Spirit’s power descend into our hearts.

Here the comparison and contrast between the Lord and Aaron ends. The apostle now enters on that which is peculiar to our Saviour Jesus. The types and figures of the old covenant could not be perfect and adequate; for that which is united in Christ had necessarily to be severed and set forth by a variety of figures. The priests offered not themselves, but animals. Now the obedience, the conflict, the faith, the offering of the will in the true, real, and effective Sacrifice could not possibly

be symbolized. Nor could any single symbol represent how Jesus, by being first the Sacrifice, became thereby the perfect, compassionate, and merciful High Priest. Christ was the victim on the cross. His whole previous life of obedience was the necessary preparation for His ultimate obedience unto death. And because He was the true sacrifice, and had learned obedience, He became the compassionate and faithful High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary. Hence we must combine the Levitical types (regarding sacrifice, and the entrance of Aaron into the holy of holies) and the Melchizedek type (regarding priesthood), in order to obtain a true view of the work and person of our Lord. We must read Leviticus in the light of the gospels and epistles, rather than explain the fulfillment by the necessarily imperfect and fragmentary types; and in doing so we shall see as much contrast between the type and the reality as resemblance between the shadow and the substance.

Called of God to be a High Priest forever, the Lord Jesus, though He was the eternal Son of the Father, and though He was returning to glory, even to the right hand of the Majesty on high, learned obedience by the things which He suffered. He knows the path of temptation, sorrow, and conflict. The following verses unfold to us that the Lord descended into the lowest depth of human weakness, anguish, and death, and that only through this dark path He entered into His heavenly priesthood. It is in like manner that in the epistle to the Philippians the mind which was in Christ Jesus is described. He who was in the form of God emptied Himself, and was obedient unto death, even the death of the cross; and it is for this reason that the Father hath highly exalted Him. In one passage the emphasis is laid on His priesthood, in the other on His royal supremacy. In both the voluntary and perfect obedience of Jesus as the eternal Son of God is presented to us. The Son of God, according to the eternal counsel, came into the world to be obedient even unto death. "Lo, I come to do Thy will." His obedience was characterized throughout by such continuity, liberty, and inward delight, that we are apt to forget that aspect of His life on which the apostle dwells when he says, that though Christ was a Son, yet learned He obedience by the things which He suffered. The Lord Jesus was always doing the things which pleased the Father. There was no break or hesitation, no pause or retrogression in His path: it was the path of the just man, which is as the shining light, which shineth more and more unto the perfect day. And as it was continuous, so it seemed without an effort, flowing forth abundantly and spontaneously out of the full well-spring of His heart. He seems refreshed and not exhausted by doing the will of the Father that sent Him. And yet Jesus learned obedience, as He Himself said, He came not to do His own will. He who is Lord, eternal, infinite in power and glory, was made flesh, and with a human will, amid the toil and temptation incident to humanity, He continually submitted Himself to God His Father. Real and great were His difficulties, temptations, and sorrows; and from the prayers and complaints ascribed to Messiah in the psalms and prophets, we can understand somewhat of the burden which weighed on His loving and sensitive heart, and the constant dependence with which He leaned on the Father, and obtained from Him light and strength. Jesus believed; He lived not merely before, but by the Father.

Thus is Jesus the author and finisher of faith. He went before the sheep He is the forerunner. He has experienced every difficulty, and tasted every sorrow. He knows the path in all its narrowness. Was Abraham a sojourner in the land of promise as in a strange land? Jesus, who was appointed heir of all things, had not where to lay His head. Did Moses refuse the treasures in Egypt? Jesus was offered the whole world, with all its kingdoms and glory. Did David, anointed by the Lord,

experience what it is to be rejected, hated, and persecuted by the proud and ungodly? What enmity, contradiction, ingratitude had our Lord to bear! Did Jeremiah weep tears of bitter sorrow on account of Jerusalem’s impenitence and the false security of Judah, misguided by false prophets? Jesus, foreseeing still greater judgment on Israel’s apostasy, wept over the city, and loved the nation with a sorrowing and faithful heart. Jesus felt all our infirmities and sorrows, He bore our sicknesses, He sighed over the misery that is in the world through sin culminating in death, the great and last enemy; and while acknowledging divine justice His compassionate love rested on the sufferer. Jesus was all the days of His flesh* a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; but in the garden of Gethsemane He entered into an experience different from His previous suffering and conflict. He saw the cross from the beginning; He had set His face stedfastly towards Jerusalem, to go up and suffer there, and the anticipation of that awful cup sometimes filled His soul with fear; His soul was straitened until His baptism was fulfilled. (Luke 12:50.) When the Greeks came to the feast His soul was troubled; the earnest of the harvest, represented by the inquiring Gentiles, reminded Him that the corn of wheat must die first, and He cried to the Father, " Father, save me from this hour: but for this cause came I unto this hour." (*The days of His flesh are in contrast to the state of exaltation after He was perfected. The apostle Peter also uses the expression Christ "suffered in the flesh" (1 Peter 4:2); and the apostle Paul speaks of our present earthly existence as life in the flesh. (Php 1:22;Galatians 2:20.) The reference is to the life of Christ before His resurrection, where He, God’s "own Son," was "in the likeness of sinful flesh" (Romans 8:3) a partaker of flesh and blood, that He might suffer death. (Hebrews 2:14.) Of the risen Saviour we read that He had flesh and bones (Luke 24:39, notice, not flesh and blood); that He possesses nowσ■μα δ■ξης- a body of glory.) The apostles had seen Jesus weep over Jerusalem; they had seen His tears and heard His groans at the grave of Lazarus. But there was something so overwhelming in the agony of Gethsemane, that the evangelists evidently struggle with the inadequacy of language to describe the impression left on the minds of the apostles who were witnesses of that awful hour. So heavy was this weight on His soul, that in most touching words He seeks the sympathy of His disciples presence. "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me." He knelt down; He fell on His face; so great was His conflict that, as Luke the beloved physician notices, His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling to the ground.

What a contrast to the calm strength and peaceful joy with which immediately before He had comforted His sorrowing disciples, whose hearts were troubled and full of fear and sadness! (John 14 - 17.) He had spoken to them of His glory, of His going to the Father and sending to them the Spirit, of His joy being perfected in them, and of their abiding with Him for ever more. He had sung a hymn of praise with them. In the prayer which He had offered before them unto the Father there was no tone of sadness, there was nothing but peace and the calm assurance of victory. But now, though never swerving from implicit submission to His Father, He is well-nigh overwhelmed by the prospect of death before Him. We know the reason. It was not the prospect of physical pain, excruciating as it was, and sensitive as was His pure and sinless body. It was not the anticipation of the external manifestations of Israel’s ingratitude and hatred, deep as was His love to Jerusalem. It was not the shadow of the valley of death; for David and many saints are able to say, "Then I will fear no evil." No: Jesus, who is the adoration and strength of rejoicing martyrs, died not the martyr’s death, He died the just for the unjust. That which men ordinarily mean when they speak of death had no terror for the Lord Jesus. "Our friend Lazarus sleepeth," He said to His

disciples, and, comforting them on that last evening, He spoke of His death as simply going to the Father, and exhorted them to rejoice because He went to His Father's house and throne. And with perfect calmness He finally committed His Spirit into the Father's hand. The enmity and opposition, the malice and con tempt of His nation with their rulers, keenly as His loving heartfelt it, had been known by Him for years, and He had borne it patiently and calmly, and with undisturbed hope and courage, knowing that by meekness He would conquer, and that the Father would cause His work to prosper. Fearlessness, such as must accompany perfect faith in God, had always characterized Him. He never feared man. As He exhorted His disciples not to fear them that can only kill the body, so He Himself met all danger and opposition with the most peaceful calmness and collectedness of implicit and uninterrupted faith in God. Whence the sorrow, the anguish, the over whelming agony in the garden of Gethsemane?

He knew that on the cross, as our substitute, He would be left to suffer in connection with the judgment of sin; that His soul would be left without the light of the Father's countenance; and that which was His sole joy and strength, the very life of His life, would be taken from Him.

He tasted that death of which sin is the sting and the law the strength. When He saw what was before Him - death in its organic connection with divine wrath - He trembled, and was in agony.

Here we see, as nowhere else, how abhorrent He was of the iniquity which was about to be laid on Him, and how wonderful was His love to God and to us. The Lord Jesus, because He v as the Son of God, and perfect, holy man, could not but shrink from that cup, the Father hiding His face from Him. He prayed with strong crying and tears. We behold Him as the Son of man. He felt that this was the hour and power of darkness. Satan doubtless used the fear of death, and presented it to the Lord's mind to throw anguish into His heart. The anticipation of His agony on the cross overwhelms Him. Yet He remains faithful. He cries unto God. His tears betoken the earnestness of His prayer; His prayer reveals the holy, submissive character of His tears. Who can fathom the depth of Christ's prayer, or understand the full import of His tears and cries? Even in our infirmities the Spirit helpeth us, making intercession for us with groans which cannot be uttered. What must have been the petitions and the cries of the Lord Jesus when He offered Himself unto the Father! He sanctified the Lord His God in His heart, He hallowed His name, He magnified His holy justice, while He beheld His infinite love! He submitted Himself to His counsel, He surrendered Himself to suffer the most agonizing pain, and yet He trusted in His almighty and faithful deliverance! Here was the most wonderful combination in the human soul and spirit of Christ, that He most fully acknowledged and adored the holiness and the justice of God, while with perfect love He continued to identify Himself with guilty and lost sinners, and with unshaken confidence He trusted in the faithfulness of God, who would crown Him with glory, and give Him an innumerable multitude for His reward. And in this agony He learned to know fully what is the weakness of the flesh, and what is the real difficulty and painfulness of the struggle, even to surrender our own will, and to say, "Thy will be done." Thus He entered into our lowest depth, and for this reason is He able now to have perfect sympathy with us.

He cried unto God, and because of his filial devotedness, which made the Father's will His own, He was heard.* The Father sent an angel to strengthen Him. The anguish that well-nigh overcame Him was conquered. He rose, and set His face stedfastly to the work before Him. With meekness He bore the kiss of Judas; He went forth with calm majesty to meet the soldiers who were sent to

take Him captive; He restrained the false zeal of Peter, as afterwards He remembered him, and looked upon him with forgiving and tender love; He witnessed a good confession before Pilate and the high priest; He called Jerusalem's daughters to repentance; He prayed for Israel's forgiveness; He heard the petition of the dying thief, commended Mary His mother to the care of the beloved disciple, and then entered into the mysterious darkness of His expiatory suffering. (*Some expositors explain, "He was delivered from the fear of death." This is indeed true; but it seems more in accordance with the meaning of the word■■λ■β■ιατο translate it "on account of His fear" of God. And, as Delitzsch says, no more suitable expression could be found to denote the Saviour's attitude of filial, reverential submission to God's will.) With strong crying and tears1 the Son of God offered up prayers and supplications unto Him that was able to save Him from death. In the depth of His weakness and anguish He looked unto the Father's power. He poured out all His heart before Him. He prayed not to be spared the suffering of death; He asked not for twelve legions of angels to deliver Him. He had made the will of God His own, and because of this perfect surrender of Himself to that death, which appeared to Him so awful, He was heard. The answer to Christ's prayer was fully given when God brought again from His grave that great Shepherd of the sheep through the blood of the everlasting covenant. "Thou hast heard me" is in the twenty-second Psalm, the connecting link between the Beloved One forsaken and the Beloved One exalted, declaring the name of God to His brethren. Thus He learned the obedience through the things which He suffered.2 The mind which was in Christ from the beginning was the mind of perfect filial submission and obedience. He brought this mind with Him into the world, into His prophetic ministry, into the garden of Gethsemane, and to the cross of Golgotha. But in His sufferings this mind was tested, manifested, perfected. And now that He has offered the obedience, by which many are made righteous, and the Father, in answer to His prayer, has raised and exalted Him, He is fully fitted for and consecrated unto His High Priestly life.3 The Father now addresses Him as High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.4 (Hebrews 5:10.) (1The expressions of this verse recall the remarkable passage in the prophet Hosea respecting the patriarch Jacob: "He had power with God (or was a prince): yea, he had power over the angel, and prevailed: he wept, and made supplication unto him." Israel was an image of the Lord. Moses relates the words of earnest supplication, but does not mention Jacob's weeping. But the earnest and intense petition naturally issues in tears. ("Implorare est fletu rogare." Compare the Frenchimplorerand our word cry.

--PUSEY,on Minor Proph. 76.)

Bengel says, in reference to this passage, "Awful cup! Reasonable fear! Unviolated obedience! Mighty prayer! Speedy answer!" The expressions in our passage evidently harmonize especially with the account of the evangelist Luke. (Luke 22:39-46.)

2Notice the force and beauty of the original,■μαθ■ν■φ■■ν■παθ■ν;

3 Hebrews 2:10: God made Him perfect through sufferings with reference to His future compassion and sympathy, through His exaltation with reference to His power and position as High Priest.

4The termπ■οςαγορ■υθ■■ς, which occurs only in this place, meansaddressed.) The man Christ Jesus enthroned in heaven is now our perfect High Priest. He who endured all temptations, who glorified God in the midst of sin and suffering, who became acquainted with all sorrow and grief,

who tasted the bitterness of death, who offered Himself by the most perfect surrender of His own will to the Father as our substitute, He by His obedience unto death has become the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him;* and unto all whom He has saved by His blood He is the Priest after the order of Melchizedek. (*Kurtz points out that the reason why believers are here described as those who obey Him is because, as Christ was perfected through His obedience to the Father, so we can only be perfected by our obedience to Christ.)

What marvellous insight does Jesus possess into all that is human! What tender sympathy is His, and how high and perfect is His aim, that God's will should be done by us, even while we are in the body and in a world of sin and trial! With what power do the words come from His lips, "Only believe! Follow me!

Thus the glory of His exaltation is full of consolation and peace for us. Because He was faithful, because He was obedient unto the death, because His love conquered every enemy and overcame every darkness, He is enthroned by the Father as the Lamb, He is solemnly addressed by Him as the High Priest, who is the perfect and eternal Mediator, by whom everlasting salvation is given to all who obey Him. The glory of Christ is the result of His obedience, and the fruit of the experience of earth, through which He went, is His perfect sympathy with us, and His all-sufficient grace, which is able to uphold us in every trial, and to carry us safely through all our conflicts, and present us unblameable in body, soul, and spirit before the Father. And herein we adore the love of God, who gave up His Son, who sent Him, who spared Him not, in order that He might become a perfect High Priest, merciful and compassionate. Herein is the marvellous love of the Father, that He gave His own Son to be not merely the Saviour, but the Brother, the Head, the source of strength, light, and consolation to those who believe in His name.

Let us therefore dwell on the perfection of our great High Priest; for, as throughout Scripture, so here, the glory of Christ is unfolded in order that we may have perfect peace, and that we may take out of His fullness, and grace upon grace. Our sorrows and our temptations, our weakness and our danger, are fully known and constantly remembered by Jesus, who most tenderly sympathizes with us. Our sins have not merely been pardoned, but our daily trespasses and infirmities, our constant sinfulness, the sins which we commit without being conscious of them, need not keep us at a distance from God, or take from us our confidence and peace. Let us confess our sins, let us in humility acknowledge the sinfulness within us, and the defilement which clings to all our actions, even our holy things, and Jesus will be to us a merciful, considerate High Priest, by whom we are not only forgiven, but healed, corrected, and chastened; so that while we are judged in the flesh, we are quickened in the Spirit. We are before the Father in Christ the High Priest. While our prayers and thoughts, the words of our mouth, and the meditation of our heart, and the work of our hands, are acceptable, because the Lord Jesus presents them to the Father; all blessings of the covenant, all needful light and strength, grace and consolation, are bestowed on us by our omnipotent Melchizedek from the heavenly Jerusalem.

Remember who He is - the High Priest, the God-man - what He suffered, how in our nature He ascended, and then give thanks, and be of good cheer, and whatever clouds and difficulties may arise, however painful and heavy the burden of sin, of weakness, of work, never for a moment forget that nothing shall be able to separate you from the love of the Father, which is in Christ Jesus the Son of God, the Brother and High Priest of all who put their trust in Him.

We never know the strength and the love of Jesus until we lean on Him with the heavy burden of our sins, temptations, doubts, and sorrows; until in confiding trust and humble candour we speak to Him of all that oppresses and perplexes us. Then we experience that Jesus is the Man, who is God’s equal, the Man of God’s right hand, whom He hath made strong, mighty to save; that He is the Messenger of the covenant, the true Presence and Light, who guides us through the wilderness, while he sends down all blessings from the heavenly sanctuary. And then we experience the wonderful tenderness, the compassionate love, the perfect sympathy of Him who is not ashamed to call us brethren, who is afflicted in all our afflictions, who is constantly interceding for us in heaven, while He is constantly sustaining our inner life by His Spirit.

"The love of Jesus, what it is None but His loved ones know"

He alone knows what is in man; the sorrow which lies too deep for human ministry He is able to understand and heal. When there is such a High Priest in heaven, when such a Man is seated at the right hand of God - almighty, omniscient, all-loving; glorious in His holiness, power, and truth; unspeakably merciful, compassionate, brotherly; Son of God, and Son of Man; bringing the ocean of divine love through the channel of human brotherhood and sympathy, and the fullness of life and glory through the agony and the death He suffered on the cross; when such a Saviour of sinners, Friend and Guide, nay, Lover and Bridegroom of the soul, is revealed unto us, will any one of us continue to go through life alone, alone with sin and guilt, with the accusations of the past, the burden of the present, and the awful gloom of the future; alone with the thirst of the soul, and the sorrow of the heart, and the afflictions, trials, and dangers of our path; alone with the guilt and power of sin, and the darkness of the grave and eternity? Oh for one simple look to Jesus, and He is yours, with His plentiful redemption, His peace, His life, His love! And you who believe in Him, and are in manifold afflictions and trials, lean on His grace and rest in His love.

"Thy risen life but fits Thee more For kindly ministry;

Thy love unhindered rests upon Each bruised branch in Thee."

12 - Hebrews 5:11-14 - Hebrews 6:1-3

CHAPTER X I I.

GROWTH IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE.

Hebrews 5:11-14 - Hebrews 6:1-3 THE apostle has scarcely entered on the central and most important part of his epistle, when he feels painfully the difficulty of explaining the doctrine of the heavenly and eternal priesthood of the Son, and this not merely on account of the grandeur and depth of the subject, but on account of the spiritual condition of the Hebrews, whom he is addressing. He had presented to their view the Lord Jesus, who after His sufferings was made perfect in His exaltation to be the High Priest in heaven. When he quotes again the 110th Psalm, "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek," the solemn and comprehensive words which are addressed by the Father to the Son, he has such a vivid and profound sense of the exceeding riches of this heavenly knowledge, of the treasures of wisdom and consolation which are hidden in the heavenly priesthood of our ascended Lord, that he longs to unfold to the Hebrews his knowledge of the glorious mystery; especially as this was the truth which they most urgently needed. Here and here alone could they see their true position as worshippers in the true tabernacle, the heavenly sanctuary. Here and here alone was consolation for them in the trial which they felt on account of their exclusion from the temple and the earthly service in Jerusalem; while from the knowledge of Christ's heavenly priesthood they, would also derive light to avoid the insidious errors, and strength to overcome the difficulties which were besetting their path. The subject being so central and glorious, and its practical bearing on the Hebrews so direct and important, the apostle, in his eagerness to develop the truth which he has only stated, feels himself checked by the spiritual condition of the Hebrews. He had many things to say concerning the Melchizedek priest; many things important, useful, nay, necessary; many things full of consolation and joy; but he felt that they were hard to be uttered, because the Hebrews were dull of hearing. They had fallen into a state of spiritual inertness. Their perception had become blunted, their vision dim. It seemed almost necessary to teach them the first principles of the oracles of God; not that they had lost the knowledge of them, but they had failed to lay to heart their solemnity, and to live in the power of the saving truth.* In times past they had known clearly, confessed joyfully, and suffered with great willingness. But instead of progressing they had retrograded. And with this retrogression they had lost their spiritual insight and vigour; they had become earthly-minded and unskillful in the word of righteousness. In this feeble state into which they had fallen, they were exposed to great danger. When heavenly realities became dim and vague to their hearts, the visible form and power of Judaism became both a difficulty to the mind and a temptation to the soul. The peril in which the apostle beholds them is the awful one of apostasy. He sees them on the brink of a precipice, and therefore he addresses them in the words of keen but affectionate expostulation. (*τ■στοιχ■■αPauline expression. Comp.Galatians 4:3; Galatians 4:9. The expressionλ■για το■ ■■ο■occurs also,Acts 7:38;Romans 3:2;1 Peter 4:2.) But while he is filled with anxiety, he still cherishes hope. Remembering their former faith and patience, remembering, above all, the mercy and love of God, who had enlightened them and counted them worthy to

suffer for the gospel's sake, the apostle enters with earnestness and trustful expectancy on his difficult task. He does not allow himself to be deterred or diverted from his purpose by the difficulty of the subject and the low condition of the people. Here is not a case where the wisdom of educating love is justified in withholding deep truths which the disciples are not yet able to bear. It is only by the exposition of deep truths, by the full manifestation of the glory of Christ as our exalted High Priest, of the glory of the heavenly sanctuary, into which the believer has access, that the imminent danger of apostasy can be averted, and the dim spark of light and joy be sustained and revived. The Hebrews, we are told, were dull of hearing: "For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat." They are blamed for being babes, and not "of full age," or perfect.1 In the Church of Christ there are little children, there are men, there are fathers. It is evident that the apostle refers in our passage to the wisdom of the heart and of life. There is a distinction between "little ones" and young men and fathers. In one sense the Saviour calls us all children. We remain always learners, and blessed are we if we belong to the "babes" unto whom the Father reveals the mysteries of the kingdom. We are exhorted by the apostle Peter, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the Word, that we may grow thereby; and the apostle John describes the various stages of Christian experience when he writes to little children, because their sins are for given for His name's sake; to young men, because they are strong, and have overcome the wicked one; to fathers, because they have known Him that is from the beginning.2 What can be more lovely than the Christian in his infancy, in the spring time of his spiritual life, when the flowers appear and the voice of gladness is heard, when in his first love he rejoices in the Saviour? Such babes are to be cherished with great affection and ten derness. Christians differ in their measure of understanding and strength, as well as in the gifts of grace, which by the Spirit and according to their natural endowments and providential position are bestowed on them. Those who have only recently been brought into the fold cannot possess the experience and the wisdom of the elder. The Lord, who is the head of the church, distributes also gifts and talents according to His good and wise will. Some members of the church are called to be teachers, appointed to be pillars, lights, and guides, sons of consolation and fathers in the gospel; whereas others will, perhaps, always remain weak, and in need of constant help and guidance. Now the Lord, who Himself is full of love and tenderness, exhorts the church to be gentle, considerate, patient toward the young and the inexperienced; to comfort the feeble-minded, to support the weak. They that are strong ought not merely to bear the infirmities of the weak, but exercise self-denial in accommodating themselves to their less enlightened brethren; even as Christ pleased not Himself, we ought to please our neighbour for his good to edification. We must exercise a wise and patient discretion, even as Jesus had many things to say to His disciples, but remembered that they could not bear them. (1νηπιοι,babes, here opposed toτελειοις. Compare1 Corinthians 2:6.21 John 2. Notice here, as in other Scriptures, indications that in spiritual things the last and the first go together. The beginning contains the germ of the whole. Children also are described as knowing the Father, (1 John 2:13.) Thus in the Beatitudes the poor in spirit (Matthew 5:3), and the persecuted for righteousness sake (Matthew 5:10), have the same promise.)

Having stated this principle in defense of the weak and the babes in Christ, we may safely proceed to remind you of the Scripture's uniform declaration, that the Spirit is given and the church instituted for the very purpose that we should not remain children, but grow unto the measure of

the stature of the fullness of Christ; that in understanding, in steadfastness, in courage, we must become men; that after awhile they who at first could not bear strong meat ought to advance in knowledge and wisdom, and ultimately to become teachers. This view is expressed often directly, and still more frequently indirectly. And of all the ways in which it is stated, none to my mind is so impressive as the prayers of the apostle Paul for his congregations, in which he beseeches God to give unto them the Spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him. Paul was anxious that Christians should comprehend the length and breadth, and height and depth. For this he laboured, he wrote his epistles, he bowed his knees before God. This was his constant prayer, and he felt it necessary to tell the churches that his soul's desire was their growth. All the children of God, from the least to the greatest, are to progress in the knowledge of God in Christ Jesus, and thus they grow in grace. According to the new covenant, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, they are all called to know the things which are freely given unto us of God. For since they are Christ's, and Christ is God's, all things are theirs, (1 Corinthians 3:21; 1 Corinthians 3:23.) They are to know the mystery of the Father and the Son, the mystery of Christ and the church, the mystery of Israel, the mystery of the apostasy. The little children are to become men, able to teach others; and if they do not grow, it is either because that which is their nourishment is not the sincere milk of the word, or because they do not really, by faith in prayer, meditation, and obedience, live on the truths of the gospel. This subject is important, and is frequently neglected or misunderstood. Starting, then, from the admission, that according to the divine word and God's will all Christians are called to grow and to become fully instructed and established, let us inquire into the nature and method of this growth.

1. The comparison between a newly-converted man and a babe is, like all comparisons, imperfect. For in one sense a Christian is born by the Holy Ghost full-grown; as Adam came into the world a perfect man, full of light and insight, who gave names to all the living creatures, who understood and spake. The newly-converted man is born into the spiritual world, and from the first moment he sees and knows Christ, and has the mind of Christ, the Spirit, so that he can immediately understand all spiritual things. The milk of the word, as contrasted with strong meat, does not refer to any real and inherent difference between the gospel first preached and afterwards taught. From first to last we present the same truth, the same circle of truths, the whole truth. The apostles preached the first and Second Advent, the person and work of Christ, the gift and indwelling of the Holy Ghost; they preached the whole counsel of God to all men. They preached Jesus as the centre; but in their preaching they presented the whole circumference of truth. Do not allow modern practice to cramp your ideas of what is meant by "preaching the gospel" even to unbelievers. Experience will decide whether the apostolic method is not the safer and better.

Hence we find that congregations after a very short time were fully indoctrinated, and that such epistles as those to the Ephesians and Thessalonians could be addressed to men who a few months ago worshipped idols, and did not know the name of Jesus. The most comprehensive and profound view of the whole plan of redemption was given unto them by the apostle Paul. He explained to them the great mystery of Christ and the church, and the position of believers in the heavenlies. For the understanding and reception of truth depend chiefly, if not exclusively, on the heart; as Paul says, "the eyes of your heart being opened." The babe in Christ (I mean he who is a babe naturally, and not unnaturally through his own worldliness and indolence), full of love to Jesus, and impressed with the importance and blessedness of heavenly things, learns very easily

and very rapidly. He delights in the word; he is humble and tender; he does not resist truths which condemn the flesh and correct our waywardness; he is unworldly, heavenly-minded, and nine-tenths of the Bible becomes clear, when we are willing to deny ourselves, and take our cross and follow Jesus. Yes, we run well at the commencement. It is apathy, worldliness, sluggishness, conceit, which afterwards render Christians slow of heart to understand all that is written. The lukewarm church must needs be an ignorant church. The divided heart must needs be con fused and dim-sighted.

It is for this reason that the apostle blames the Hebrews for not having progressed in knowledge. If it was an intellectual effort, if the progress meant a mere matter of thought, research, and study, would such importance be attached to the slowness of their progress? But it implies the growth of faith and of love; their retrogression was based upon a moral and spiritual retrogression and de cay. Their senses had not been exercised; that is, they had not walked closely with God, they had not followed the Master, listening earnestly to His voice, and proving what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God. They had not conscientiously applied the knowledge which they had, but allowed it to remain dead and unused. If they had really and truly partaken of the milk, they would not have remained babes. If people really loved and cherished what they so fondly call "the simple gospel," their knowledge and Christian character* would deepen, and all the truths which are centered in Christ crucified would become the object of their investigation and delight, and enrich and elevate their experience. (*"The word of righteousness" is the gospel, for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith. (Romans 1:17.) When we abide in Christ, we add to faith knowledge; we learn to distinguish spiritual things; we do not dwell exclusively and morbidly on consolatory aspects of truth, but seek to be conformed to Christ, and to profit by the whole Scripture.)

2. It is not that there is a higher truth or life for the older Christians. The apostle in writing to the Corinthians blames them that they were still carnal, that they were still babes, and that therefore he was to feed them with milk and not with meat. And yet in this very epistle he states most emphatically that he knew nothing among them but Christ and Him crucified, and that this is the wisdom of God, wisdom among them that are perfect.

There are no doctrines more profound than those which are preached when Christ’s salvation is declared, and to which they who are more advanced are admitted, as to an esoteric wisdom. All our progress consists in learning more fully the doctrine which at first is preached unto us.

Let us beware of entertaining erroneous views as to what is meant by milk and meat. "Milk" designates gospel truth preached simply, so that thereby true nourishment is given, and faith is both called forth, and the new spiritual life strengthened and increased. Hence, there is nothing in the term meant to depreciate, but, on the contrary, to exalt the first declaration of saving truth in Christ. The strong meat, the doctrine of Christ’s high priesthood in heaven, is also milk, pure and nourishing, simple, and only received by the child like heart; whereas pride and ambition often call speculative and unprofitable discussions strong meat, though they are of no use to the spiritual man, but minister only unto strife and the exaltation of the flesh. The Colossians dreamt of a higher and deeper wisdom than the gospel of grace. They wished to speculate about the nature of angels; they wished to ascend to a higher platform, a so-called higher Christian life of worship, devotedness, and obedience. But the apostle corrects them. He shows them that Christ is all; that

in Him are hid all treasures of knowledge and understanding; that we are to learn Him, and to abide in the simplicity of the inexhaustible gospel. While they fancied they were advancing, they were falling back into the elements of the world.

It is the fleshly mind that is puffed up with dreamy speculations and self-invented gradations of worship. The spiritual mind knows that to know Christ, to know more and more what we saw and believed at first, is the whole progress of the Christian in time and eternity.

Connected with this is also the Corinthian error. It seems at first contradictory that the apostle calls them babes, and at the same time speaks of them as enriched in all utterance and in all know ledge. The church at Corinth was gifted in a remarkable degree. Very manifold were the manifestations of the Holy Ghost among them. But their knowledge became a snare to them, and ceased to be true knowledge. False knowledge puffeth up; it is unsubstantial, and without value. A man may possess much knowledge of Scripture truth; he may possess intellectually a vigorous and comprehensive grasp of doctrine; he may see the relation of various aspects of truth, and the application of truth to human character; he may be able to express doctrine and experience in lucid and glowing language, to detect error, subtle and false teaching, in a keen and masterly way, and yet he may be a babe in Christ; that is, in true spiritual knowledge of Jesus, in the tone of his mind, in the character of his daily walk, in his knowledge of his own heart, and his skill and wisdom in the conflict with sin, the world, and Satan. True knowledge is of the heart, and in love. Hence the apostle explains, in the epistle to the gifted Corinthians, so fully and with such earnestness and beauty, the pre-eminence of love. When love is perfect, knowledge is perfect. The child of God grows, obeying and honouring God, meditating on the word of God, applying it to himself, and moulding his life according to the mind of Christ, he becomes strong, his vision clear, his perceptions sensitive, his heart established. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. They that follow on to know shall know. The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom. Beginning means not merely the temporal commencement, but the very root and life of wisdom.

Returning to our passage, let us notice that the apostle refers to the wisdom of the heart and of life. The Hebrews had become as babes. Hence the word, which elsewhere is the sweetest expression of divine love and favour, is a term of reproach when it indicates an unnatural and dangerous condition of spiritual weakness, the result of a culpable and habitual inertness. It had not always been thus with the Hebrew Christians. For we read that when they were first enlightened they endured a great fight of affliction. Then, although they had many and grievous sufferings, they were strong, and rejoiced in Christ; and why? Because they were heavenly-minded. They believed and knew that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance. Then, though young in the faith, they were more fervent, and therefore more spiritual, possessed of clearer knowledge and perception. And therefore the apostle is so anxious to lead them on to perfection, that is, to fix their thoughts on Christ in heaven. Their earthly-mindedness constitutes both the necessity and the difficulty of his task. For the perfection unto which the apostle desires to go is not an esoteric doctrine or method of holiness peculiar to an imaginary second stage of faith. It has nothing to do directly with anything in our heart and conduct. It refers, on the contrary, to heaven, to the High Priest above, to our position in Him who is seated at the right hand of God. The perfection the apostle speaks of is the beholding Christ by faith, our righteousness, strength, and life, in the heavenly sanctuary. It is to know that we are priests, worshippers in Spirit and truth, that, being reconciled to God by the death of Christ, we have now

been brought nigh to the Father; and our citizenship, the source of our life and strength, the things which we seek, the blessings with which we are enriched, are no longer on earth, but in heaven. Here is perfection; for here and nowhere else is the Christ who was crucified. Christ was made perfect. The law made nothing perfect. But in the incarnate Son of God, in heaven, after His death and exaltation, there is now perfection for all who believe in Him. This is the strong meat, the same as the milk, viz., Christ is here, who was crucified, yea, lather that is risen, sitteth at the right hand of God, making intercession for us. And here alone is the power and safety of the Christian during his earthly life. Looking unto heaven, he keeps himself unspotted from the world; he is delivered from this present evil age, and he is able to follow the Lord, and to go outside the camp bearing His reproach. The apostle exhorts the Hebrews to go on unto perfection, to become men in understanding, to fix their thoughts on Christ ascended into heaven, and representing them inside the veil. For this reason he wishes to leave aside the elementary and fundamental doctrines through which they were initiated as disciples. He enumerates six doctrines, and in a form with which the Jews were familiar. As Bengel says: "The six particulars here specified had been, as it were, the Christian Catechism of the Old Testament; and such Jews, who had begun to recognize Jesus as the Christ immediately on the new light being shed on these fundamental particulars, were accounted as having the elementary principles of the doctrine of Christ." To turn from dead works, a life without God, in which there was no true life, and to turn by faith unto God, this is the very commencement of all discipleship. They who had thus repented and believed, received, in baptism and by the laying on of hands, the sign and seal of covenant gifts, and the power of the Holy Ghost to labour in the work of the church; and, sealed with the earnest of the inheritance, they looked forward unto the resurrection of the just, and the final separation unto the kingdom of glory.*(*This is another illustration of the fact, that the most elementary instruction of apostolic days was more comprehensive than what is now called the simple gospel. It embraced not merely teaching concerning the holiness of God and the guilt and depravity of man (repentance), but also the doctrine of the gift of the Holy Ghost and the work of the church, as well as the doctrine of the second coming and kingdom of Christ, of which all Scripture testifies.) 1. Repentance from dead works and faith toward God. The divine message to sinners has always been to turn from sin and ungodliness to the mercy and power of God, who is willing to forgive sin and able to renew the heart. Repentance and faith are inseparably connected. All true repent ance has its source in the declaration of God’s holiness and grace. He who turns unto God believes both the justice and the mercy of the Lord. Repentance was never preached except in connection with redemption: the kingdom of God is at hand; the loving arms of God are open; turn unto Him before the great day of His wrath. The whole message of the old covenant prophets is the solemn and yet sweet message of repentance; and this also was the preaching of John the Baptist, and the Lord Jesus Himself, during His prophetic ministry.

Repentance is unto life. The deepest explanation, and the most lovely illustration of the true nature of repentance, is in the gospel of Luke (chap, 15); the publicans and sinners drawing near to Jesus to hear Him. To draw near to the Saviour, and to trust, is to repent.

Again, faith cannot be without repentance. When Cornelius and his friends believed the gospel preached unto them by the apostle Peter, their conversion is described by these words: God has given repentance unto the Gentiles. (Acts 10) But while repentance and faith are thus inseparably connected, in repentance the negative element preponderates, in faith the positive. In the one,

because of God’s holiness and grace, we turn from sin and ungodliness; in the other, because of our sin and misery, we look unto the holy and merciful Lord. Hence sorrow and fear are prominent features of repentance; hopeful trust and loving joy characterize faith. The expression "repentance from dead works" refers to the truth that, apart from God and from the life which His grace implants, even our good works are without life; possessing no vitality, they are unfruitful; that is, they do not glorify the Father (John 15:8), and they do not issue in the reward and blessedness which Scripture connects with good works wrought in God. As long as man is alienated from God, he, though living, is dead in trespasses and sins; and while he is apart from the true Vine he can do nothing. The works of the law performed in the spirit of bondage have no inward truth and substance. The good works of a godly man reveal his inner life; they exert a life-influence on those that see them (Matthew 5:16), and they react on the character and spirit of him who performs them. But our old life, before the grace of God renews us, is a life of "dead works."

Opposed to the life of dead works is faith; that is, the positive aspect of conversion; the soul turning in confidence and appropriating trust to the grace of God as revealed in redemption. Faith in God the Redeemer, the covenant God, who will abundantly pardon, and with whom is plenteous redemption, was the life of God’s saints, from Abel to John the Baptist. The just always lived by faith (Hab. 2), and by faith they possessed that life which is of God and eternal. And since God has now fully revealed Himself in Christ Jesus, and given us in Him the true and perfect redemption, it is evident that the object of our faith is now specially the Lord Jesus Himself, and yet the same Holy One of Israel, in whom the fathers trusted.

2. The doctrine of baptisms and the laying on of hands. The Jews were familiar with baptism as a rite of initiation, by which Gentiles were separated from the unholy and idolatrous communion to which they belonged, and admitted into the commonwealth of Israel. The baptism of John required for this reason no explanation as to the act itself; the only thing remarkable about it was, that it was applied to the children of the kingdom, and not to those who stood without. The baptism which our Lord instituted differed again from that of the Jews and of John the Baptist, in that it was a sign and seal of the covenant of grace, and in the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost, signifying and sealing the gift of a new life, through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus and the renewal by the Holy Ghost. Those who had been baptized were viewed as having put on Christ, as being washed from their sins, and as having received the Holy Ghost. The laying on of hands was a symbolic act which from time immemorial, and with divine sanction, had been connected with prayer, invoking the divine benediction. And they who had been admitted into the church, and recognized as believing and renewed members, were viewed as priests, and each one was called to exercise the gift which the Spirit had bestowed on him for the good and edification of the whole; while some, called to special work of evangelization or other ministry, were set apart for the work, after fasting and prayer, by the laying on of hands.*(*The Synagogue calls the laying on of hands íîéë■, and connects it with the setting apart to the office of teacher in sacred things. The hand is viewed in Scripture as the organ by which gifts are imparted and transferred. The Israelite laid his hand on the sacrifice, on the burnt-offering (Leviticus 1:4), on the peace-offering (Leviticus 3:2); Aaron and his sons, upon the sin-offering (Leviticus 8:14) and on the scapegoat, as we readLeviticus 16:21, thereby symbolically putting all their transgressions upon the head of this goat. In the case of the sacrifices for sin, the laying on of hands symbolizes the transference of guilt and transgression; in the thank-offering, the transference of gratitude and self-surrender. We

find the laying on of hands among the patriarchs connected with benediction on the seed of promise. (Genesis 48:14.) This custom still continues among the Jews - the father blesses thus his children on the Sabbath day. Under the law we find it connected with setting apart to special ministry. (Numbers 27:18.) In the New Testament we read of our divine Lord laying His hands on the sick, and healing them. (Luke 4:41;Mark 6:5.) We then read of the apostles laying on hands on disciples (Acts 8:17); and Ananias (not an apostle notice, but simply a member of the church) laid his hands on Saul, and immediately his eyes were opened. Thus the laying on of hands was a symbolic action accompanying the communication of divine gifts. Lastly, in connection with special work and ministry. (Acts 13:3;1 Timothy 4:14.) The laying on of hands has justly been retained by the churches of the Reformation in the setting apart of men to the ministry into which they are called of God. But perhaps we have not used this symbol, sanctioned of God, sufficiently in the admission to the Lord’s table and in praying with the sick.

3. Intimately connected with the doctrine of the Holy Ghost, as set forth in baptism and the laying on of hands, is the doctrine of resurrection and eternal judgment. In the Creed (commonly called the Apostles’) we find this connection illustrated; believing in the Holy Ghost, we see His creation in the Catholic Church, His power and indwelling in the communion of saints, His consolation in the renewed assurance of forgiveness of sin, His ultimate and crowning work in the resurrection of the body and the life of glory, which is eternal. By the spirit that dwells in us God shall quicken our mortal bodies. (Romans 8:11; compare also 2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:14.) The doctrine of resurrection, which was strenuously held by the Pharisees, is so intimately connected with the Messianic hope that the apostle Paul could say truthfully: "Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question." (Acts 23:6; compare Acts 25:6.) As this fundamental doctrine was held by the Jews, so in its full and deepest sense the resurrection was the crowning and ultimate object of the apostles’ hope, the goal to which they constantly looked. "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection from among the dead." (Php 3:11) This is the resurrection of the just, of which our Lord speaks; this is the first resurrection, in which the blessed and holy have part. (Revelation 20:6.) The judgment is called eternal; for the word judgment (κρ■μα) means not the act or process of judgment (which is κρ■σι■ Hebrews 9:18 and Hebrews 10:27), but its result or judicial sentence, which is final and irrevocable. For nowhere does Scripture hold out the prospect of that sentence "Depart from me" being changed. It is the uniform doctrine of Scripture, that the gulf between the saved, the "blessed of my Father," and the lost, is fixed, and that the life of glory as well as the death of anguish is everlasting.

Such was the elementary Christian instruction, summed up in the form of sound words, with which the Jews were familiar. The germ of all truths is contained in them; they present an outline and sketch of the whole building. And yet these fundamental doctrines did not set before the Hebrews with sufficient fullness and clearness the truth of which they stood in need to keep them from apostasy, and to strengthen and comfort them in their sore trial and temptation. It was necessary for them now to fix their thoughts on the "heavenly things" to which our Saviour alludes in His conversation with Nicodemus, to the perfection of the High Priest and the heavenly sanctuary.

John the Baptist preached repentance and faith; he baptized with water, and spoke of the baptism with the Holy Ghost; he testified of the approach of judgment, of the wheat gathered, and the chaff burned up. And yet John the Baptist stood not in the full light of Pentecostal fulfillment. It behooved

the Hebrews to go on in their knowledge unto perfect manhood, till the measure of the stature of Christ's fullness be attained. And it not merely behooved them, but it was absolutely necessary. For, notwithstanding their dullness of hearing, the apostle, deeply impressed with a sense of their danger, and hoping in the never-failing mercy of our compassionate Lord, takes courage to un fold to them the deep things of God.

Here is a very important lesson for our times. When we think of the state of the church and of Christendom, we naturally ask what is the best method of rousing and strengthening that which is languid and feeble, of bringing back those who have strayed, and of fortifying the tempted against the errors and the God-opposing spirit of the age. This is specially a solemn question for those who are teachers, stewards of the mystery of God, under-shepherds of the flock. Is it sufficient to preach the simple doctrine of the gospel, to declare the fundamental truths of repentance and faith, limiting ourselves to what is absolutely essential to the commencement of Christian life, and simply reminding our people of the great salvation, that Jesus died because of our offences, and was raised again because of our justification? Is such a method scriptural? and, viewing it from the lower point of expediency and experience, is it safe and effectual? Does not Scripture teach us that we should keep back nothing that is profitable, that we should not shun to declare the whole counsel of God, that the children of God should comprehend with all saints what is the breadth, and length, and depth, and height? Do we not continually notice that scanty, elementary, and one-sided teaching does not even secure the true, living, and healthy knowledge of simple and fundamental truths? And with regard to those who are still strangers to the grace of God, is it not our duty to lay before them the divine message in all its fullness and beauty, in its comprehensiveness and depth, and by unfolding to them as far as man is able the Scripture, teaching to counteract the unscriptural opinions which refer not merely to the central questions of personal salvation, but to the character of God, the origin of the world and man, the nature of sin, the history and the ultimate destiny of our race? Above all, is it not for us to preach Jesus Christ; Jesus, the Messiah promised to Israel, the Saviour of sinners and head of the church; Jesus, the Son of God and Son of man; Jesus, the High Priest in heaven and the coming Lord, who will be King over the whole earth?

Perhaps no church had fallen into so low and dangerous a condition as the Hebrews. The remedy which apostolic wisdom and love applied was (contrary to what most of us would have suggested) a profound exposition of the glory of the exalted Saviour as the royal High Priest. He endeavours to bring before them the wonderful perfections of the Lord Jesus as their all-sufficient Mediator, that thus their hearts may be drawn from earth and filled with the peace and joy of God. Thus nothing is more needed in our days, both for the church and the world, than a faithful and deep exposition of Scripture, of the whole Scripture, of Scripture in its organic unity and comprehensive fullness, in order that by grace mind, conscience, and heart may be convinced that here are revealed unto us thoughts higher than our thoughts, divine realities and blessings, things which eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man. And thus, while they who believe not will acknowledge that God is in us of a truth, the children of God will be kept stedfast and faithful; they will be furnished unto every good work, and, forgetting the things that are behind, will press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus.*(*The want of docility and of active inquiry into divine truth manifests itself in various ways. Sometimes in ignoring prophecy, as if prophecy was isolated and not essentially and inseparably connected with

the other portions and aspects of truth, as if the whole word was not the sure word of prophecy, the word of Him who was, and is, and is to come. Sometimes in a shrinking from the deeper meaning of the types, such as the sacrifices and festivals, or those of David and Solomon. Sometimes in neglect of the Jewish Scriptures, and in forgetfulness of the mystery of Israel, and the relation between the church and the kingdom. Again there is the morbid and exclusive repetition of the blessed truth, "peace in believing," apart from the new life, the conflict of faith, the service of love, and the crucifixion of the flesh. What we need is not (so-called) intellectual or aesthetic or eloquent preaching, but pneumatic (spiritual) preaching of the "whole counsel of God" as unfolded in Scripture.)

Going on unto perfection, beholding Christ in heaven, we continue in the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. When by the grace of God we were converted, we became as little children; we were made humble, docile, cheerfully dependent on God’s mercy, and joyfully accepting His gift. Having no wisdom, righteousness, or strength of our own, we were made willing to receive Christ Jesus. By Him are we continually brought as little children to the Father. When we abide in faith and love, though in understanding we become men, yet we continue childlike, we are children in malice. Thus only do we retain the humble, trustful, joyous, obedient, and plastic character of childhood, the dew of our youth. In one sense we always sing -- "Sweet the moments, rich in blessing, Which before the cross we spend."

Christ crucified is the sum of our knowledge. For here is not merely the foundation on which our faith rests, the source of our love and obedience, of our strength and hope; but here we behold the eternal counsel of God, and the glory which shall hereafter be revealed. But it is the living Christ, the Lord Himself, who is the object of our faith and contemplation. We behold Him who was dead but is now living; it is in Him that we now see and learn God. He who became man that we might be made partakers of the divine nature, who died that by His blood we might be brought near unto God, who ascended and sat down at the right hand of God to send unto us the Spirit, and to present us perfect before the Father, is the true Mediator, in whom divine light, life, and love are given unto us. Thus is fulfilled the saying of Israel’s great King, "The way of life is above to the wise, that he may depart from hell beneath." In Christ ascended is our only safety. To look unto Him is the only way in which our feet can be kept from falling, in which we can worship in the presence of God, and, beholding the countenance of our Father, serve Him on earth.

There is a simplicity which is the result of full and profound knowledge, of varied experience and conflict; a simplicity which is the indication of abundance and depth, which is the result of meditation, prayerfulness, and a humble walk with God. They who are fathers in the church, who, like the apostle John, lean on the bosom of Jesus, who behold the glory of the only-begotten, and in singleness of heart rest in His love, reach a lofty and calm mountain height, and they express their knowledge and experience with great simplicity and brevity. We often fancy we understand their quiet and axiomatic words, or that we have fathomed their meaning, and yet we may only have come into contact with the surface. The apostle John is thus the simplest and deepest teacher in the church. Like the Sabbath-day, he appears among the disciples; a solemn, yet childlike quiet and simplicity characterize his words; we meet with no complicated arguments, no noise and struggle, no upward steep ascent from earth to heaven, law to grace, Levitical type to Melchizedek perfection; we are transplanted at once into the high region of God’s light, love, life. These simple yet in exhaustible words are the constantly recurring realities of which he testifies.

To reach this simplicity is the object of the Christian individual and of the Christian church.

While we are serving the Lord amid trials and sorrows, and waiting for His second coming, let us behold, as we are taught in the epistle to the Hebrews, the High Priest in heaven - let us see, as the apostle John testifies in the Apocalypse, "the Lamb in the midst of the throne." This is the simplest and most comprehensive word of Scripture. "The Lamb on the throne." This sums up all Scripture history and prophecy, all Scripture doctrine and consolation; this fulfils all Scripture types; for here is the sacrifice, the sanctuary, and the royal High Priest. He who was slain for us is the Divine King; He unto whom all power is given in heaven and in earth is the Lamb, full of love and tenderness. We are at peace; we learn the patience and wisdom of the saints as followers of the Lamb. Called to surfer in fellowship with Him, we look forward with hope to His return; for the Church is the bride, the Lamb’s wife. To behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne, this is "going on unto perfection."

13 - Hebrews 6:4-20

CHAPTER X I I I. THE DANGER OF APOSTASY; THE PATIENCE OF FAITH AND THE ANCHOR OF HOPE.

Hebrews 6:4-20. THE danger of retrogression is, perhaps, nowhere in Scripture placed before us in such a forcible and alarming manner as in this solemn chapter. One of the promises which occurs very frequently with regard to Israel after their con version and restoration, is their stedfastness; they shall never turn back, but love and serve the Lord forever. The prophetic word represents to us the picture of Israel continuing faithful during all the centuries that may be before them in the promised land. They shall never lapse. After, by the grace of God, and the appearing of the Lord Jesus, and the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, they are brought to repentance and faith, they shall continue forever walking in the light of His countenance, and rejoicing in the rock of their salvation, serving and glorifying God their Redeemer. The apostle Paul may be regarded as a striking and eminent type of Israel. Converted on his way to Damascus by the appearing of the Lord of glory, he typifies the sudden and direct manner in which the Jews, who, ignorant of God’s righteousness, reject the gospel, shall be turned from darkness unto light, and experience the forgiving love of Joseph their brother, whom they hated and sold into Egypt.* And the subsequent life of the apostle seems a type of the subsequent uninterrupted faithfulness and service of renewed and restored Israel. Think of the career of the great apostle. When it pleased God to reveal His Son in him, obedient to the heavenly vision, and without conferring with flesh and blood, he became the servant of the Lord, whom before he had persecuted. From that day on he continued stedfast, and through a life full of danger and suffering, of incessant toil and sacrifice, he went on with increasing ardour, vigour, and alacrity, never pausing, never relaxing his effort, or diminishing zeal, until at last, facing death, he was able to say, "I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith." He never for a moment relaxed in his intense energy, in his fervent devotion, in his arduous labours. He went on with a steady step and a loving heart. His affection, his faith, his self-forgetfulness, his courage, seem to increase and shine with a brighter and stronger light. He never seems to rest satisfied with his past attainments, or to be content with the measure of suffering and reproach endured for Christ’s sake, or with the measure of victory gained in the beloved Master’s cause. He is always, as he himself describes it, doing one thing, forgetting the things that are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, he pressed toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Many and painful were the disappointments which met him in his work. He had constantly to bear the enmity of the Jews, the opposition of the Greeks, the suspicion with which many Jewish Christians regarded him, the interference of false teachers, the ingratitude and the unfaithfulness of many of his own converts; but his zeal remained unaltered, he continued in faith, in patience, in that love which endureth all things and hopeth all things. No stripes or imprisonment, no perils by land or sea, among robbers or false brethren, no sufferings or hardships, were able to cloud his confidence in the grace and power of the Lord Jesus who had sent him, or to lessen that ardent affection which he felt for unbelieving Israel, and that tender and fatherly love with which he regarded all the faithful. He

continued bearing the churches on his heart, praying for them, and writing to them words of heavenly wisdom and fervent affection. The ingratitude of men seemed only to deepen his love and stimulate his zeal. Forgetful of self, he addressed words of encouragement and rejoicing from his prison and in the prospect of death. With ever-increasing brightness of knowledge, faith, love, hope, he patiently ran the race set before him, though none of God's servants had such a rough and thorny path. Jesus, who said of him that he was a chosen vessel unto Him, also declared, I will show him how great things he must Buffer for my name's sake. As the Lord Jesus showed forth all long-suffering in him for a pattern, so by the grace of God the apostle Paul is an illustration of perseverance and faithful service. (*"For my part," says Mede, "I incline to think the Jewish nation shall be called byvisionandvoice from heaven, as St. Paul was; and that that place ofZechariah 12:10, 'They shall see Him whom they have pierced,' and that ofMatthew 23:39, 'Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord,' seems to imply some such matter. They will never believe that Christ reigns at the right hand of God until they see Him. It must be an invincible evidence which must convert them after so many hundred years settled obstinacy. But this I speak of the body of the nation; there may be somePraeludiaof some particulars converted upon other motives, as a forerunner of the great and main conversion.

"The Jews will not be converted unto Christ by such means as were the rest of the nations, by the ministry of preachers sent unto them; but by the revelation of Christ Jesus in His glory from heaven, when they shall not say, as when they saw Him in His humiliation, 'Crucify Him,' but, 'Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord.' Whose coming then shall be as lightning out of the east, shining unto the west; and the sign of the Son of man shall appear in the clouds of heaven, and every eye shall see Him, even those which pierced Him, and shall lament with the spirit of grace and supplication for their so long and so shameful unbelief of their so merciful Redeemer.")

I am not idealizing the apostle. I am not guilty of hero or saint-worship. He was a chosen vessel, appointed to be a pattern, both of converting grace and of the power and stedfastness of the new life, bestowed by the Holy Ghost. He was able to say to the churches, "Be ye followers of me, even as I am of Christ." With what force and significance do exhortations to perseverance come from him. How willing ought we to be to listen to him when he exhorts us to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. He was always giving diligence to make his calling and election sure. His constant aim was, to know Jesus, and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being made conformable unto His death, if by any means he might attain unto the (first) resurrection from among the dead. Filled with love to the saints, he is anxious to see them all strong and joyous in the faith, that God may be glorified. When he thinks of the Hebrews, who through lukewarmness and culpable inertness had become again like babes, unable to receive the doctrine of the glorified Saviour and of His perfect priesthood, he is filled with sorrow and great anxiety. Although new-born babes are weak, yet the apostle, like his divine Lord, rejoiced over them, and gave thanks unto the Father for their faith and love. The life of the newly-converted souls is full of promise. With eagerness they listen to the doctrine of apostles, and in their first love they are swift to hear and to understand. But when old Christians become again like babes, their state is dangerous. The apostle regards the retrogression of the Hebrews with dismay. He sees in it the danger of an entire, continued, willful, and irrecoverable apostasy from the truth. He beholds

them on the brink of a precipice, and he therefore lifts up his voice, and with vehement, yet loving earnestness, he warns them against so fearful an evil.

"It is impossible for those who were once en lightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, and have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, if they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance." These solemn and awful words have occasioned much controversy, and caused much alarm to anxious and sensitive hearts; but let us also hope that, blessed by the Spirit, they have achieved the purpose for which they were written; viz., to rouse the careless and indolent, who have fallen asleep on the enchanted ground; to show unto the backslider and unto the unfaithful and slothful servant the evil and danger of his way; to cause earnest heart-searching before God, and to en courage the humbled soul to return to the love of the Father and the grace of the Lord Jesus; for it is evident that the apostle’s great aim in this chapter is to encourage the Hebrews to persevere and to stand fast in the grace of God, that returning unto the Lord they may have full assurance of hope. The Hebrews had become lukewarm, negligent, and inert; the gospel, once clearly seen and dearly loved by them, had become to them dim and vague; the persecution and contempt of their countrymen a grievous burden under which they groaned, and in which they did not enjoy fellow ship with the Lord Jesus. Darkness, doubt, gloom, indecision, and consequently a walk in which the power of Christ’s love was not manifest, characterized them. Now if they continued in this state, what else could be the result but apostasy? Forgetfulness must end in rejection, apathy in antipathy, unfaithfulness in infidelity.

Such was their danger. And if they succumbed to it their state was hopeless. No other gospel remains to be preached, no other power to rescue and raise them. They had heard and known the voice which saith, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." They had professed to believe in the Lord, who died for sinners, and to have chosen Him as their Saviour and Master. And now they were forgetting and forsaking the Rock of their salvation. If they deliberately and willfully continued in this state, they were in danger of final impenitence and hardness of heart. The exhortation must be viewed in connection with the special circumstances of the Hebrews. After the rejection of the Messiah by Israel, the gospel had been preached unto the Jews by the apostles, and the gifts and power of the Holy Ghost had been manifested among them. The Hebrews had accepted the gospel of the once crucified and now glorified Redeemer, who sent down from heaven the Spirit, a sign of His exaltation, and a pledge of the future inheritance. Having thus entered into the sphere of new covenant manifestation, anyone who willfully abandoned it could only relapse into that phase of Judaism which crucified the Lord Jesus. There was no other alternative for them, but either to go on to the full knowledge of the heavenly priesthood of Christ, and to the believer’s acceptance and worship through the Mediator in the sanctuary above, or to fall back into the attitude, not of the godly Israelites before Pentecost, such as John the Baptist and those who waited for the promised redemption, nor even into the condition of those for whom the Saviour prayed, "for they know not what they do;" but into a state of willful and conscious enmity against Christ, and the sin of rejecting Him, and putting Him to an open shame.

Though the apostle hopes better things of the Hebrews, as we shall see immediately, yet he cannot in faithfulness and love but present this solemn warning to them, and as this warning, like all Scripture teaching and exhortation, applies not merely to the people to whom it was primarily addressed, but is written also for us, it becomes us more fully to consider and weigh its meaning.

It has been asked whether the description here given is the description of a truly converted and renewed soul. While some, remembering the Scriptural truth, that the sheep of Christ can never perish, and that the children of God are born of incorruptible seed, have attempted to explain the terms used, as not reaching fully the description of regeneration by the Spirit; others have insisted on the expressions denoting unmistakably the renewal of the heart by the grace of God. The true explanation seems to be, that the apostle uses expressions to describe what the Hebrews were in profession and outward appearance. He describes them as we describe our fellow-Christians - as they appear to us, as they themselves profess to be, and as we think of them from their words and actions. Hence the apostle would doubtless use different expressions if he wished to describe (objectively) the believer. From the eternal, heavenly, and divine point of view, a believer is one who is born of God, who has been quickened together with Christ, who is accepted in the Beloved - who was chosen before the foundations of the world were laid - who has received the Holy Ghost as an earnest of the in heritance: he is of God, and the seed of God abideth in him; he is one of Christ's sheep, and can never perish. The new life which is given by the Spirit is an eternal life. The union between Jesus and the believer is an indissoluble one. The apostle therefore could never join the description of a true believer with the description of final apostasy. But he does join (and so does all Scripture) the description of the apparent and professing believer, and that taking him at his highest and best, with the consequence of retrogression, and lukewarmness, and sin. The Hebrews professed, and to all appearance had been enlightened. They had tasted of the heavenly gift, for they expressed their joy in believing the glad tidings; they seemed to have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost, for they called Jesus Lord; they seemed to have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the world to come, for they were willing to suffer and to lose their worldly goods for the sake of the eternal reward. But now, unless they gird up the loins of their mind and rouse themselves from their slumber, unless by repentance and faith they collect and concentrate their energy, and ascend the steep and rugged height as Jesus commands us to follow Him, their path is downward and unto eternal ruin.*(*This warning does not refer to isolated sins, but to a protracted and habitual condition of mind; to neglect and disbelief of truths once recognized and confessed; and it places before us the result of a series of unfaithful and willful rejections of spiritual influences and privileges. Many humble and timid Christians have misunderstood the whole scope and purport of this passage. He who judges himself is not judged. The man who fears always is safe, because he trusts in the living God and Saviour. But, as we know from Scripture, and, alas! also from experience, there are some who appear to the church to be zealous and true Christians, and who yet have not received the word in a good heart, and by and by fall away. Such men are in a most deplorable condition. Their antipathy to truths, once known and professed, is very great, and different from the apathy of the worldly; theirs is a bitter and subtle hostility. Yet even their case should not be received by us as hopeless; but we should pray Tor them, that God may give unto them true repentance and living faith. The willful and conscious rejection of the testimony of the Holy Ghost is another subject, and not spoken of in this passage.) In no other form could this most necessary exhortation have been given. And it is equally unscriptural to blunt the edge of this severe warning as it is to deduce from it the doctrine that the truly-renewed soul can finally fall away from God. While the apostle entertains the hope that the Hebrews are true and sincere, and that by the grace of God their faith will be revived, he feels that this can be effected in no other way than by showing them their present actual condition, and the inevitable results which must follow their continuance in it. If they continue in their

downward career, it will then become manifest that they received the good seed only superficially, that they had no depth, and therefore after a short season of joy fell away. Land which drinks in the rain that comes down from heaven shows that it is good land, because it brings forth fruit, and the blessing of God is visibly and evidently resting upon it. Land which, though visited by the same benign influences, and watered by the same rain, brings forth nothing but briers and thorns, shows that it is reprobate, and well-nigh unto destruction and cursing. Think it, then, no slight or unimportant matter whether you are bringing forth fruit or not. Delay not, but retrace your steps; return to the Lord; go forth and weep bitterly, and then hear the Lord’s question, "Lovest thou me?" Choose between ignorance, apathy, gloom, and the favour and blessing and service of the Lord.

It is strange that some have failed to perceive that all Scripture warnings are given according to the same method; and it is difficult to see how they could possibly be framed differently. For instance, the apostle says to believers, "If ye live after the flesh, ye shall die." (Romans 8:13.) Does he teach that they unto whom there is no condemnation, who are in Christ Jesus, shall die? No; but he wishes to show that the consequence of living after the flesh would necessarily be death. "If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered." If one who appears to be a member of Christ does not continue in the communion of faith and obedience, the inevitable result is that, having no vital union with the source of life, he must perish. Again, if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses. And still more clear is the parable of the unmerciful servant who, having received his Lord’s forgiveness, would not forgive his fellow - servant who owed him a debt. Here the hypothesis is converted into a narrative. The point to be illustrated is this, forgiveness which is not accompanied by a renewal of the heart, inclining it to be merciful, compassionate, and forgiving, is only apparent and superficial, and on the day of decision it will be made manifest that it was not genuine and God-given. Now, in what other way could this thought be illustrated than by representing the hypothesis as an actual fact? The servant’s debt is remitted; he meets his fellow-servant; he shows no pity, but is unrelenting; the Lord finally pronounces judgment, and cancels his pardon. Does this parable then contradict the truth that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance, that being justified by faith we have peace, and stand in grace, that once in Christ, we are in Christ forever? Take again the parable of the servants, and the picture given of the unprofitable servant who brought the one talent hid in a napkin. What is the truth taught here, but that most solemn one, that there is a semblance of conversion, of faith, of preaching, of works, in which there is no truth, substance, and life; that there is a counterfeit of conversion and renovation; that many profess and think they have been pardoned and accepted, of whom yet Jesus says, "I know you not"? The Lord Jesus represents this in a history. The question is not, Has this servant (who afterwards is manifested to have been unprofitable) received true grace? But the conduct of one, who appeared and professed to be a servant of Christ, is described, and the result is declared for our instruction and warning. Our election of God is a secret, and to make our election sure is the constant desire, aim, and prayer of the godly. The Lord’s people are known only unto Him; there is no outward, unmistakable sign or seal given to any individual or to any community, whereby they stand out as the chosen saints of God, who shall be with Him in glory everlasting. Tares are among the wheat. Think of the twelve apostles, chosen and called by the Lord Himself. What higher position could be assigned to men? What greater dignity could be bestowed, or what surer indication given of divine favour and of future glory? And when Jesus said to the twelve, "Ye shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the tribes of Israel," did it not seem as if the throne had been already prepared for Judas

Iscariot? And so it must have appeared from our human point of view to the twelve disciples, and to him also who afterwards betrayed the Lord. Yet the divine Master, while He thus spake, warned all the apostles, (and it is beautiful to hear them ask, in true humility, "Lord, is it I?") and with faithfulness and solemnity He warned Judas especially. Every individual must see to it that he builds upon a sure foundation, that he possesses not merely the form, but the power of godliness. The whole Church of God, as an actual, outward, and visible community, even the innermost circle of apostles, and still more the innermost sanctuary - the heart of the chosen believer - must be constantly kept in the attitude of humble watchfulness; and we must continually remember that faith is in life, that there is a necessary connection between self-denial, obedience, stedlastness to the end, and the final manifestation of the elect of God, chosen from all eternity in Christ Jesus to be His for evermore. "He that endureth to the end shall be saved."*(*The most popular and graphic illustration of these remarks is BUNVAN'SPilgrim's Progress, in which we see that Christian meets many, who, though apparently they have left the city of Destruction, and are on their way to the heavenly Jerusalem, yet have not the love of God in them, and never reach the pearly gates.)

Yet, dear friends, all these warnings and exhortations do not for a single instant militate against the truth of electing love and the grace of God sustaining the believer unto the end. There is a higher region of truth and of doctrine revealed unto us in Scripture. If we look at the disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ from the earthly, or time-point of view, as I have said already, then all these exhortations are in full force, and who can doubt their necessity? The Lord Jesus said, "If the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!" He warned us that if the salt lose its savour it is good for nothing, but must be cast out and trodden under foot. And did it not happen that whole congregations, whole churches, whole regions, who had the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ, but who through unfaithfulness lapsed, have become entirely forsaken by the light and by the grace of God? Thus we read warnings in the seven epistles which Jesus sent from heaven. He threatens that the candle stick shall be removed, and the candlestick was removed, and many of those churches in the East lost their savour, and became almost worse than the people that were around them. The condition of churches who once possessed the knowledge of God became so low - Christians, so-called, fell into such superstition, deadness, and idolatrous practices, that even Mahometanism, notwithstanding its imposture, and with all its grievous errors, was to a certain extent an improvement on the fearful hypocrisy and ungodliness of those who were called by the holy name of Messiah. But let us consider now the other and the higher aspect of truth. The children of God are born again of incorruptible seed, and they can never die. They that believe in Jesus, who really, and not in word only, trust in the Saviour, are born of God, and they cannot sin, because the seed of God abideth in them. They who belong to the flock of Christ can never perish. Have you noticed the use of the word "sheep" in Scripture? We read of true disciples and of false disciples, of wise virgins and of foolish virgins, of faithful stewards and of unfaithful stewards; but we never read of sheep in any other sense than as the elect who are saved with an everlasting salvation. "For my sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me: and I give unto them eternal life; and they shall never perish, and none shall pluck them out of my hand. My Father, who gave them me, is greater than all." The sheep of the Lord Jesus Christ are saved by the blood of Jesus, chosen by the Father from all eternity, and quickened by the Holy Ghost; in vital union with Him who is the resurrection and the life, they shall receive that blessedness which is eternal and full of glory. In like manner, the Lord Jesus Christ says, that in the latter days there shall be many false Christs, many false teachers, so that they shall lead astray many, and, "if it

were possible," even the elect. What is the meaning of that "if it were possible"? The meaning of it is simply, that it is not possible; that the elect of God are perfectly safe; that if it were not for the power of God that keeps them, the sophistry and the fascination of false teachers would certainly lead them astray; but because God holds them, and Jesus prays for them, and the Holy Ghost seals them, therefore they cannot fall away.

These abundant assurances of the word of God are illustrated by every aspect of the work of salvation, by the election of the Father, by the sacrifice of the Son, and by the work of the Holy Ghost. They are confirmed by our own experience; for every Christian can sing:

"Twas thy love, O God, that knew us Earth’s foundation long before; That same love to Jesus drew us, By its sweet constraining power, And will keep us Safely, now and evermore."

While we have these abundant assurances of the position of safety that all the chosen of God have in Christ Jesus, it is by these very warnings and exhortations that we are kept humble, vigilant, clinging unto Jesus.*(*Thus in a large crowd a father might exhort his child to keep close to his side, and not to lose hold of his hand, representing how helpless and perilous the child’s condition would be if left to himself. While the father’s love is ever watchful, the child’s attitude ought to be obedient and humble, yet confiding dependence on his care and affection.) But the apostle hastens to comfort and en courage, lest the Hebrews should be overwhelmed with fear and sorrow, or lest they should think that their condition was regarded by him as hope less. The affection of the writer is now eager to inspire hope, and to draw them with the cords of love. The word "beloved" is introduced here most appositely, a term of endearment which occurs frequently in other epistles, but only once in ours; not that the apostle was not filled with true and fervent love to the Hebrew Christians, but that he felt obliged to restrain as it were his feeling by reason of their prejudices against him. But here the expression bursts forth, as in a moment of great danger or of anxious suspense the heart will speak out in tender language. He assures them that, although he thus speaks, he is persuaded better things concerning them, and things which are connected with, which grasp and accompany, salvation. This thought is eminently Pauline, and a comment on the words, Love thinketh no evil, and hopeth all things. So he says to the Romans, "I myself am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye are full of goodness" (Romans 15:14); and to the Philippians, "Being confident of this very thing, that He which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ: even as it is meet for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart." The things which accompany salvation, or are linked to it, are humility, faith, patience, diligence, prayer, stedfastness. His confidence is, that as true children of God they will persevere unto the end. For he recalls the days of their first faith and love, when they willingly suffered for Christ’s sake, and when they ministered unto the saints. God also remembers it; and as in His grace He has connected reward with our good works, wrought by faith in Jesus, so it would be unrighteous in Him to forget what they had done and suffered for the gospel. He will reward them, and what better, higher, and sweeter reward can God give us than to keep us faithful, to sustain us to the end, to shed abroad His love in our hearts; for God Himself is our sure portion, and our exceeding great reward.

Having this encouragement and hope, his heart’s desire is that every one of them should show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. He reminds them of their father Abraham. In faith and patience he continued stedfast, though his hope was not accomplished.

How long had Abraham to wait for the fulfillment of the promise! How severely was his faith tested! If the Hebrews were sorely tried, if they felt it a great hardship to be excluded from the temple, to be regarded as strangers from the common wealth of Israel; if they felt it difficult to look by faith unto Jesus and unto His return, waiting for the possession of the promised inheritance, let them remember the patriarchs, who likewise lived by faith, who not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were persuaded of their substance and certainty, and embraced them; who made pilgrimage their willing choice, and, though dwelling in tents in a land which was not theirs, rejoiced in hope of the glory of God.

Abraham believed the word of God. He hoped against hope. He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief, but was strong in faith, giving glory to God. The birth of Isaac fulfilled his hope, but did not terminate the trial and conflict of faith. But when the decisive trial was past, and Abraham by faith had offered up Isaac, then God gave unto him the reward in a final confirmation of the promise by His oath. The promise which was thus renewed and confirmed to Abraham, after the patience and wonderful endurance of faith, was most comprehensive and emphatic: "Blessing I will bless thee . . . and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." The words "blessing I will bless thee," express that this blessing is not an outward and transient act of God, but the manifestation of His cherished purpose and of His inmost love. It expresses the truth which runs through the whole Scripture that God has chosen His people, that His delight is in them, and that He Himself is their glory and blessedness. And knowing our weakness to grasp such infinite blessings and to rely on promises so exceeding great, knowing our difficulties and temptations, God confirmed the word with an oath. Among men an oath is an end of all strife. It is the ultimate and highest confirmation of statement and promise. God in His wonderful condescension and considerate remembrance of our weak hearts, which are slow to believe the exceeding riches of His grace, confirms the promise with an oath, and since there is none greater than Himself, the Lord by an oath mediated (■μεσ■τευσεν ■ρκ■) between Himself and the heirs of promise.

Jesus is the Mediator, the seal as well as the fulfillment of God’s promise. He is as it were the Oath of God. "Verily, verily, I say unto you" is the majestic commencement of the Saviour’s declarations and blessings. In Him all the promises of God are yea and Amen; in Him all covenant blessings are made sure. How much more abundant ought the faith of those to be, who in the resurrection of Jesus and in His exaltation behold the confirmation of God’s counsel. Abraham possessed the promise, and in the oath of God the assurance of the immutability of His counsel. We possess a more abundant confirmation in fuller manifestation of the oath. The eternal blessings and the future glory of the covenant are sealed to all who believe by the resurrection of Jesus, by the outpouring and indwelling of the Holy Ghost, by Baptism and by the Lord’s Supper. So abundant is the encouragement which God gives to all faithful though tried disciples. The apostle therefore expresses his eager desire that every* member of the congregation show the same diligence and zeal in regard to the full assurance of hope. In this chapter his object is to rouse the lukewarm and inert, to lift them out of their apathy and gloom, and to raise them to the sunny and joyous height of faith and hope. Assurance, or fullness of hope (Comp. Colossians 2:2; 1 Thessalonians 1:5; Hebrews 10:22), means a living, constant, and firm expectation of the coming of our Lord Jesus, who will give rest and glory unto all who wait for Him. We rejoice in hope of the glory of God. By hope we anticipate the future blessedness, and thus live in the power of heavenly realities, influenced by the promised reward. Thus the apostle, who so clearly teaches us that we have

been saved by grace through faith, also teaches that we are saved by hope; we wait for the adoption that is the redemption of the body. In this patient waiting we are the followers of the Old Testament saints. They also, from Abraham, to whom God confirmed the promise by oath, looked unto the same advent of Messiah which we are awaiting. The fathers who pertained specially to the Hebrews (Rom. 9), cherished the same hope, which was more fully revealed by the gospel, and which therefore we should hold fast with greater steadfastness and joy. (*Hebrews 4:1; Hebrews 7:11;Colossians 1:28) The severe rebuke of the apostle thus ends in words of strong encouragement. Fullness of hope is to characterize the believer. In like manner, Scripture speaks of the assurance or fullness of faith. The kingdom of God is not in word, but in power. To say that we are sure of our salvation, to force ourselves as it were into expressions of certainty and peace, without possessing that inward and true calmness which flows from communion with God, is of no avail. It is dangerous to anticipate by imagination an experience which we have not reached, and to adopt the expression of feelings which we covet, but do not actually possess. It is unwise of teachers to urge people to use words of assurance and triumph. The true assurance of faith is given unto those who in humility look unto Jesus; for assurance of faith means not a peculiar kind of faith, but simply faith in full, healthy, vigorous exercise* - the singleness and sincerity of trust which looks only to the promise, which leans only on the perfection of the Saviour's grace. To look unto Jesus only, to see Him as our light and life, our righteousness and strength, is the fullness of faith; and to wait for the fulfillment of the promises at the coming of our Lord Jesus, is the fullness of hope. (*πλη■οφ■■ια π■στεως- "In the full sail of faith, bearing right on with the wind, all canvass up." - J. DUNCAN.)

We wait for the Son of God from heaven; and in the fact that the Son of God is in heaven we possess the substance as well as the pledge of our future inheritance. Jesus Himself is our hope. The soul is like a ship, tossed to and fro by the tumultuous waves of the sea, exposed to the temptations of Satan, the afflictions and sufferings of this present life, the difficulties and dangers of our earthly course, to doubts within and storms without. But we have an anchor, even hope; and this anchor is fixed, not in the depth below, but in the height above, even in the heavenly sanctuary, the everlasting and immovable throne of the Most High. Where but in heaven, in eternity, in that which is infinite, can we find rest, can we find the object of faith, love, and hope? Only He who from everlasting to everlasting is God, can be the dwelling-place of His people in all generations; only God the Father in Christ Jesus can be the object of our faith, our soul's trust and stay; only infinite love can kindle in us love, and be the love of our love. Thus only God Himself is our hope. And as God in Christ is the sinner's faith and love, so it is the Lord Jesus, once crucified and now enthroned, who is our hope; and while earthly joys and encouragements vary and vanish, the Spirit commands the troubled and disquieted soul to hope in God.1 (Ps. 43) And this suggests to the apostle another illustration,2 For when the mind beholds vividly spiritual truths, when the heart is filled with the fervid vision of heavenly realities, the fullness of glorious blessings can only be expressed by combining the scattered and imperfect rays in which, through symbols, the light shines unto us. The believer on earth is, as it were, in the outer court of the Tabernacle. In the holy of holies is Christ the Lord. The veil that separated the holy place from the most holy was the body of Christ. When He died the veil was rent, sin was put away, transgression was finished, the curse was removed, Satan and death were conquered, and an everlasting righteousness was brought in. We who believe in Jesus, by faith and prayer enter now into that which is within the veil; we who trust in Jesus, who died for us, are now, as it were, on the other side of the cross. Sin,

condemnation, death, have been put away, and within the veil is the region of resurrection life, peace and glory, the eternal election, love, and favour of God. It is only through the death of the Lord, through the rent veil of His flesh, that we are saved; but having been reconciled to God by the death of His Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. "Within the veil, Jesus, in the prayer which He offered before His death unto the Father, reveals unto us this highest region when He says, "I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." The eternal and infinite love of the Father, who has loved us as He loved Jesus (John 17:23), this is "within the veil." This anchor is sure, it never yields even to the strongest pressure; it is steadfast, it never moves from its place, it never varies with the changing condition of our feelings. Many are they that rise up against us, and often are our foes increased; but when hope enters into that within the veil, we can say, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth. Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." (1Anchor is never mentioned in the Old Testament, either in the literal or figurative sense; in the New Testament only here, and in its literal sense,Acts 27:29-30; Acts 27:40. It occurs as the emblem of hope in Greek and Roman authors.)

(2Dr. Brown remarks: "Two images beautifully combined: I. Thesoulistheship; theworld, thesea, thebliss beyondthe world (ch. 11:13),the distant coast; thehoperesting on faith, theanchorwhich prevents the vessel being tossed to and fro (Ephesians 4:14);the encouraging consolationthrough thepromiseandoathof God, the cable connecting the ship and anchor. II. The world is the fore-court; heaven, the holy of holies; Christ, the High Priest going before us, so as to enable us, after Him and through Him, to enter within the veil (Leviticus 16:2; Leviticus 16:12; Leviticus 16:15;Numbers 18:7; cf. below,Hebrews 9:3; Hebrews 9:12; Hebrews 10:19-20)." Estius explains, "As the anchor does not stay in the waters, but enters the ground hidden beneath the waters, and fastens itself in it, so hope, our anchor of the soul, is not satisfied with merely coming to the vestibule;i.e. is not content with merely earthly and visible goods, but penetrates even to those which are within the veil; viz., to the holy of holies, where it lays hold on God Himself, and heavenly goods, and fastens on them. Hope, entering within heaven, hath made us already to be in the things promised to us, even whilst we are still below, and have not yet received them; such strength hope has, as to make those that are earthly to become heavenly." THEOPHYL.)

Jesus Himself is our hope; for He (and not merely His work and death) is for us entered, the forerunner. And by this thought and expression the apostle returns to the theme of the epistle, which he never forgets; viz., the Melchizedek Priesthood of the Lord Jesus. Aaron went into the holy of holies only once a year, and then it was not to abide there. Moreover, only the high priest was allowed to enter; and not even the priests, still less the people, were permitted to follow him. But here is one, Jesus (for the apostle dwells emphatically on the human nature of our Lord), the Man who is God's equal, and who died on the cross, who enters the holy of holies, to abide there in royal dignity, and to prepare a place for us - the Forerunner, by whom all believers are brought into the very presence of God. He is therefore a priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek, the eternal High Priest, in whom is perfect mediation.

Let faith only behold Jesus on the right hand of God, let hope only enter as an anchor into that within the veil, the eternal Father-love in the glorified Son who died for us, and we have reached perfection. Amid all dangers and temptations, amid all struggles and conflicts, though sin is still

present with us, though we have no confidence in the flesh, and with increasing sorrow and contrition judge ourselves, we are persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus. We are in Christ; "old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new." Christ is in heaven, and His prayer is, "Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am."

Read again this solemn and severe chapter, and say, "Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head." rill God’s words are in love, the thoughts of His heart are peace. Blessed are they who listen to the voice of heavenly wisdom, who love instruction, and turn not from correction; for the bitter arrows of reproof are sent by the sweet hand of a Father, and the earnest words of warning come from the home of everlasting truth and peace. There is a sweetness which is not wholesome, and a calmness which is treacherous; there is the voice of the flattering woman, there are the enchanting words of a spurious gospel, which bids us not go outside the camp bearing the reproach with Jesus, which tells us not of our heavenly citizenship, and of our having been crucified by the cross of Christ to the world. But let us who are risen with Christ seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God. Faith and hope rejoice; for of God is our righteousness and our glory, even Christ.

14 - Hebrews 7:1-5

CHAPTER X I V.

MELCHIZEDEK A TYPE; AND THE CHARACTER OF THE INSPIRED SCRIPTURE.

Hebrews 7:1-5. THE apostle now enters upon the main argument of the epistle. The High Priestly dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ, upon which He entered after His death and ascension, is infinitely higher than that of Aaron; and as the Levitical priesthood was imperfect and only the shadow and type of the substance, so the Lord is the true Priest of the heavenly and eternal sanctuary, (Hebrews 7:1-9; Hebrews 7:18.)

We are first reminded of the absolute perfection of the High Priest Himself, and for this purpose Christ is compared with Melchizedek and contrasted with Aaron. The incident recorded in the book of Genesis is in itself very remarkable and instructive. But the comment which David five centuries after gives in the psalm, of which the Lord Himself testifies that in it David spoke by the Spirit, and the exposition of the psalm which after a thousand years is given here, unfold unto us depths which our own investigation, be it ever so minute and careful, would never have brought to light. May not, therefore, this exposition of Scripture by Scripture be useful to us in giving us a fuller and deeper view of the character of the history of Israel, and of the record of this supernatural history? The victory which Abram the servant and friend of God had gained over the kings was a remarkable and significant event. It was before Isaac was born and the sign of the covenant was given unto our father, whose faith was counted to him for righteousness. Obedient to the call of the God of glory, Abram left his father’s house and country. He believed in God and in the promise which God gave unto him to make him a great nation, and to bless all the families of the earth in his seed. The character of Abram appears from the beginning one of singular beauty and greatness. The sincerity as well as the strength of his faith manifested itself in sacrifice and self-denying obedience. The treasure which he had found in the love of God made him willing to be a stranger on earth. Seeking a better country, that is a heavenly, and believing Him faithful who promised, Abram left all and followed the Lord. Full of the generosity and the meekness of true love, he allows his nephew Lot to choose the land where he wished to dwell; and after Lot, who had chosen what appeared good and fertile, had separated from him, the Lord renewed and confirmed the promise to Abram, giving unto him the length and breadth of the land which he should after wards receive for an inheritance, and in the plain of Mamre the God-fearing man built an altar unto Jehovah. Love is always the companion of faith, and self-denial the daughter of love. And God always sustains and rewards those who for His sake love and serve the brethren. Lot’s righteous soul was vexed with the iniquity of the people among whom he dwelt, and the place chosen for its prosperity soon proves a place of trial and danger. When Abram heard that Lot had been taken captive, with that love which, forgetting injuries and remembering kindness, is eager to help the needy, he armed his trained servants, and with a small band of three hundred and eighteen men, who were doubtless filled with the same spirit of faith as himself, and united with him in the bond of affection, he completely conquered the kings, and regained the captives, and all

the goods which had been taken. While no doubt love to his kinsman, unclouded by any reminiscence of his somewhat selfish conduct, was his chief motive, he was actuated by the justice of the cause, and he showed the purity and disinterested motive of his enterprise by his refusal to receive any reward from the liberated kings; and in this he appealed unto the Lord, the most high God, the possessor of heaven and earth; as if the servant of such a Master must needs represent in all things the honour and dignity of the almighty and bountiful Lord. So great and lovely was our father Abraham from the very first days of his faith, so simple and earnest was his trust in God, implicitly believing and immediately obeying the call from above; so meek and lowly, and yet so heroic, valiant and courageous; so affectionate and tender hearted towards his kinsmen, so generous and royal towards all men. Blessed is the memory of the just; their very name is full of fragrance, and we delight to recall the features of their spiritual countenance.

Returning from the victory, he was met by Melchizedek, king of Salem. Let us view this incident first in the light of the statement in Genesis. Let us limit ourselves to the facts there stated by the historian. This king, whose name was King of Righteousness, was also a priest of the most high God. He lived at Salem; he brought forth bread and wine; and he blessed Abram, and said, "Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth: and blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand." And Abram gave him tithes of all. This priestly king was a worshipper of the true God. Idolatry was then predominant. Even Abram’s father was a worshipper of idols; yet, as this instance shows, the primeval revelation was not entirely forgotten, and there were still cities and tribes in which God was adored and served. Melchizedek calls God the most high God. This expression implies that he knew and worshipped the only true and living God, who is above all. Though there are many that are called gods and lords, there is only one God, high above all gods. The expression also means that God is above creation, high above heaven and earth; the Lord whose throne and sanctuary are now no longer on earth, as they were once at the entrance of the garden of Eden, but high above.

He was king and priest, and, it seems to me, because of the priesthood, a king. It was his peculiar position in relation to God which invested him with authority over men. Because he knew God, and in the name of God pronounced blessings, was he king, and, as his name expresses it, the prophet and dispenser of righteousness. Salem, or peace, was the name of the city where he reigned and exercised his priesthood. This venerable man, in whom we behold as it were the glorious sunset of the primeval dispensation, met Abram and brought unto him bread and wine, evidently as symbols of the gifts of God in creation, to sustain and gladden fallen man; and he blessed Abram, as belonging by faith to the same God; and he blessed God, as having given through Abram and his victory a new manifestation of Himself. Abram received the blessing, and gave tithes of all unto him, thereby recognizing Melchizedek’s superiority.

What did Melchizedek see in Abram? Evidently the future - a new dispensation of divine grace and truth. What did Abram see in Melchizedek? The past, in its universal character embracing all tribes and families of the earth; in its character of simplicity and fullness, the blessing of God in the reign of righteousness, priestly intercession, and peace - type of the ultimate future, which shall terminate the period of Israel and the church. Melchizedek is thus greater than Abram, because the past dispensation, which he represents, is a type of that future dispensation of which the Abrahamic is only preparatory. As the last chapters of the Apocalypse correspond with the first chapters of Genesis, as the Garden of Eden was a type and earnest of the ultimate reign of

blessedness, which the last pages of the book of Revelation describe, so the Melchizedek reign and priesthood prefigure the glory of the Christocracy, which we await, and which is the consummation of the period commencing with Abram, and including the history of Israel and the times of the Gentiles. In the bread and wine Abram saw the pledge of God's abundant grace. After the expulsion from Paradise, and the judgment of the flood, bread and wine are the gifts by which man's life is nourished and invigorated, and which, though, like all good gifts, coming primarily from God, are yet obtained through processes symbolic of suffering.

Abraham is blessed of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth. The expression "possessor" is significant. The patriarch "possessed" nothing actually; but by faith he possessed all things promised unto him. Abraham had to buy even the burying-place for Sarah of the sons of Ephron. But He in whom he trusted was the possessor of heaven and earth, and the promised inheritance was therefore sure. Abraham, like all the faithful, was blessed of God. In Him he was rich; by Him he was strong and victorious. All things are ours, if we are God's - if His blessing rests on us.

Such are the main features of this remarkable incident, as recorded in the Book of Genesis, and viewed apart from the inspired exposition of its deeper meaning, as given in subsequent portions of Scripture. Before entering on the consideration of the Davidic and Pauline exposition, it may be useful to recall the peculiar character of the history and of the record of revelation.

We must always view Scripture in its connection with Israel and with Christ. The Lord Jesus is of Israel, and therefore to Abraham's seed were given the oracles of God. While we believe that God is not the God of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles, that in all history His wisdom, power, and grace are to be recognized, and that all history is typical, illustrating spiritual principles, a mirror of things invisible and future, we believe that the history of Israel is in a special sense miraculous and supernatural and in immediate connection with the great plan of redemption. Israel is the nation; chosen for the sake of all nations, separated unto God, and for the good of the whole world, that through them the glory and salvation of God might be made manifest. God has connected from all eternity, and in a necessary and inseparable manner, the Word, who is the brightness of His glory, and the express image of His person; Israel, His chosen nation; the oracles or Scripture; and Jesus, the Son of God and man. As the Word was with God, and the centre of the divine counsel, as the Word became the centre and medium of creation, so the Word was set apart to be the centre of redemption, and the centre of the future glory and inheritance. This great plan of God, while it had the Son of God for its centre, had Israel, as it were, for its immediate and primary circumference. God selected Israel as the garden in which the blessed Branch should appear. From all nations he separated Israel, that out of them should come the Redeemer and Saviour of mankind. And as Israel was chosen in Christ, and for Christ's sake, so their whole history and education were according to that great object. The Scripture, which is the testimony of God's dealings in mercy as Jehovah, could therefore not originate anywhere else than among the Jews. It was according to the divine plan that Jesus should be of Israel, and likewise the Scripture must needs be Jewish. Israel's history is therefore central in importance and symbolical in character. It is for the sake of the Redeemer, chosen in the counsel of God, that fallen and sinful humanity is allowed to continue; it is for the sake of the final restoration that there is a history of nations: in Israel's Messiah shall all nations of the earth be blessed. And since God chose Israel, and revealed Himself and His grace unto them in word, act, and type, it cannot be otherwise than that

the whole history of this nation should be a grand series of symbols of spiritual and eternal truths, and that the Scriptures recording the history should possess a vitality and depth of meaning which can never be exhausted. The history of the chosen people of redemption was supernatural, and all events and institutions connected with it under the immediate guidance of God and under the immediate influence of the Holy Ghost. The supernatural character of Israel's history must be obvious to everyone who believes the miraculous birth of the Lord Jesus. As He was conceived of the Holy Ghost, and born of the God-chosen Virgin Mary, so His birth was the last link of a chain, the consummation of a long series of miraculous revelations and acts of the Redeemer-God. The offspring of David is also the root of David; the seed of Abraham is before Abraham was; and the whole history of Israel is the going forth of Him who is eternal.

Thus we understand the great and outstanding events of this history, such as the birth of Isaac, the sufferings and exaltation of Joseph, the Exodus, the fall of Jericho, the reign of David. Thus we understand the types, the sacrifices and festivals. Thus we perceive that the tabernacle was not framed by human wisdom, but that the Holy Ghost symbolized through this mysterious sanctuary the eternal truth as it is in Jesus. Nor can we be astonished that this supernatural, symbolic, and eternal character of Israel's history should manifest itself not merely in central events and persons, but that it should pervade the whole, and enter into every detail. The very names Abraham, Joshua, David, the very sequence of events and promises, the colours and numbers in the arrangements of the tabernacle, were ordered of God, and are full of deep meaning. And as the history of Israel by reason of its central character is symbolic, mirroring the experience of the individual soul and of the congregation in every possible circumstance, in patriarchal infancy, in the house of bondage, in the wilderness journey, in Canaan's warfare and temptation, in Davidic and Solomonic rule, in Babylonian exile, so is it also typical and prophetic, and stands related to that ultimate development of the divine kingdom, towards which tend all God's dealings, and of which all the prophets of the eternal witnessed from the beginning. The whole history of Israel is a golden history, if we may so - say a Holy Ghost history. It differs from every other history. This nation God formed for Himself; and in all the events, institutions, and great men of this people God in a special manner revealed Himself and the truths of His kingdom. And this because the eternal Word, the Saviour of sinners, the King of the Jews, the Head of the Church, the Heir of all things, who is the upholder and end of all ages, Jesus Himself, is organically and inseparably connected with this chosen nation; He is of the seed of David, of the seed of Abraham.

Now such being the character of the history, was the record of this history (or the Scripture) the work of man, depending on the capacity and grasp of human intellect, the faithfulness of human memory, on man's wisdom and design? Is not the casket also golden which contains the in valuable jewel? If the spirit and substance were God-given, has He not also clothed it with a body prepared and perfected by His own omnipotent and all-wise hand? We believe that Scripture is given by inspiration of God. We do not believe it possible that this book, world-wide and eternal in its character, could have been written by holy men, unless they were moved by the Spirit, who searcheth the deep things of God, and guided by Him who was, and is, and is to come. We believe Scripture to be inspired. And our faith in the inspiration of Scripture has its basis and root in our faith in God Himself. It is because we have experienced the divine power of the truth Scripture contains, and because in the reading of Scripture we have heard the voice of God; it is because God speaks to us in this written word that we believe it is God's. This faith is a conviction, an

inward beholding and seeing, a knowledge which far transcends in light and strength, in certainty and firmness, all human evidence and argument. We cannot communicate this faith to our neighbour; for faith is the gift of God, and "they shall be all (and each) taught of God;" we can only testify of it and give a reason, a connected statement of the knowledge that is in us. But on no lower ground can we build our assertion, that Scripture is God-inspired; not on the testimony of the Church, not on the evidences (valuable as they are) of the historic faith fullness of the record, the fulfillment of prophecy, the effects of the sublime teaching on human minds, etc. The inspiration of Scripture is an object of faith; and faith can only rest on the word of God, the testimony of the Spirit to the soul. When we are asked: Is this inspiration verbal? or does it refer only to the divinely - revealed truths and promises? it is not necessary focus to enter into distinctions which Scripture itself does not make. We need no adjective to qualify the substantive, inspiration. It is impossible for us to form a theory of inspiration. Even of that influence of the Spirit of which we possess personal experience in our own conversion and daily renewal, it would be impossible for us to frame a theory; for the work of the Spirit is mysterious. We cannot trace the beginning or end of His path (John 3:8); His "intercession is with groanings which cannot be uttered" (Romans 8:26); we cannot explain His indwelling in the heart; and as His love is infinitely tender, entering into our deepest and most individual peculiarity and need, so is it impossible for us to analyze His constant vivifying influence, guidance, and rule. If it is thus with the work of the Spirit, of which we have experience, why should we attempt to form a theory of inspiration of which none of us have experience? Most probably the prophets themselves could not explain and analyze the operation of the holy and infinite Spirit upon and within their spirits, and could give no other reply to our enquiry than the statement which Scripture contains: the Spirit of the Lord came upon them; they spake not of themselves, but as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. The inseparable connection between thought and word, between the substance and spirit and the form and expression, is obvious. The Holy Spirit, who reveals truth and spiritual reality to holy men, moves them also in speaking; influencing also the words, so that they are correct and adequate expressions: the spoken and written word is an adequate manifestation of the word* inwardly revealed. To separate thought and word, spirit and embodiment, matter and manner, is at all times a very difficult and perilous thing; for not merely is the boundary line between the idea and the expression almost impossible to find, but the Spirit who animates the body which it has formed can only be retained by us in the word. Hence, as Martin Luther said against the rationalists of his day, "Christ did not say of His Spirit, but of His words, they are spirit and life." Scripture is God’s word; it is His gift, and a revelation of Himself. It is God’s word, the revelation of eternal and spiritual truth in a written record. (*The Hebrew ãáø means thing and word. "The word of God is more exact than is generally thought in its expressions; because the expression has its origin in the thing itself.") The language of Scripture accordingly is perfectly unique; it possesses an indescribable something which is not found in any (merely) human writings; the Spirit, who seeth all things in their depth and reality, and who knoweth the end from the beginning, speaks here in a way so profound and comprehensive, that the wisdom and experience of all ages cannot exhaust His meaning, and yet with such simplicity and definiteness, that all childlike hearts find guidance and consolation in their daily path of duty and trial. The style of Scripture betokens its inspiration. Here is a depth, a solemnity, a heart-winning sweetness and familiarity, which we meet nowhere else. Here is the voice of One who speaketh with authority, and communicates to us out of an inexhaustible fullness what is profitable for us in our present condition. The Scripture is to other books as Nature is to the

works of art, as the ocean is to a lake; the Scripture sees all things from a great height, and breathes the atmosphere of eternity. In the best human books, in the loftiest poetry, in the most fervent and devout utterances of man, there is always something unreal, artificial, self-conscious; something morbid and necessarily ephemeral. Scripture is the only true, real, eternal book. The apostles and the Lord Himself teach us that not merely was Israel's history, if we may so say, inspired, under the special influence of God; but they teach us also that the record of this history is inspired, that the Scripture which narrates God's dealings with Israel is also under the special and infallible guidance of the Holy Ghost. It must be evident, from the preaching of the apostles to Jews and Gentiles, from the manner in which they decide difficult questions of doctrine and practice, from the epistles they addressed to the churches, that they believed Scripture inspired in the fullest sense, and regarded the men by whom the word was written as the instruments, but the Lord, and more especially the Holy Ghost, as the true author of the whole organism of the Jewish record.

It appears from this very chapter (and from the whole epistle) that its author regarded the Scripture as inspired in the most absolute sense of the word; for his whole argument here is based upon the manner in which the Holy Ghost narrated the incident of Melchizedek's appearing and blessing. Because there is no statement given of his descent, of his beginning and end, the apostle sees in this omission the indication of a very important and fundamental truth. Genesis is the book of genealogies. Most carefully and minutely the descent of men is traced; their age is stated, and the fact of their death chronicled. In a human work no further inference could be drawn from an omission of this kind. It is otherwise, however, in Scripture. As in music, not only the notes, but also the pauses are according to the plan and mind of the composer, and instinct with the life and spirit which breathe through the whole; so the very omissions of Scripture are not the result of chance, or of the accidental ignorance of the writer, but according to and in harmony with the wisdom of the eternal Spirit, who is the true author of the record. The apostle evidently thinks that the Holy Ghost teaches by not stating these points. In like manner he attaches importance to the names of Melchizedek and Salem. When he writes to the Galatians he bases a very important argument on the word seed - not many, but one - showing that Christ is the promised seed and heir. He represents Sara and Hagar as typical of the two covenants - of Jerusalem and of Sinai - gospel and law, liberty and bondage; and, in a manner quite analogous to our chapter, he points out that the promise given to Abraham four hundred years before the giving of the law could not be disannulled by it. He affirms that the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen by faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, "In thy seed shall all nations be blessed." And again, The Scripture hath concluded all under sin, that the promise of faith might be given to them that believe. He personifies the Scripture as omniscient, foreseeing all things, and speaking in harmony with the whole counsel of God. The apostolic "as it is written" is rooted in a very deep conviction of the divine perfection of the written Word. The whole Scripture is one organic structure; and in its minute and subsidiary portions, as well as in the more prominent and fundamental parts, the Scripture is inspired of God (θ■■πν■υστος): the infinite and eternal Spirit reveals through the Scripture the truths and realities of God's salvation.

Hence the names of persons and places, the omissions of circumstances, the use of the singular or plural number, the application of a title, - all things are under the control of the all-wise and gracious Spirit of God.*(*Compare Paul's commentary on the word "all" inPsalms 8:7, and the

important deductions from it inHebrews 2:8, and1 Corinthians 15:27; on the word "new," Jer. 31,Hebrews 8:13; the singular "seed,"Galatians 3:16. What a wonderful superstructure is built onPsalms 110:4! Each word is full of most important and blessed meaning. InPsalms 32:1-2, no mention is made of works; henceRomans 4:6. Many other instances might be quoted.)

I may also add a word on the manner of quotation. Scripture passages are quoted by the Lord in the gospels and by the apostles not always with verbal accuracy, giving an exact repetition of the expressions used by Moses or the prophets. This appears at first sight a difficulty, and not in harmony with the doctrine of inspiration. But on investigation it will be found to confirm this truth; for here also the Spirit is revealed as the Spirit of truth and liberty. The original meaning of the Spirit is developed with increasing clearness and fullness; the Lord and His apostles quote the Scripture according to the deepest and truest meaning of the inspired Word, and according to the new requirements of the dispensation and the condition of their hearers. The prophets themselves knew that their prophecy was above them; they therefore searched with diligent zeal what Messiah's Spirit which was in them did signify. In the fullness of the Spirit the Messiah Himself quotes Scripture; in the fullness of the Spirit, received on the day of Pentecost, the apostles quote and apply the Scripture to confirm and illustrate the truth as it is in Jesus, to guide and to exhort the church in her present course. This refers also to interpretation. The allegorical interpretation, if applied by man, is dangerous; because he may either be without the mind of Christ, and then he will certainly introduce thoughts contrary to and apart from Scripture, and his interpretation will not be the unfolding of the divine truth; or he may possess the Spirit, yet by reason of imperfection and sin fail to see the true and real meaning of the Word. But when the Lord Jesus and the inspired apostles interpret Scripture, it is as if the author of a book himself explains his true, real, and full meaning to those who have read it. It is authentic exposition of the original Word; an exposition which, on account of the further development of God's counsel, is more profound and luminous than could have been given at the time of its first utterance.

It seems as if in the outward form of Scripture, in the quotations and comments, there is such apparent imperfection in order that faith may be tested. Outwardly, there seems no difference between Paul's allegorizing and that of the Rabbis or of Philo. It was said of Jesus, "Is not this Jesus, the Son of Joseph, the carpenter?" So it may be thought that Scripture is merely human. The Word (that is Christ, and also the Scripture) came, as Luther says, "in unser armes Fleish und Blut" - in our poor flesh and blood.

Above all, remember that the Lord Jesus, our one and only Master, the Son of God, who is the Truth, honoured, confirmed, and fulfilled the Scripture, and led His apostles into a deeper, because more loving, reverence for the inspired word, and into the true and full understanding of its mysteries. Remember how Jesus referred to Scripture when He was teaching the people, or refuting gainsayers, or resisting and conquering Satan, or instructing and comforting His disciples. Remember how He appeals to Scripture as the ultimate judge, declaring as an axiom that the Scripture cannot be broken, and that not one jot or tittle of the law can pass away. Remember His questions: How does David in the Spirit call Him Lord? How readest thou? Have ye not read? Remember His references to the whole scope of prophetic teaching (it is written in the prophets, They shall be taught of God); to Moses, who wrote of Him; to the prophets and psalms; to the whole Scripture (the things written concerning me); and to single words and expressions, incidents and institutions, contained in the Scripture. Remember Christ's references to Scripture on the

cross, how the whole prophetic word passed before His mind; and in the conviction of His having fulfilled all that by the Holy Ghost was written concerning Him, after He had said, "I thirst," He uttered that great and blessed word, "It is finished." And alter His resurrection, appearing unto His chosen disciples and witnesses, He opened unto them the Scriptures, beginning with Moses, unfolding unto them His suffering, and giving and commanding them to preach, because they understood now the word. "Thus it is written, and thus it behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise from the dead the third day, and thus preach repentance and remission of sins in His name."

It is impossible to separate the Lord Jesus either from Israel or from the Scripture. Faith in Jesus, the true and real Jesus, who died and rose again according to Scripture, must lead to childlike and reverential faith in the Scripture as the word of God, inspired and perfect. On the testimony of the Lord Jesus and the apostles I receive the Scripture as God’s word. Like David, I pray that God may open mine eyes to see wonders hidden in God’s law, in the history and ordinances, recorded in the Scripture; like the psalmist, I view the history of Israel as a parable, a symbol of spiritual and eternal truth. (Psalms 119:18; Psalms 78:2, etc.) Not as a critic dare I approach this book as if it were an ordinary book, which I may hope to master and fathom. It is above me, and I cannot exhaust its fullness; it knows me, even the hidden things of the heart, and judges me, bringing me into contact with the all-seeing God. I enter with reverence into the temple of Scripture, which, from the height of God’s eternal counsel and out of the depth of God’s infinite love, beholds and comprehends all ages, and is sufficient for the guidance and perfecting of souls in all generations - praying with trustful hope that out of Christ’s fullness the Spirit will minister unto me also grace upon grace. But while I thus stand in awe, beholding the grandeur and infinite depth of the Scripture as one organic spirit-built temple, and the beauty, perfection, and exquisite skill which characterize the most minute portion of this structure, I feel at home and as in a peaceful and fragrant garden. For our admonition was the Scripture written; for us upon whom the ends of the world are come. Moses and the prophets minister unto us, to whom the fullness of salvation is revealed. Through comfort of the Scriptures we have hope. I am not paralyzed by the divine perfection and the infinite depth of the Word; for such is the love, such is the perfection of God, that even from a child I may know the Scriptures, and be made wise by them unto salvation. And while it may be given to me in some favoured moment to take a comprehensive view, and to behold somewhat of the length, and breadth, and height, and depth, I know that every word of God is pure, every name which He has revealed, every promise which He has given, every word He has uttered, is perfect; and in it He is a shield unto them that put their trust in Him. Thus I possess the whole in every little fragment; though weak, ignorant, and limited, I have perfect peace and the light of life. And often I find the truth of that saying, so characteristic of that great lover of the word,* "In Scripture every little daisy is a meadow." (*Luther) Is not this the experience of the Christian? We are at home in the Scriptures, because we have found the Messiah, of whom the Scriptures testify. Once we are in possession of this central truth, we see unity, order, light, and beauty throughout. Though many things seem dark, wonderful, and beyond our comprehension, it is the mystery of love. It does not alarm our heart, or contract our affection, joy, and courage. The whole Scripture is full of the goodness, the sweetness, and the beauty of the Lord. Yea, in one sense we know all things; for we have received the anointing of Christ; the Spirit Himself is our teacher and guide. Everywhere in Scripture we behold Jesus, the Lord; our great High Priest, enthroned in heaven; King of righteousness and Prince of peace, who brings unto us the blessing of God; who sustains our inner life, and who gladdens and strengthens our hearts by giving us continually

bread to eat and wine to drink. Do you know the Bread? He came down from heaven; He suffered and died; He was buried and rose again. This is the bread - the body that was broken, the flesh that He gave for the life of the world. Do you know the Wine? He is the true Vine, and the wine which He gives to us is the fruit of the suffering of bitter agony, when He was crushed under the weight of transgressions not His own; it is the blood which was shed for the remission of sins. Are you a child of Abraham? Is yours the righteousness which is of faith? Are you waiting for the inheritance? Then in the reading of Scripture Jesus will bless you, and give you the bread and wine which the world knoweth not, because it seeth no longer Him who is now in heaven.

15 - Hebrews 7:1-17

CHAPTER X V.

MELCHIZEDEK A TYPE.

Hebrews 7:1-17. THE High Priesthood upon which our Lord entered after His sufferings, death, and ascension (Hebrews 6:20), is infinitely higher than the Aaronic. It possesses perfection; it is heavenly and eternal. Hence it is impossible that it should be prefigured by the Aaronic priesthood;* and therefore the apostle illustrates it by the type of Melchizedek, in accordance with the interpretation given centuries before by David, when in the Spirit he declared the divine decree - "Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek." (*Christisat present a Priest after the order of Melchizedek, and not after the order of Aaron, though theexerciseof His priesthood at present is according to the type of Aaron, as within the veil on the great day of atonement.)

It was difficult, though absolutely necessary, to explain to the Hebrews the imperfect, shadowy, and temporary character of the Levitical priest hood, and to show unto them that with the change of priesthood there must needs be also a change of dispensation. The Aaronic priesthood and the Levitical dispensation were indeed of God, and possessed glory. And our Lord, who on the cross was the Sacrifice, and who by His own blood entered into the holy of holies, fulfilled all that was typified by these divine ordinances. Hence the apostle neither makes void the Aaronic institutions, nor does he depreciate their importance, value, and power. But Jesus, the Messiah, having come and fulfilled that which was written of Him, and being the substance of the shadow, there has begun now the exercise of a real, living, continuous, and perfect High Priesthood, of which a type is found in the pre- and super-Aaronic priesthood of Melchizedek. Jesus is in heaven, dispensing the blessings which He purchased with His blood, and in perfect mediation bringing us to God, and the favour and life of God to us. The argument of the apostle, deducing and illustrating the superiority of Christ’s priesthood over the Aaronic, from and by the relation of Melchizedek to the Levitical priesthood, is in some respects analogous to the argument of the apostle with regard to the law, and its parenthetical and inferior position, as compared with the gospel. You must have noticed the sluggish tendency in man which renders him unwilling, and to a certain extent unable, to understand quickly, and to accept readily any change and development in the manifestation of God’s purpose; so that when that which has been preparatory, and which from the very outset was given only for a time, and with indications of its imperfect and intermediate character, is removed, he feels, so to say, to a certain extent disappointed, and as if some injustice had been done unto him, or as if God was changeable, and the revelations of God not consistent. It was in this way that the Jews were shocked when the apostle Paul taught that it was not necessary for the Gentiles to observe the law; that for the new covenant church the law of Moses was no longer the rule and form of life. And therefore the apostle, in his epistle to the Galatians, tells them that the law was given four hundred years after the promise had been made unto Abraham, and that therefore there was no injustice, and no inconsistency, in the bringing in of a new dispensation, which was in fact only a return in a fuller and more perfect manner to that which was from the beginning in the mind

of God. There was in it nothing that was derogatory to the majesty and holiness of the law. The original promise which through Abraham was given both to Jews and Gentiles was brought prominently into the foreground, and the law set aside, which had come in as an intermediate dispensation, a schoolmaster to bring men unto Christ, a guardian to keep the appointed heir during the years of his minority. The twofold object of the law was now fulfilled. The law was to convince man of sin, and to declare God’s condemnation. Christ was made a curse for us; He is the end of the law unto righteousness. The law was also to teach us our deadness; for it could not give life; it could not minister the Spirit; but the Spirit of Christ, as the Spirit of the Son, is now sent into our hearts. Hence, the law being fulfilled, we enter fully and substantially into the covenant which was made before law.

It is in like manner that he argues in the epistle to the Romans with regard to our father Abraham. Abraham was justified by faith; he received the promises; the covenant was made with him. He believed God, and his faith was counted to him for righteousness. But when was this? Was it not before circumcision was instituted? And is it not clear from this that God may again return unto His original, primary, and more comprehensive idea, and bring in that righteousness which is by faith, irrespective of all ordinances and of all temporary and intermediate institutions? Thus in the present day some regard the doctrine of the ushering in of a new dispensation - the advent of the Lord Jesus Christ with His glorified Church, and His reign in the age to come, as something disturbing. They feel unwilling to enter as it were upon a new phase; it seems troublesome to have to understand and to comprehend new developments. Remember that God, who is the eternal, is the Lord of all times and of all dispensations. And although the ages change, His truth remains forever the same. Time only brings out more fully that eternal and immutable counsel which He purposed in Himself when He appointed Christ, the incarnate Son, to be Lord and Heir of all. And yet no portion of Scripture can ever become antiquated, losing its instructiveness, significance, and value. No period of the history of God’s people, no type, no institution, no event of any dispensation, can be forgotten; nothing that God has said, given, or done, will be lost. For the eternal Spirit, who saw the end from the beginning, hath so ordered it that the whole Scripture ministers unto all generations of His people, that as the fathers cannot be made perfect without the children, so the children who are privileged to see the better things provided for them by God are gathered unto the fathers, and blessed with the ancient household of faith; and when the purpose of God is at last fulfilled, then Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, kings and prophets, who saw the glory afar off, the church gathered since Pentecost, and called especially to know the fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, shall rejoice together and praise Jehovah, "Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and to-day, and forever." As there was diversity in the dispensations and the gifts, the service and the suffering, and yet one Lord, one Mediator, one Spirit, so will the glory also be manifold and yet one glory, even the glory of God and of the Lamb. The incident of the meeting of Melchizedek and Abraham which is mentioned in the book of Genesis belongs unto the history of God’s people, which, both in itself and in its record, is under the immediate guidance of God and of the Holy Ghost.

We have seen already what the meaning of the appearing of Melchizedek was unto Abraham himself - what is immediately implied in the historical record apart from its typical aspect. This Melchizedek, who was king and priest in one person, and the name of whose residence was Salem - that is, peace - who possessed the knowledge of God, as of the Lord Most High, who is

supreme above all kings and above all gods, who is high above all things that are created, came as the representative of the primeval dispensation, which is greater and more comprehensive than the dispensation that commenced with Abraham, and is therefore a type of that restoration of all things, of that universal reign of Truth and Love which shall commence with the appearing of our Lord Jesus Christ. He came as the representative of the first dispensation, and as the type of the ultimate dispensation, and he blessed Abraham, the father of Israel and of the faithful, in the name of God, bringing unto him in bread and wine the symbolic representation of all the blessings pertaining to a vigorous and joyous life which, according to the goodness of God, were in grace vouchsafed unto Adam's children, although they had forfeited life through their transgression. Abraham, the man whom God called His friend, who was chosen, honoured, and blessed of the Lord, acknowledges this royal priest as his superior; he receives his blessing, and he gives unto him tithes.*[*The only feature of the narrative which the apostle does not explain is that Melchizedek meets Abrahamafter his victory by faith. Here is a figure of the final blessing, the possession of the purchased inheritance, and the perfect enjoyment of communion with Christ. They who overcome shall inherit all things; they shall be met by the Lord, who said, "I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom." (CompareRevelation 2:17; Revelation 3:21;Luke 24:29.)] But now the apostle tells us that in this record we have to consider not merely that which is mentioned, but that which is not mentioned. Different speculations have been entertained in the church with regard to the actual historical person Melchizedek. The sole reason why I allude to it is to remind you how utterly useless these speculations are, and not merely useless, but entirely in contradiction to the scope of this very passage. Some have thought this Melchizedek was Shem. As far as chronology is concerned, there is nothing impossible in this hypothesis; for Shem lived not merely up to the days of Abraham, but even into a later period. Others have thought that this Melchizedek was a descendant of Japhet. Some again have supposed that he was an Amorite. 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 which the Holy Ghost does not wish us to know. Thus has it pleased God to leave this man that he should stand out in Scripture as a man without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days nor end of life; as a man having a priesthood inherent in himself, of whom we do not know the parentage, of whom we do not know the successor. It is equally obvious that this Melchizedek is not a theophany, an appearing of the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. For he was made like unto the Son of God; that is, he was made in the inspired record to be a similitude, or pattern, or illustration of the Son of God. In all the appearances of the Word of God or the Son of God, in all theophanies before the incarnation, there is something either in what the mysterious One says, promises, or does, or in the worship that is given unto Him, or in the names and attributes which are applied to Him, which shows most clearly and distinctly that He is the Lord Jehovah; whereas there is nothing of this kind in the record of Genesis; all we are told is, Melchizedek was one of those still left upon the 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 purposely has 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.*(*"We are not to know anything of the historical Melchizedek; for he is ordained of God for us ‘a wonderful man (Zechariah 3:8), as type and illustration of the One who was to come." -- STIER.)

(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 of 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 whatthe Scripture itself says concerning them.)

Now, in this Melchizeclek we see, as in a type foreshadowing, these things: In the first place the dignities and functions of priest and king combined in one person; in the second place, righteousness and peace joined together; in the third place, a priest who is greater than Abraham, and therefore above the Levitical priesthood, which, as Abraham’s descendants, are represented by him; in the fourth place, a priest who has neither father nor mother, without beginning of days, or end of life, who therefore has a priesthood inherent in himself, to which there can be no successor, a priesthood which is based upon an eternal or indissoluble life; and in the fifth place, this royal priesthood which, different from the priesthood of Aaron, is appointed and confirmed with the divine oath.

Looking upon Melchizedek simply in the way in which he is spoken of in the Scripture - not the historical individual Melchizedek, but the Melchizedek whom Scripture both by its statements and omissions makes a similitude of the Lord, an illustration of that fullness which is in Christ Jesus - we may hope in the light of the apostolic epistles and of the doctrine of the new covenant to see how beautifully the perfection of the heavenly priesthood of our blessed Lord is pre-figured in this eminent type.

1. What is meant by king? what by priest? What is the idea of kingship and of priesthood? For it is evident that in this world there are many kings and many priests who give us a false and, if not an erroneous, yet an inadequate idea of what God means by royalty and by priesthood. For the things and relations which are seen on earth, and which are imperfect and temporal, are according to realities which are in heaven, and which are perfect and eternal. Even in the case of the illustration of father and child, we must not transfer earthly things to heavenly things, but we must rather transfer heavenly things to earthly things. There is a true, eternal, and perfect fatherhood; and thus we must also learn from God’s word what is implied in kingship and in priesthood.

Now, the idea of kingship was to some extent announced in the creation of Adam, who was of God (Luke 3:38), and who was appointed lord and ruler over the earth, over the beasts of the field, and over the fowls of the air. (Comp. Ps. 8 and Daniel 2:37-38.) A king then is a man in the image of God, who represents upon earth God Himself, and unto whom, direct from God, without the intervention of any other, there is given power and dominion that he may rule according to the mind, according to the goodness and the wisdom of God. By priesthood is meant communion with God - that which brings unto man the love of God - that which brings unto God the worship and service of man. It need scarcely be added, that kingship and priesthood cannot exist without prophetship; for how can there be rule in the name of God, or how can there be a mediation of the

love of God to man, and of our worship and obedience to God, unless there be in the first place a manifestation of God Himself, a revelation of His character? Nay, as this very revelation of God is the basis, so is it the very essence and the very fruit of all kingship and priesthood; in which aspect the office of the prophet is the most comprehensive and ultimate of the three. These simple ideas combined amount to this - there is a mediation between God and man; this mediation is to bring unto us in the first place the knowledge of God (we require a prophet); in the second place the love and favour of God, so that we can have communion with Him (we need a priest); and in the third place the life and the power of God, so that we can serve, obey, and glorify Him (we require a king; in New Testament language a head, source of life). And this the Church of Christ has always taught; everything that Christ does as a Mediator is summed up in these three offices. He is prophet, priest, and king. There is no fourth; neither will any one of these, or two of these, suffice. These three, by a necessary, essential, and inherent unity, go together.

Moses, as we have seen, combined to a certain extent the three offices; hence as the mediator of the old covenant he is a figure of Jesus, the Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant. But in the history of Israel we nowhere see the royal and priestly dignity united; for, as the apostle reminds us, the priests were of the tribe of Levi; the kings were of the tribe of Judah. He who was a priest never could rule over Judah and Israel. He who was a king never could perform priestly functions in the sanctuary, still less go into the holy of holies. When king Uzziah, contrary to the ordinance of God, interfered with the prerogatives of the priesthood, he was smitten with leprosy; that is to say, he was made an outcast, so that he was not able to approach God and to mingle with the congregation of Jehovah. What a wonderful thing it is then, that that which formerly never could have been combined was, in the primeval age and before the children of Abraham were born and the Abrahamic dispensation commenced, shown to exist in unity - that Melchizedek, who was a priest, was also a king. "David who as the king over Israel after God’s heart was himself a type of his great Son, given to him by divine promise, got possession at last of Jebus1 according to God’s command; he founded the sanctuary of the Lord upon mount Zion, and in connection with it his royal throne. He thereby to some extent restored the ancient Salem of Melchizedek; he appears as it were as a successor of Melchizedek, a king appointed by God, whose sceptre goes forth from Zion, where is also the ark of the covenant, the glory of the Lord."2 It is on this historical basis, that the prediction of the future royal Priest rests, illustrated by the Melchizedek-type; it is from this point of view that the eternal priesthood and glorious reign of the Son and Lord of David are seen by the psalmist. In like manner we read in the prophet Zechariah, that the Messiah, the man whose name is the Branch, is to build the temple of the Lord: He shall bear the glory, and shall sit and rule upon His throne. With the terseness characteristic of this prophet, who condenses the previous Messianic predictions, he declares of the Son of David, "He shall be a Priest upon His throne." (1There seems little doubt that Salem is identical with Jerusalem. "In Salem is His tabernacle, and His dwelling-place in Zion." (Psalms 76:2.)] 2STIER, slightly altered.) The fulfillment is in Christ. It is fully explained to us in the New Testament. That simple and most comprehensive expression, "The Lamb in the midst of the throne," shows us that when this High Priest entered into the holy of holies He entered also as King into the palace.*[*Jehovah is Israel’s King. Hence, the temple (äéëì) means both palace and sanctuary. In the New Covenant Jesus is represented as seated on the throne of God; and with greater simplicity, and leading us more fully into the perfection and sweetness of our filial relation to the Father through and in the only-begotten Son, the Lord speaks in the gospel of John of His going to His Father’s house, there

to prepare a place for us. (John 14)] He went not merely into the sanctuary, but ascended and sat down on the throne of the Majesty on high, there to be a king and ruler over God's creation. Jesus by His blood entered into the heaven of heavens, and because He humbled Himself unto death He was not merely made a priest to represent us before the Father and to bring unto us the benediction of God, but all things were put under His feet, all power was given unto Him in heaven and in earth; He is ruler over all things, and head over all things unto the church, to the glory of the Father. He commands in heaven and on earth. All the elements obey Him, all angels and principalities, thrones and dominions, worship and serve Him; He is the Governor, the Prince of the kings of the earth; He has the keys of Hades and of death. Such is His power. And why is He King on God's throne? Because He is Priest. By reason of the obedience unto death, He was enthroned King in the universe of God; and in exercising this kingship now He exercises it in the spirit of priesthood. At present the kingship of Christ is in the background; the priesthood of Christ is prominent. Thus it is that He overrules all things for the good of His elect. Thus it is that He stays the execution of vengeance and of judgment, in order that the chosen of God may be gathered in, and that the Church of Christ may be perfected. At present His royalty is not manifested, but His high-priestly compassion and mercy are continually set forth. The gospel of the Good Shepherd is preached now, who having sought and saved the lost sheep laid it on His shoulders and carried it home, there to abide in perfect safety, greeted by the love and joy of the Father and all angels; the gospel of the faithful Shepherd, who gathers the lambs with His arms and carries them in His bosom; of the compassionate and merciful High Priest, who prays for us that our faith fail not, and who up holds us with His all-sufficient grace and perfect sympathy. But when He shall come again, when the High Priest shall come forth out of the heavenly sanctuary, then shall He show unto all the world that He is King of kings, and Lord of lords; then shall His royalty be made prominent; then shall He be seen as the Son of man, unto whom God has given an everlasting kingdom and a dominion which shall have no end. Now the King is seen as Priest; then the Priest will be seen as King. The wrath of the Lamb will be revealed, and instead of the rod of the Shepherd will be seen the rod of iron. And after the judgment the King will reign with justice, mercy, and equity, as Psalm 72 describes.

How does He exercise His High Priesthood? He exercises His High Priesthood royally. He sits down on the throne of God. By that very attitude He shows that He is not an Aaronic high priest; for the high priest went into the holy of holies only once a year, on the day of atonement, and then only for a short time, standing there before the glory of the Lord, which he was not to see clearly lest he die; but this High Priest, when He enters into the sanctuary, by the very entrance shows that He is Lord of all, that He is King of glory, that He is equal with the Father. In His humanity He is enthroned as the Lamb that was slain; He exercises the High Priest hood with royal power. His intercession possesses omnipotence. The government is on His shoulder, and the Father heareth Him alway. Omnipotent royalty is in His Priesthood, priestly love and tenderness in His royal power and glory. He is still meek and lowly in heart, with infinite tenderness and compassion. He rules over His people by His indwelling Spirit. What a wonderful combination is here! What perfection in Jesus! He is Priest and King - He who is also the Prophet, the Son of the Most High!

I delight to think that the Sonship of Christ is the basis of all our hope, and that in that first announcement of our epistle, that God speaks to us now in His Son, all Scripture doctrines and consolations are contained. None but the Son of God can be the Mediator. From this eternal and

essential Sonship flow all blessings of redemption. Here is the source of grace and glory. Because He is the Son of God, He is Prophet, Priest, and King, to bring us nigh unto God.

2. Melchizedek, that is, as the name signifies, the king of righteousness, lives at Salem, which signifies peace. In the Scripture everything is of importance; we cannot read and interpret the Scripture as any other book, since Scripture is not like any other book, even as no other book is like the Scripture. The Scripture is among books what the man Christ Jesus is among men: as Jesus is God and man in one person, so is Scripture a divine word and a human word; and hence it is that only through the interpretation of the Spirit in the Scripture can we understand the true meaning of the word. In God’s light we see light. Scripture is its own interpreter. Only diamond cuts diamond. And when the inspired apostles see significance in names of eminent persons, we see in it nothing arbitrary or fanciful, believing as we do in the wonderful and perfect structure of the Scripture record.

These quotations and expositions of Scripture in Scripture are, as has been remarked, "grapes of Eshcol - examples of, not exceptions to, the fruitful Carmel, whence they come." Thus, who can fail to see the significance of the name Seth, who was given instead of Abel, one who was firm and enduring in the place of him who vanished? or of the name Joshua, who brought Israel into the promised land? or of Saul, the king asked of the people, and David, the man loved of God? or of Isaiah, who spoke of the salvation of God? The names Melchizedek and Salem are to teach us that Christ Jesus is the King of Righteousness and the Prince of Peace. "Righteousness" is one of those fundamental words in Scripture, without the true understanding of which it is impossible to understand its teaching. The experience of Luther, narrated by him in his preface to the epistle to the Romans, and frequently throughout his writings, is well known. While he understood by "righteousness" something which man offers to God, the Scripture remained to him a sealed book, and his soul was without peace. As soon as he discovered that the Scripture "righteousness" is righteousness, which God in His infinite mercy, according to His holiness and justice, gives to man, he understood the way of salvation, and rejoiced in the grace of God. The righteousness of God, of which both the law and the prophets witnessed, is now revealed from faith to faith. It is now manifested. There is no righteousness by the works of the law; the gift of righteousness is by Jesus Christ unto all who believe.

"King of Righteousness" seems to be a title which properly belongs only unto God. For unto Him alone belongeth righteousness. Yet does prophetic Scripture speak also of God’s righteous Servant; of David’s Son, who loveth righteousness; of the true Solomon, whose reign is a reign of righteousness and peace. The prophetic word teaches also that this righteous Servant shall justify many by His knowledge; it announces that the Lord will bring man His righteousness, and that Jehovah-Tsidkenu will be the name of Israel’s Redeemer, who bringeth safety and help to His chosen people. As in the prophet Isaiah (Is. 53), so in the prophecy of Daniel, the bringing in of everlasting righteousness is connected with the atonement for sin. (Dan. 9) The fulfillment is in Christ Jesus. He is the righteous Servant of God. He came to fulfill all righteousness; He obeyed the law perfectly; in Him the Father was pleased. While He was on earth, though no man could convince Him of sin, yet His purity, His holiness, His righteousness were not recognized, for the world knew Him not. He was made under the law. He went to be baptized of John, and submitted Himself to all the ordinances of God. He concealed His divine glory and righteousness. He was accused of blasphemy, of breaking the Sabbath, of not honouring the temple. He was at last

numbered with transgressors, and died the death of reproach outside the camp. But it was by this death that He brought in everlasting righteousness. It was by His thus "going to the Father," by His entering through the cross into that glory, where the world seeth Him no more, that there is now "righteousness" unto and upon all that believe. In His resurrection God declared both the righteousness of Jesus and our justification in Him. And now we behold Christ in heaven, the Righteous One and our Advocate. (1 John 2) He is the King of righteousness. The government of the everlasting kingdom is based on redemption-righteousness. Because of His obedience unto death He is exalted Lord; because He is the Lamb that was slain He has power to open the book and the seals thereof.

It is true, that it is of God that Christ is made unto us righteousness (1 Corinthians 1:30), even as it is God who made Him, who knew no sin, to be sin for us, that we might be made the righteousness of God in Him. (2 Corinthians 5:21) God is righteous when He justifies those that believe in Jesus. But when we speak of the Lord our righteousness, we refer not to the divine attribute of righteousness, but to the righteousness of Jesus, the Mediator, the Substitute - of the Redeemer-God, Jehovah, in whom all the seed of Israel shall be justified and shall glory. As God commends His love in Christ’s death on the cross, so God’s righteousness is the righteousness which in Christ is ours. By the obedience of one, even Jesus, we are made righteous. We possess the righteousness of God and our Saviour Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:2) Even as eternal life is the gift of God, and Jesus saith, I give unto my sheep eternal life, and I am the resurrection and the life; so is it with the gift of righteousness; it is of God, it is in and through Christ, it is Christ’s righteousness, and it is Christ Himself.

Christ is the perfect righteousness in which believers stand, and with which they are clothed. Christ is likewise the King of righteousness, by renewing our hearts and giving unto us His Spirit. Hence He says: "Except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven." Christ speaks of our righteousness. In like manner, although Christ is the Eight of the world, and the true and only light, He commands us: "Let your light so shine before men." If we are clothed with Christ our righteousness, we ourselves become righteous in our mind, and work righteousness. This aspect of truth is emphasized by the apostle John, when says, "He that doeth righteousness is righteous." He adds the necessary and salutary warning: "Little children, let no man deceive you." The same Lord who clothes us with His righteousness renews us also after His image. Justified by faith, we are quickened unto the new life of obedience. Jesus is our Lord and Master, our King, who by the Holy Spirit fills us with the love of righteousness, and enables us to be followers of Him, and to do the will of the Father in heaven.

Melchizedek is at Salem. Jesus is also, and by virtue of righteousness, the Prince of peace. Without righteousness there cannot be peace. But the Lord Jesus came to bring peace, to make peace, to be our peace, and this according to the holiness of God; so that glory abounds to God in the highest, because justice is satisfied, the divine law honoured, and the conscience purified; and even Satan the accuser, who has the power of death, can no longer lay anything to the charge of God’s elect.

How perfect is the peace which the risen Saviour gives to His people! It is His own peace, which the Head gives to His members. It is a blood-bought peace. It is God’s peace, ordained by Him

and beloved of Him as His chosen rest - a peace which passeth all understanding, and which is secure from all the interruptions and adverse influences of the world. Jesus has made peace between God and man (the Father Himself, the God of peace, sending Him for this purpose to His "enemies"); peace between angels and reconciled sinners, between Jew and Gentile. In Him all things which are in heaven and which are on earth shall be gathered together. (Eph. 1 and Col. 1) He is the Peace and Bond of the whole creation. Blessed are all who dwell in Salem, who are in Christ.

3. Melchizedek, greater than Abraham, is also greater than the Levitical priesthood, and is thus a type of Christ, who is above Aaron, and whose priesthood is perfect.

Abraham represents all Israel. The doctrine of federal representation is deeply rooted in Scripture. By Adam's disobedience many were constituted sinners. In his fall all men fell. Through the transgression of one, sin and death entered into the world. Such is the truth revealed to us in Scripture, and confirmed by universal experience. And the darkness of this mystery is irradiated by the brightness of the great mystery of the Second Adam.

We can praise God that there is such a federal representation; for the gift of God is eternal life through the righteousness of the Lord Jesus, the federal Head of all who trust in Him. Nor is the gift as the offence, but exceeding abundant is the grace of God, which instead of merely restoring us to our former condition of creaturely innocence, unites us with the Son of God through the Holy Ghost, who from the glorified humanity of Jesus is given unto us.

We see this same law of representation here. Isaac was not yet born. The whole nation was therefore as yet in Abraham. And the tribe of Levi was, in the person of the father of the faithful, paying homage and acknowledging the superiority of Melchizedek. Abraham received Melchizedek's blessing. He paid tithes to him. It seems, from the expression used by Jacob (Genesis 28:22), that the offering of a tenth was from time immemorial one of the ways in which believers honoured the Most High. Hence we may argue that, in receiving the blessing and in offering tithes, Abraham (and in him Aaron) acknowledged the priesthood of Melchizedek. For we must bear in mind what is implied according to Scripture in this expression: "He was blessed of him." Abraham, as the apostle points out, had already received the promises. The Most High had already revealed to Abraham the gracious purpose, that in his seed all families of the earth should be blessed; and he had received repeated assurances of this great and comprehensive promise. (Genesis 12:2-3; Genesis 12:7; Genesis 13:16.) How great the blessing is which God promised to Abraham we may learn from such passages as Galatians 3:14. Who then is this royal priest, better and greater than Abraham, the father of the faithful and the blessed of the Lord? We know with what profound veneration the Hebrews regarded their father Abraham, and how reverently and fondly they cherished the remembrance of all that is written concerning his faith and the favour he found with God. It is therefore with great emphasis that the apostle says: "Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth." Melchizedek typifies the Lord Jesus, who, although a Son of Abraham, yet says of Himself: "Before Abraham was, I am;" who is not merely the offspring, but the root of David. He who was promised to Abraham is Himself the blessing of God, the Mediator through whom all divine gifts and promises are bestowed, and in whom all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are given. In Him Abraham and Abraham's children are chosen. He is that greater One who blesses the patriarch. Herein is also typified that Jesus is

above the Levitical priesthood. When He was on earth Jesus was subject to the law, and observed all its ordinances. He commanded the cleansed lepers to go and show themselves to the priests. Thus it behooved Him to fulfill all righteousness. But He is the Lord, and His is an eternal and perfect priesthood. For whereas the Levitical priests died and succeeded one another, thereby also showing their imperfection, Jesus, as is witnessed in the 110th Psalm, liveth for evermore. (Hebrews 7:8.) But if the priesthood is changed, if instead of the Levitical priesthood there ariseth according to the type of Melchizedek and the prediction of the 110th Psalm "another priest," then the inference is inevitable that there is also a change of dispensation; there must needs be also a change of Law. This was a very important statement, and we can scarcely realize the effect it was calculated to produce on the minds of the Hebrews. The unbelieving Jews accused Stephen that he had spoken against this holy place and the law, and that he had been heard to say that Jesus of Nazareth should destroy that place, and change the customs which Moses delivered them. (Acts 6) We must remember how difficult it was even for believing Jews to understand the liberty of the gospel, the change of dispensation, the character of the new covenant; for they also were zealous of the law. (Acts 21:20.) But now the same argument by which the apostle had proved to the Galatians, that apart from the law the promise given to Abraham was fulfilled unto all who believe, is presented to the Hebrews from another point of view, and with equal clearness and cogency. For the Levitical priesthood is evidently imperfect. It was weak and unprofitable (Hebrews 7:18); that is, it could not bring perfection, else "another priest" would not have been predicted. But as the law was based upon the Levitical priesthood, so the change of priesthood necessarily involves a change of dispensation. Jesus, the great High Priest, is the end of the law unto righteousness; and in the liberty and power of new covenant blessings, of which the gift of the Holy Ghost is the chief, the righteousness of the law is fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit, who are not under the law, but under grace.

4. Melchizedek is introduced in the narrative of Genesis without descent. In the book of Genesis genealogy holds a very prominent position. The genealogical records in the word of God are of importance, although we frequently may not see their value or significance. There are many things in Genesis, and in Scripture in general, which will only be understood when Jesus comes again to fulfill all things, and when, according to the purpose of God, known to Him from the beginning, the nations are brought to know and to serve Him. Then shall we understand why all these genealogies are given at length. In the book of Genesis are enumerated also tribes which do not appear afterwards in the history of redemption. God has entered them in His book to show that He has counsels of love and peace with regard to them.

Now, with regard to Aaron, we know the name of his father and mother; we know how old he was, and how he was buried. And so important is the genealogy of the priests, that in the book of Nehemiah we read that those priests who were not able to trace their descent, and about whose genealogy there was the slightest doubt, were excluded from the Levitical services. This strictness was necessary; for these men were priests, not by reason of anything inherent in them, but simply because God had set apart that tribe, and therefore their descent from one who was unmistakably and certainly a priest was their only authority, and their only position. There is nothing of the kind in the Church of Christ.*(*Those who introduce the legal element of a successional office into the Church of Christ, a shadow which has passed away, an old thing which has vanished and decayed, must remember that as the genealogy of the Levitical priesthood was kept with perfect

accuracy, and the slightest flaw or break in it would unfit a person for the priesthood, so the so-called apostolic succession must be made out with perfect and unbroken regularity, to have any value or significance. That it is scarcely possible to do this is admitted nearly on all hands. Even if it were, the argument of this epistle, and the teaching of all the epistles, show that the New Testament ministry is spiritual, and not after the method of a carnal ordinance. "By their fruits ye shall know them." The last council of the "successors of the apostles" proves that, whatever historical evidence may be adduced for an unbroken series of ordinations, the true apostolic authentication, the power of Christ's Spirit, was lamentably absent.) But Melchizedek appears in the inspired history as a Priest solely by divine appointment and right His priestly dignity is personal; his position is directly God-given; his priesthood is inherent. It is not derived and inherited; for he who is the first person in Scripture called priest, is introduced "without descent," without father, without mother. There is neither end mentioned of his priesthood, nor successor.

Let us look now at the fulfillment. Jesus is the "everlasting Father." The very Scriptures, which describe Him as a child born, as a Son given, which dwell on His humanity, declare to us His eternal divinity. He has no beginning of days, nor end of life. His is now a continuous, not a successional priesthood, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless, an indissoluble life. For He, the eternal self-subsistent Word, that eternal Life which was with the father, became man, and of His own free will laid down His life for the sheep. Through the eternal Spirit the Son of God offered Himself, and so that life which was manifested on earth was solved. The Saviour actually died, He gave up the ghost. He was crucified because of the weakness which in His mercy He had taken upon Him. According to the counsel of God, He who was God's own Son, sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, was a sacrifice for sin, when in His death God condemned sin in the flesh. But when Jesus rose again from the grave, after He had been offered for our offences, and had in His death conquered death and put away our sins, He, as God and man in one person, entered into that life which is indissoluble; for who or what power can solve it? He died unto sin once. The condemnation of the law, the power of Satan and of death, the guilt of sin and the wrath of God - all was met on the cross. Hence Jesus is declared now to live to God for evermore; (Romans 6:10) Thus the glorified Redeemer, when He appeared to the beloved disciple, said: "Fear not; I am the first and the last [without beginning of days or end of life]: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." Because He was dead, His is now an endless, an indissoluble life. In the power of this resurrection-life He exercises His priesthood; for in Him is fulfilled what no single type could set forth, what all types combined do not adequately illustrate. He is God and Man, Sacrifice and Priest, Righteousness and Life, Atoner and King, interceding Advocate, and the Dispenser of blessings. The life upon which He entered by His resurrection is life for us, because in Christ's death our death is abolished, and we are raised together with Him. And the sanctuary whither He has ascended is heaven itself, the very throne of God, whence He rules over all things, according to the power which is given unto Him in heaven and in earth. Continuously, without interruption and without successor, He is our Priest, applying to us the efficacy of His sacrifice, and by the Spirit appropriating to us the blessings purchased with His blood. He is our Priest in the power of His endless life. Thus we know the power of His resurrection. God's power to us-ward who believe is exceeding great, according to the working of His mighty power, which He wrought in Christ when He raised Him from the dead, and set Him at His own right hand. (Comp. Php 3:10; Ephesians 1:20) We are partakers of Christ, Christ liveth in us, and therefore our life is endless, indestructible, incorruptible. Neither things

present nor things to come; neither this present earthly existence nor the death of the body, which may be before us; neither powers, nor principalities, nor angels; neither height, nor depth, nor any creature, can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus; for our risen Lord is Priest according to the power of an indissoluble life.

Here let us pause. These truths are truths of the greatest solemnity. Why were the Jews so unwilling to receive them? Was it not partly because it was too solemn and too overwhelming to believe that the end of all things had come; that the last times had begun; that the days of the Messiah had been ushered in; that the day had commenced, the very day which shall end with the appearing of the great God and Saviour, and with the establishment of the reign of righteousness and peace upon the earth? And is not this hesitation natural to us all? Do we not shrink from entering into the full and realizing faith of what is revealed unto us in the Gospels and in the Epistles, because it is the beginning of the end? The Son of God has become man; the Son of God has died upon the cross; the Son of God has entered as man into the holy of holies. The blood of Jesus Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary. The powers and influences of the Holy Ghost are going forth now to gather a people unto Himself. He is waiting until the command is uttered by the Father to appear again, and to change all things, and to make all things new. We are living as it were upon the very threshold of that new dispensation, the new heavens and the new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness. The most awful and stupendous sacrifice has already been made. Christ has suffered and entered into His glory. We have now to wait for nothing except the consummation, Jesus, apart from sin, appearing unto salvation to them that look for Him. But the reality, the substance, the earnest of the inheritance, behold, all is given even now to everyone that believeth. This very instant that I speak, Jesus as man, as the Lamb slain, as the merciful High Priest, is at the right hand of God. Believe in Him and you are justified, a child of God, an heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ Jesus.

Oh, if we know these great, these awful, and these real solemnities, what manner of men ought we to be! Have we tasted the power of the world to come, of that kingdom of heaven, which has come already? Have we received a life which alone is worthy to be called life - not the life of the senses, not the life of the intellect, not the life of emotion, not the life of fluctuating and sentimental religiousness, but the life which comes out of the fountain of life, even from Jesus, and from Jesus only after His death and His resurrection? How blessed is it for poor guilty sinners to know that the King of righteousness and peace is the Lamb, and that the Lamb has all power! He was dead; then all my condemnation is gone. And He liveth; therefore we also live. And He is alive for evermore; and we also, who bear now the image of the first Adam in humility and bondage, shall bear the image of the second Adam in liberty and in glory.

16 - Hebrews 7:15-28

CHAPTER X V I. THE WORD OF THE OATH AND THE SON PERFECTED FOR EVERMORE.

Hebrews 7:15-28. THE characteristics of the eternal Priesthood of Jesus, inferred by the apostle from the inspired record of the typical history of Melchizedek, both in its statements and omissions, are, as we have seen, that Jesus is Priest and King; that in Him righteousness and peace are united; that He is above Aaron, and that He is Priest for ever after the order of an endless life. All these points receive additional illustration and confirmation from the fifth characteristic - the oath - by which Jesus, according to Psalm 110, was made Priest. The legal dispensation was connected with the Levitical priesthood. Without mediation it was impossible that God should enter into covenant-relation with sinful and guilty men; and therefore even the first covenant was made not without blood. The apostle argues that if there is a change in the priesthood, there must necessarily be a change in the dispensation with which that priesthood is connected. When the apostle speaks of the Levitical priesthood and of the first dispensation in such strong terms as that it was weak and unprofitable, we must remember that here, as well as when he speaks of the law of Moses, he looks upon them as separate from Christ, who was the substance of the shadow; he addresses those who viewed the law and Levitical ordinances apart from their vital connection with the promise of Christ and with the true sacrifice. The believing Israelite, taught by the law and the prophets, looked forward unto the coming of Jehovah, and the redemption that was to be accomplished by the Messiah; he saw in the ordinances pictures of eternal and heavenly blessings; and although under the dispensation of the law still in the spirit of servantship, kept under the guardianship of the schoolmaster, he obtained through faith the forgiveness of sins, and looked forward to that everlasting inheritance which God had promised unto the fathers. But when the Jews looked upon the law as a source of righteousness and life, forgetting its true character and significance; when they regarded the Levitical priesthood and the temple and the offerings apart from Christ, looking upon shadows and types as substance, then it was that the apostle, in all the epistles where he touches upon this subject, is constrained to show unto them that the law, the tabernacle, the sacrifices, the priests viewed in themselves, were in no way able to give righteousness or peace or life unto the soul; that they were entirely weak and unprofitable; that they were sent only for a temporary purpose, in order to prepare for the introduction of that which shall never be moved, and in which there is true substance and blessedness everlasting. In this way the whole dispensation of the law and the Levitical priesthood were merely parenthetical. They were never intended to remain. They were only, as the apostle explains it of the law in the epistle to the Galatians, the schoolmaster, the tutor, appointed for a time until the child had reached a certain maturity, in order that then it might obtain real possession of the blessing, being made free by the Spirit of sonship through faith in Christ Jesus. The apostle announces a great principle in the words, "The law made nothing perfect." There was not a single point in which the law reached the end; for the end of the law is Christ. The law is in itself by its very nature fragmentary and temporary; it is necessarily imperfect. This is an essential characteristic of the dispensation. The law was a revelation and condemnation of man’s guilt, and, secondly, a shadow

of things to come. The law showed unto the people that God was holy, that man was sinful, and that therefore a perfect mediation was necessary, to bring us into the presence of the Most High. The law typified this mediation; but all types are by the very nature of types mere shadows, and therefore not able to give the real substance except by anticipation. The imperfection of the law appears in these three points especially:

First, the forgiveness of sin. In the old dispensation believers were comforted by the revelation of God's mercy, and by the promise of the Messiah. But, as was shown by the continual repetition of sacrifices, the true atonement was not yet made; everlasting righteousness was not yet brought in, and therefore the conscience was not yet purged from sin. The apostle explains in the epistle to the Romans, that although God forgave and pardoned the sins of the Israelites before Christ died upon the cross, yet they were remitted only through the forbearance of God. (Romans 3:25) It was in a temporary manner, in view of the future atonement. But now that Christ has died, He has become the Surety of the new covenant, which has better promises, and the first blessing of which is the forgiveness of sin. In this dispensation we now have no longer any conscience of sin, because he that has come unto Jesus Christ, who died once for all, has received the absolute and entire remission of sins, and needeth not but that his feet should be washed daily, that his trespasses should be acknowledged and confessed to Him who is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.

Secondly, access unto God was not perfected under the old dispensation. Abraham, Moses, David, and all the fathers, prayed unto God, and knew that God was the hearer of prayer; but their access to God was imperfect, because they were not yet able to enter into the holy of holies, seeing that the way into the sanctuary through the rent veil of the flesh of Christ was not revealed yet. Before Jesus came, the worship of the Old Testament saints was not in liberty of the Spirit. They had received the spirit of bondage, and not the Spirit of adoption. They could not pray as the children, who are identified with the Man who is their Lord and Head, the Son incarnate. The third imperfection was this: They had not received the Holy Ghost as an indwelling Spirit. This is explained in the apostle's epistle to the Galatians. The more we study this section of the Melchizedek priesthood, the more shall we be convinced that the same mind that argues in the Romans and the Galatians about the law, explains here the superiority of Christ over the priesthood of Aaron. If a law could have been given through which life could come, it would not have been necessary for Christ to die upon the cross. Then righteousness would have come by the law; but the law, the dispensation of Moses, was not able to minister life, that is, to give unto us the Holy Ghost (Galatians 3:2; Galatians 3:21); for the Holy Ghost was not yet, because Jesus Christ was not yet transfigured. (John 7) The Spirit of God is from eternity to eternity one with the Father and the Son; but the Lord Jesus refers to the Holy Ghost as the Spirit of the anointed One, who, according to the promise of the Father, dwells in the church. He was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified. The Spirit was to be sent from Jesus the Son as our Lord and glorified Head. It required that indissoluble (resurrection-) life of the High Priest, of the Victim slain upon Calvary, and raised again by the power of God out of the grave. It is from our risen Lord that life is now given to believers; the Spirit dwells in our hearts, and we have fellowship with the Father and the Son. Such is the threefold privilege of believers in the present dispensation - perfect forgiveness of sin, perfect access unto God, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. But the law made nothing perfect. For perfection is true, substantial, and eternal communion with God through

a perfect mediation; and this perfect mediation we have obtained in the Lord Jesus Christ.

Now, the apostle says that all this is quite evident from the word of God in Psalm 110. David in the Spirit declared the oath of the Lord: "Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek." If "after the order of Melchizedek," he puts aside the order of Aaron. If "a Priest forever," then there must be perfection in this priesthood; that is to say, this priesthood is continuous, untransferable, unchanging; it brings that ultimate blessedness which endureth forever, perfect and substantial communion between God and us. And this ordinance is by an oath. The Lord hath sworn. Thus it is written in the psalm. The apostle deduces a most important argument from this expression; and if, as the Lord Jesus Himself points out, David was "in the Spirit" when he penned this psalm, we have no difficulty in accepting the teaching of the apostle. Are we to judge the expressions of Scripture like the expressions of other books, in which sometimes words are used thoughtlessly, accidentally, superficially, without any further or deeper meaning? This be far from us, if we have indeed learned the mind of God. The priesthood of Aaron was not instituted with an oath. That which is connected with an oath can never be changed; for God is immutable. And in the same way as He swore unto Abraham, "Surely with blessing I will bless thee," in order that by two immutable things in which it is impossible for God to lie we may have abundant assurance of hope; even thus is it that because the High Priesthood of Jesus can never be altered, because it is based upon the eternal decree and counsel of God, and because it is essentially connected with the very nature and purpose of God Himself, it is introduced with an oath. The Lord hath sworn, and will not repent. For this royal priesthood was set up in Christ before the foundations of the world were laid. Here is revealed to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself. (Ephesians 1:7-9.) Christ, the Lamb without blemish and without spot, the Sacrifice; Christ the High Priest, Christ the Heir of all things, was foreordained in the eternal counsel of God. His royal Priesthood is an eternal one; even as eternal life was promised by God, that cannot lie (the nature of oath), before the world began. (Titus 1:2.) Thus are believers chosen in Him unto glory, and thus the gospel of grace is connected with eternity; whereas the law, which deals with man’s works, belongs in its very nature to the region of time. God’s own purpose and grace was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. (2 Timothy 1:9.) This is the Priesthood of the Oath, of which it is said: It will never repent Him. In this declaration the apostle beholds the disannulling or abrogation of the legal dispensation which was connected with the Levitical priesthood, and, in the second place, the introduction of a better hope by which we draw near to God. This oath shows that Jesus is the surety of a better dispensation.*(*διαθ■κηoccurs here for the first time in the epistle. As will be more fully explained in connection with chapters 8 and 9, the word means dispensation, covenant, and testament. The Levitical priesthood is connected with the law, theoldcovenant, temporary and imperfect, with aworldlysanctuary; the Melchizedek priesthood of our Lord with the new, eternal, and perfect covenant, of which Jesus is Mediator and Surety (compareHebrews 8:5; Hebrews 9:15), and with theheavenlysanctuary.)

Let us look now at the contrast between the priests of the Levitical dispensation and this Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. They were many; He is only one. Their priesthood was successional - the son followed the father. Christ has a priesthood which cannot be transferred, seeing that His life is indissoluble. They were sinful, but He is holy, pure, and spotless. They offered sacrifices in the earthly tabernacle; He presents Himself with His blood in the true

sanctuary, which is high above all heavens, which is eternal. He appears in the very presence before the face of God. In Jesus Christ, the eternal Priest after the order of Melchizedek, all is fulfilled which in the preparatory dispensation could only be shadowed forth imperfectly and by a variety of ordinances. It was impossible to illustrate adequately by any type or combination of types that which is infinite, that which is eternal, that which is both divine and human. All the types taken together are not intelligible to us, and will not bring us to a right conclusion and a right understanding of Christ, unless we always bear in mind their necessary imperfection. Jesus is the sacrifice; but what sacrifice could be a type of Christ? The animals that were slain were only passive in death. It is quite true that they were to be without blemish, and in that way they showed forth that Jesus Christ was perfectly holy. But that offering up of Himself, the giving Himself unto God in our stead, the laying down His life for the sheep, the coming to do the will of God the Father who had sent Him, the obedience of faith and love, - this could never be typified. Again, the sacrifice was slain, simply to obtain the blood. Remission of sin was through the blood. It was the blood that was brought into the holy of holies. And this blood existed separately from the sacrifice which had ceased to live. This also was a very imperfect adumbration of the reality. By His own free will, in obedience to the Father, and out of love to us, the Lord Jesus gave His life as a ransom for our sins. With the blood, Himself, the living Jesus, Priest and Sacrifice, entered into the holy of holies, there to abide as our righteousness and life. On the cross He was the victim; in the holy of holies He is Priest, not after the order of Aaron, but after the order of Melchizedek. All that was prefigured by the sacrifices, and all that was prefigured by Aaron, the Lord fulfilled; and having fulfilled all, He entered upon His true, real, and eternal Priesthood, which is after the order of Melchizedek. For although He intercedes for us, and bears us on His heart, as was typified by Aaron, His Priesthood itself is now not after the order of Aaron. And although He is Priest after the order of Melchizedek, He has not entered yet on the fulfillment of the priestly reign typified by the priestly king who met Abraham.*(*We still look forward to the ultimate fulfillment of this type. After the final victory over all enemies, over all kings and great powers of earth gathered against the Lord’s people, when idolatry is destroyed forever, and the Most High God alone is worshipped, then shall heaven and earth be blessed in the priestly reign of the Lord Jesus. The King of righteousness and peace shall bless the seed of Abraham, and all the meek who inherit the earth; while the glorified saints, who have overcome in Christ’s name and strength, inherit according to His promise all things. Then all things, both which are in heaven and which are in earth, shall be gathered together in one, even in Christ; and God, the possessor of heaven and earth, be blessed, while His blessing flows unhindered through all parts of His dominions.)

Christ, in virtue of His priesthood, can save completely (in a perfect, exhaustive, all-comprehensive manner) all who through Him come to God, because He ever liveth to intercede for them.

Let us remember the importance which is attached in all epistles unto the resurrection-life of Christ. He who was our Paschal lamb liveth now, and our only hope is in the risen Lord. There are many Christians who dwell on the crucifixion of Jesus in a one-sided way. We cannot dwell too much on the glorious truth that Jesus Christ was crucified for our sins. Yet it is not on the crucifixion, but on Christ the Lord, that our faith rests; and not on Christ as He was on the cross do we dwell, but on Christ who was dead and is risen again, and liveth at the right hand of God, making intercession for us. What does the apostle Paul mean when he says, "If we have been

justified through His death, much more shall we be saved by His life"? There is a "much more," there is progress, there is a climax. When Jesus died upon the cross He put away our sins, but this was only removing an obstacle. The ultimate object of His death upon the cross was His resurrection and ascension, that through suffering He should enter into glory, that He should be the perfect Mediator between God and man, presenting us unto God and bestowing upon us all the blessings which He has purchased for us with His precious blood. He has obtained eternal redemption on the cross. He applies the blessings of eternal redemption from the holy of holies. Therefore do we testify every Lord's-day that Christ is risen. If Christ was not risen we should still be in our sins; and if such a thing were possible, though we might be forgiven, we should be dead and without the Spirit. The law brought neither righteousness nor life; Christ brings both righteousness and life: for He died in our stead, and He lived again to be our life. Thus the apostle says, in the epistle to the Romans, "Who will condemn? It is Christ who died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is at the right hand of God, making intercession for us." The Father Himself loveth us; it is the Father's good pleasure that Jesus should thus intercede for us. It is of His own free love and sovereign grace that Jesus intercedes for us, that thus the life which through death He has brought unto us might be in us abundantly, and that all the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, which are in Him, and all the temporal blessings which we require for our safety, comfort, and use fullness, may be bestowed upon us by the love of the Father, and through the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. The Lord Jesus, who through death entered into glory, brings us to God as to His and our Father, and brings God to us by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost. Thus is His Priesthood perfect.

Consider now the perfection of Christ's Priesthood, and of that better covenant or dispensation of which He became Surety and Mediator.

There are three things that Scripture teaches. God is holy; man is sinful; Jesus is the perfect Mediator. In the old dispensation great stress was laid upon the first two points - God is holy; man is sinful. Therefore the godly Israelites prayed: Oh that God would send forth His salvation! Mediation was foreshadowed. Perfection was promised, the true Sacrifice, the gift of the Spirit. Israel was taught of God the nature, depth, and condemnation of sin. The law was the full, comprehensive, and profound commentary on the consequences of the Fall. It revealed to the Jews man's deep-seated estrangement from God, his depravity and corruption, the sinfulness of the very root and fountain of our life. The holiness of God and man's sin and sinfulness were thus vividly impressed on God's ancient people. The sins committed in ignorance required also atonement; the sinfulness of the flesh was constantly brought to their remembrance. Thus they longed for the fulfillment of God's promise, the true Atonement and the indwelling Spirit. In the new covenant the emphasis is laid on the perfect mediation of Jesus; and from the stand-point of perfect acceptance we are to see the holiness of God and the sinfulness of man. Let us not cherish less profound views of God's holiness and of the nature of sin than our fathers under the less perfect dispensation of the law. In the light of the heavenly sanctuary, where Jesus is as our High Priest, we can never say that we have no sin, or that we have any confidence in the flesh, or that we have not to mourn over and to condemn the evil that is present with us, and the opposition of the old man, who constantly warreth against the new. The Lord Jesus is the perfect Mediator. The Levitical high priests were sinful men, and required to bring sacrifices for themselves. But the Lord Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled. In His relation to God the Lord Jesus was holy (■σιος);

from His very birth pure, and in His whole life manifesting His inner perfect love to the Father, and conformity with His will. In relation to man He was harmless. He went about doing good; He loved with perfect love, forgiving and enduring all things. With regard to Himself, though living in a world of sin and temptation, He was undefiled. He touched the leper, and the leper was cleansed. He came into contact with death (herein a contrast to the Jewish priest), and conquered death; He took the little maid by the hand, and she arose. He came into contact with the tempter; He remained undefiled. He was "separate from sinners." The description given of the righteous man in Psalm 1 is fulfilled in Him. The only sinless one in the world, He was always alone with God.*(*And yet, although thus in reality separate from sinners, He attracted and befriended the poor in spirit and contrite in heart. Sinners drew near to listen to His gracious words. He received them and ate with them; and at last He was numbered among the transgressors. Let us learn from Jesus the true separation unto God, which manifests itself in humility and in love to sinners, as contrasted with the self-constituted Pharisaic separateness, in which there is neither communion with God nor the attractive power of divine grace drawing men to God.) This Lord is "exalted above the heavens." Jesus went into the holy of holies, which was typified in the tabernacle. Above all created heavens, above angels and principalities, Jesus is now in the true Sanctuary, in the presence of God, and there He is enthroned our perfect High Priest. His position in heaven demonstrates that when He offered up Himself He put away sin forever, even as it sets forth His divine glory. For who but the Son of God can sit at the right hand of the Majesty on High? As it is written, "Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens." And now the apostle turns again, in a most emphatic and conclusive manner, unto the key-note which he had struck at the beginning of the epistle. The law of Moses constitutes priests that were changing continually. But the Word which came with the oath after the law consecrated for ever more as High Priest Him who is the Son. (Comp. the same emphasis on Son, Hebrews 1:1-2.) Only the Son could be the High Priest, and He became the High Priest. Through His incarnation, through all the experiences of His life of sorrow and of faith, through His death upon the cross, through His resurrection and ascension, Jesus is perfected for evermore a High Priest at the right hand of God. He is our one and only royal High Priest, eternal, heavenly, God and Man in one Person.

True peace or communion with God must combine three things. There is no perfect mediation, and there is no real communion with God, unless it fulfils three conditions. In the first place, the mediation must go low enough. A ladder is of no use unless it comes down exactly to the point where I am. Unless it is there where I can place my foot upon it, it is of no avail. Hence mediation that does not reach down into our fallen, guilty, and lost condition - a mediation in which there is no expiation - a mediation that does not remove the wrath of God, that does not take away the curse of the law, that does not blot out the writing of ordinances that is against us, that does not bind and conquer Satan, who has the power of death - I say, a mediation that does not go into this depth is no true mediation for a sinner. But Christ’s mediation is based upon His sacrifice on the cross; and therefore it descends to my lost and guilty condition. How can I receive it without repentance, without godly sorrow, without self-condemnation, without the crucifixion of the old man, and of all the flattering hopes which may be built upon self? The second point is, the true mediation must go high enough; it must bring me into the presence of God. Only that which is pure and that which is living can be brought before God. Hence I need righteousness and life. The Lord Jesus is our righteousness, and by His resurrection and the indwelling of the Spirit He is our life. In Him we are accepted, and filled with the Spirit of life. We have access by Christ unto the Father. Here is our

perfection. It is not in ourselves, but in the Lord, who is at the right hand of God. It is not a progressive perfection, or a gradual diminution of the evil and God-opposed character of the flesh. Through all the days of our earthly life the flesh warreth against the Spirit, yet is there no condemnation to them who are in Christ Jesus. And the third requisite is this: As the mediation must go low enough, reaching us in the depths in which we are, and as it must go high even into the sanctuary of God, so it must go deep into our very hearts. As we are brought unto God, so must God be brought unto us; for the Christ that lives for us must also live in us. Christ, who is our High Priest at the right hand of God, sends the Spirit into our hearts; for to be carnally-minded is death; but to be spiritually-minded is life and peace. Of which things this is the sum: Christ the Son of God died in our stead on the cross; Christ lives for us in heaven; Christ lives in us by the Spirit.

17 - Hebrews 1 - 11

CHAPTER X V I I.

RETROSPECT.

HEB. 1 - 11.

REVIEWING the teaching of the first seven chapters of our epistle, let us recall some aspects of truth brought before us with regard to - 1. THE SCRIPTURE.

2. THE GLORY OF THE LORD JESUS.

3. THE CHRISTIAN LIFE.

1. The Scripture: its authority, inspiration, and practical character. No other church appears to have been in so perilous a condition as the congregation of Hebrews to whom our epistle was addressed. The abuses which had crept into the Corinthian churches, their discord and divisions, their pride and conceit, the flagrant sins into which some of their members had fallen, were grievous indeed; and the apostle addressed to them words of sharp rebuke, not free from piercing irony, though characterized throughout by his tender and loving spirit. The error into which the Galatians were ready to fall was of vital importance, and the apostle expostulates with them in tones of eager and intense anxiety, warning them that if they do not stand in the liberty of the gospel, but return to the stand-point of law, Christ is become of no effect unto them. And while the character of false teachers and corrupters of the doctrine of godliness became more apparent among the congregations to whom the second epistle of Peter and the epistle of Jude are addressed, yet do we not behold anywhere a congregation in so imminent danger of apostasy. It is therefore remarkable that, although in this epistle the Hebrews are exhorted to obey them that have the rule over them, to submit themselves to those who are called to watch for their souls, and to remember those that preached the word of God to them, yet this is done only in the concluding chapter, while the main argument of the apostle is to obey the word of God, to hold fast in loyal and persevering faith the Word which was spoken of God in divers portions and ways to the fathers by the prophets, which in these last days was spoken unto us in the Son, and which was declared by the apostles, who had seen Him on earth. Identifying the gospel message with the written Word, with the Scripture, which was received in Israel as the record of divine revelation and as the oracles of God, the writer of our epistle bases all his arguments and exhortations on the inspired testimony. It is most instructive to notice how the individuality of the writer is kept in the back ground, how the authority of Scripture is kept prominent. And if the so-called successors of the apostles and some communities lay much stress on central authoritative legislation, by which all doctrinal and practical questions which agitate Christian congregations are to be settled, it is well for us to remember how little the apostles themselves thought of exercising such a mechanical authority, and how they relied exclusively on the power of the Word applied by the Spirit to the heart and conscience.

If it was thus in the apostolic churches, ought it not to be still more so in the present day? Scripture is the only authority in the Church. We are to be guided and moulded by the Word, not by antiquity or the opinions of men, however eminent, or the traditions and customs of churches, however venerable. The church is the bride, and it is hers to obey the Lord, and in all things to carry out His commandment. She has no light of her own; like the moon, she is to reflect the light of the sun. And as the church, so the individual Christian is to abide in the teaching of the Word. Avoiding all subjection to the opinions of men, to the charm of novelty, to the authority of those who are distinguished by their gifts of learning or their character of devotedness, let us seek always the teaching of the Holy Ghost through the Scriptures, that so we may receive truth from God, that we may be taught of Him who alone can teach to profit, and whose teaching is accompanied with the light of peaceful assurance and with vital power. From early childhood we may thus know the Scripture, and be made wise unto salvation; and from the least to the greatest the members of Christ's church may possess that true, individual, and direct teaching from above, by which alone we can retain our liberty and abide in the humble, docile attitude of disciples of the one Master. The word of God abideth forever: "Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up." Whether it be doctrine or practice, nothing can stand except it be of God; and of plants, not planted by God, it is not enough to lop off some branches in order to prevent their too luxurious growth, but according to the declaration of the Lord, whose love is as infinite as His truth, they must be rooted up. The Reformers, in so far as they were enabled to return to the Scripture, were acting according to the commandment of the gentle and loving Saviour; and their zeal was spiritual and salutary, and for the true welfare of the church and the nation. We cannot be reminded too frequently and too emphatically of the authority of Scripture, and of the relation in which every Christian stands to the word of God. According to the Scriptures, Christ died; and according to the Scriptures, Christ rose again. And as the apostles preached from the Scriptures the gospel in its most elementary and fundamental aspect, so all divine truth, which is necessary and salutary for us, is taught by the Spirit through the prophetic and apostolic word. The Scripture is the record of God's revelation to His chosen people Israel. God revealed Himself in word and deed, in doctrine and in the works of His redeeming grace and royal rule, in promises and in types. Hence it is impossible to separate in a mechanical way the divine and eternal element from the lower and human, the historical and subjective. In the history of Israel, the institutions and laws of the chosen people, the character, conflicts, and development of patriarchs, prophets, and kings, God reveals unto us His truth, and reveals to us Himself. When the inner life of God's saints is unveiled to us, as in the Psalms, the Book of Job, the Lamentations of Jeremiah, and indeed throughout Scripture, so that, as Luther says, "we see into the very hearts of these men, and not merely behold paradise and heaven itself there, but also death, and even hell," we possess in these apparently purely human and subjective delineations the teaching of the Holy Ghost, who presents to us truthfully and perfectly the conflict in human souls between God's grace and their sin and weakness, and provides us with a guide-book in which all possible difficulties and errors are noticed, and the true remedies and correctives indicated. Hence no Scripture is purely human and temporary; all Scripture is divine and eternal. It possesses vitality, fulfilling itself continually, and containing throughout the revelation of God's character and of God's salvation. In Scripture all lines of thought and history, of type and prophecy, converge and meet in one point, the Messiah. Christ is set forth in the words, deeds, and persons of prophets, priests, and kings. He is typified in the tabernacle with its God-appointed furniture; His advent is heralded and His work proclaimed,

not merely by the living voice of God speaking to the patriarchs and prophets, and not merely by the response of faith and prayer of the saints, but even by the creatures whose blood was shed; by the inanimate symbols, as the ark, the laver, altar; by the Sabbath, by the feasts and fasts, and the year of jubilee. Yea, the very infirmities, failures, and sins of prophets, priests, and rulers, whose offices were bestowed by God for the glory of His name and the good of the nation, only increase the desire of the God-fearing, that the perfect Mediator may appear, even the Son, in whom God speaks, and through whom the divine favour and rule are brought perfectly unto His people.

While God-manifestation or Christ-manifestation [Revelation] is thus the central and crowning object of the Scripture, this great purpose could only be fulfilled gradually. Each succeeding need of man was used by God as a new opportunity of manifesting His character, and of unfolding the vast resources of His gracious counsel. Hence Scripture gives us the history of the chosen seed, the people whom God formed for Himself, that they might show forth His praise. It reveals to us Israel in bondage, Israel in the wilderness, Israel worshipping, Israel entering the promised land, Israel now conforming to the nations, now conquering in faith. In all these various aspects is Israel represented, that we may learn thereby the ways of God, the character of the world, the trials and difficulties of the believer, the source of weakness and defeat, as well as the source of victory and strength. Thus while God reveals Himself throughout, it is in such a way that it suits our weak vision, and that it supplies all the guidance, correction, and encouragement which we need during our earthly life. Our epistle illustrates these truths concerning Scripture in a remarkable way. We read in Acts 17:2-3 that it was the manner of the apostle Paul to reason with the Jews out of the Scriptures, opening and alleging that Christ must needs have suffered and risen again from the dead, and that "this Jesus whom I preach unto you is Christ." In this he only followed the method of the Lord Himself, who after His resurrection began at Moses and all the prophets, and expounded unto them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning Himself.* This was the method of all the apostles. Like their divine Lord, the apostles regarded the books of Moses and prophets as one; they speak of "the Scripture," and of "all Scripture." The references to Scripture in our epistle, by which doctrines are proved as by an ultimate and all-sufficient authority, show that the writer regarded the whole collection of books as of equal importance and dignity. In a very marked way the Scripture is quoted as God’s word; He is the true and one Author, though many holy men were His messengers and instruments. (*Luke 24. It is striking that this is specially recorded in the gospel of Luke, whose Pauline character is acknowledged by all.) For Scripture is not merely the record, it is the inspired record of revelation. Scripture teaches of itself (directly, and still more frequently and strongly indirectly) that it is given by inspiration of God. The choice of biographies, narratives, genealogies, prayers, proverbs, the manner in which these were recorded, the very omission of circumstances - all this was not according to human selection, wisdom, and skill, but according to the mind of the Spirit, who, searching the deep things of God, and foreseeing the end from the beginning, has caused holy men to write in such a manner that the truth of God is revealed in fullness for the instruction and comfort of all generations. To the Holy Ghost we trace Scripture. It is perfect, all-comprehensive, and pure. The Scripture is above every age; for it is written by the eternal Spirit; and our wisdom is to receive Scripture teaching with absolute child-like faith, and to receive Scripture teaching according to its own method, not mixing it up with the enticing words of human wisdom, and the thought and terminology of temporary schools.

While the authority and inspiration of Scripture as a testimony of Christ are vividly brought before us in this epistle, the practical character of the Word is continually urged. The Spirit is still connected with the Scripture. By it He still teaches, guides, and comforts the hearts of men. The Word is living, because the Holy Ghost applies the Word, and the voice of God is heard by the soul. Especially are the exhortations of Scripture attributed to the Holy Ghost. As the Holy Ghost saith, "To-day if ye will hear His voice, harden not your hearts." For the Spirit of God, though one with the Father and the Son, identifies Himself in His condescending love with us. As He maketh intercession for us, praying within us, and, as it were, becoming a suppliant with us, expressing our desires and wants, so when God speaks to us, the Spirit continually urges us to listen and to take to heart, as an affectionate mother encourages her child to attend and to mark the important and beautiful instruction of the teacher. The Scripture is the mirror in which we behold the human heart, with its unbelief, its selfish and carnal thoughts, its tendency to hypocrisy and to rest in mere shadows. The apostle reminds us that by this Word, as by a sharp sword, all that is confused and mixed in our thoughts and hearts is severed, the heavenly separated from the earthly, and the thoughts and intents of the heart discerned. He shows us that the Word brings us into the presence of Him from whom it comes, and with whom we have to do.

Thus while the Word reveals Christ, it judges everything in us that prevents our walking by faith in Him. Solemn and stern as its voice may be, the blessed result, to the faithful and humble who tremble at the word of God, is, that by it they are directed to look off unto Jesus, to look up unto Him who is the way of life above to the wise, and that thus they are kept from the evil that is in the world. The Word speaks to the heart. The voice of the Lord is powerful and full of majesty; the heart adores and is filled with awe. The voice of the Lord is full of love and tenderness; the heart trusts and rejoices. The voice of the Lord declares mercy; and the heart forgives them that have trespassed against us. The voice of the Lord promises peace and glory; the heart feels the festival of generosity, and becomes cheerful and patient in giving sorrow. Of a living Christ and to living souls does the living Word speak, that we may walk with God* All Scripture, given by inspiration of God, is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto every good work. It makes us wise unto salvation; it gives us not that knowledge which puffeth up, but the wisdom which is from above, even love, that edifieth. (*Luther’s well-known expression, that the words of Scripture are not Lese - sondern Lebe worte; not words for reading, but for living.) 2. The person and work of Christ. The great object of this epistle is to show the heavenly Priesthood of the Lord Jesus, the Messiah. But as all the offices of our adorable Lord are rooted in His eternal Sonship, and are most inseparably connected with each other, the epistle brings before us in great fullness the doctrine of the person and work of the Messiah. In the first chapter the Messiah is spoken of as the Son. In relation to God He is from all eternity, the brightness of His glory, the express image of His substance. In relation to the world He is the Mediator by whom it was created, and by whom it is upheld. In relation to the prophets He is the Son, in whom is the perfect and ultimate revelation of God. In relation to the angels He is Lord, whom they worship and serve. In relation to the future world, or the Messianic kingdom, He is appointed Heir of all things. And this glory was not lessened by His humiliation, His sufferings and death; it was by His obedience that He entered into glory, that He ascended into heaven, and was exalted at the right hand of God. We behold the glory of Jesus, the Messiah, the Son of David, the Son of Man, of whom Psalm 8 and the prophecy of Isaiah witness, the glory of the Lord, unto whom all things are subject, and whose dominion is

everlasting. The first two chapters set before us the wonderful union of the divine and human natures in one Person. We rejoice that He who is the eternal Son of the Father, and the self-subsistent Word, has through sufferings and death entered into glory, and that Jesus is Lord above all, and our High Priest before God. He is the Mediator of the new covenant, greater than Moses; for Jesus is Son in the House and Lord over the House; whereas Moses, though faithful, was only a servant, and for this very reason in a preparatory and imperfect economy. (Com. John 8:35.) Jesus is greater than Joshua; for in Him the rest of God is also our rest, even as through Him we shall finally enter into the everlasting Sabbatism. He is greater than Aaron; for, while fulfilling all that was prefigured by the Aaronic priesthood, He was consecrated a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek; and after the power of an endless life He is the true Mediator, who in the heavenly sanctuary represents us before God, and communicates to us the blessings of the everlasting covenant. But as the epistle unfolds the glory of the exalted Saviour, it dwells also on the humanity of Christ, and on His obedience and sufferings in the days of His flesh. In showing Christ's eternal divine glory, the first chapter of our epistle reminds us of the commencement of John's Gospel, it ascends into the loftiest height; but it is also like the Gospel of Luke - in which the beloved Physician reveals to us Jesus the Son of man, in a manner as vivid and touching as it is profound. In no portion of Scripture are we so fully taught the humanity of our blessed Lord, the sufferings of Christ, and the sympathy of the glorified Saviour. And this is one great and important feature among many which renders this epistle so important and precious to every Christian.

Here we see His real humanity. Moved by a boundless, an infinite love, He took hold of the seed of Abraham; and because the children were partakers of flesh and blood, He likewise took part of the same. He was true, real Man, body, soul, and spirit. In His walk on earth He went through every sorrow, trial, temptation, that can oppress and pain the human heart. He lived by faith, putting His trust in the Father. In this epistle we behold the reality of His suffering in temptation, of His conflict and walk of faith, of His weakness and fear; we see how He became a merciful and compassionate High Priest, touched with the feeling of our infirmities, able to help us and sympathize with us in our difficulties and sorrows. The agony in the garden of Gethsemane, which is here described, shows us that Jesus went into all the anguish of death in dependence on God, submitting Himself, and learning obedience, though He was Son. Because His obedience, tried to the utmost, was perfect, He was exalted, and is now the glorified Man; and as Son of man, the eye of faith beholds Him at the right hand of power.

Jesus is in heaven a perfect High Priest. His perfection is twofold. First, in that, having through the sacrifice of Himself obtained everlasting redemption for us, He was by His resurrection and ascension perfected - the High Priest who, in the power of an endless life, represents us before the Father, and brings to us the blessings of the heavenly sanctuary. Secondly, that through His experience on earth, He possesses a full knowledge of our difficulties and trials, of the power of temptation and the anguish of suffering, and regards with an infinite compassion, tenderness, and sympathy His people below, while His purpose is to keep them faithful, and to make them more than conquerors.

While, according to the purpose of the epistle, the emphasis is laid on Christ's Priesthood, and present glory at the right hand of God, His prophetic and royal office and His future Messianic reign are not left out of view. As the perfect Prophet or Revealer of God He appears already in the

first chapter, and the royal character of His Priesthood is indicated, not merely by the name Melchizedek, but also by His session at the right hand of power. And though the object of the epistle is to confirm the Hebrews by showing them the heavenly sanctuary as the place of worship, yet the future reign of Messiah as King is indicated. This is meant by His being the Heir of all things, as Son of David, as Son of man, who by reason of His sufferings is enthroned Lord of all, the King of the whole earth, of whom all prophecy witnesses. Thus the epistle to the Hebrews represents the continuity of God's dealings with men, and with Israel especially. It shows the gospel of Jesus Christ, as preached by the Lord Himself and the apostles, to be the full culminating manifestation of the revelation of God to the fathers by the prophets; it declares the faith of God's saints from Abel to Abraham, and from Abraham to the Maccabees, as a looking forward to the ultimate kingdom and glory of Messiah, which is also our hope. Likewise it speaks of the new covenant as the covenant predicted by the prophet Jeremiah, as the covenant made with the house of Israel and the house of Judah - a promise containing spiritual and eternal blessings - but enshrined in and immovably connected with the national restoration in the land of Canaan, according to the purpose of God and the unconditional covenant made with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. (Jer. 31) 3. The Believer's Life.

(1) We begin with the most important, the highest aspect, worship. As there is only one High Priest, Christ in heaven, so there is only one holy place, the heavenly sanctuary.*(*This is more fully brought out in Heb. chaps. 8-10.) And by the blood of Jesus we have boldness to enter into the holiest. As the sacrifice was offered once for all, and the Lord is perfected for evermore, there is now the continued and uninterrupted favour of God resting upon us in Christ Jesus. We possess an unchangeable, perfect righteousness in Him. There is no more remembrance of sin, and we enter into the presence of God Himself in the full assurance of His love. In this epistle the chief point insisted on is access to God - worship in the holy of holies. We constantly fall into sin, and thereby our communion with God is interrupted, and our enjoyment of peace and light. If any man sin, the apostle John teaches us, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous. Through Christ's advocacy we are restored, and in answer to His intercession we are preserved, so that our faith fails not, and our souls are brought back into the paths of righteousness. But our epistle deals with the subject of the believer's position, of his standing before God, of his access to the throne of grace, and we are taught that in Christ we are perfected forever. Boldly we may come to God, for His throne is a throne of grace. In the sympathy of the Lord Jesus we have the blessed assurance that, amid all suffering, temptation, and failure, sufficient grace and timely help will sustain us, and that as we are seated with Christ in heavenly places, so the love of God and the grace of our compassionate and merciful High Priest will uphold and succour us during our weakness and warfare on earth. The Christian is still in the wilderness, but his worship is in heaven.

We cannot come boldly unto the throne of grace unless we see the High Priest. By one sacrifice Christ hath perfected us, consecrated us, and brought us nigh unto God forever. Christ having made purification of our sins, sat down at the right hand of God. We are accepted in Him. We possess a righteousness divine, perfect, eternal. Our sins and failures interrupt our communion with God; we are chastened and humbled; we must confess and repent; but our state before God remains the same. We always return to a throne of grace, to the Father and to the Saviour. Hence we worship, as accepted and forgiven, inside the veil, on the other side of the cross, so to say; not

at the brazen altar, not at the laver, but in the holy of holies. And here I may appeal to the experience of the Christian, that it requires deep humility, self-abasement, and self-condemnation, to go with our sins and failures unto God as our Father, and unto Jesus as our Saviour and High Priest; to appear in His presence on the ground of perfect righteousness, and in faith of eternal and unchanging love; to turn from sin and disobedience, from forgetfulness and lukewarmness, unto God, believing that in His love to us there was no interruption or diminution, that in the mercy and the intercession of our High Priest there was no pause or alteration, that the same favour, the same righteousness, the same eternal and infinite covenant-love was ours, while we were forgetting the Rock of our salvation and grieving the Spirit of promise by whom we are sealed. To do this is indeed hard and painful to flesh and blood, it is contrary to the carnal mind, for it exalts the grace of God and abases the creature. And if we come otherwise, if we draw near less boldly, if notwithstanding our sins we do not come as those whose warfare is accomplished, Whose iniquity is forgiven, and who have received of the Lord of free grace, and according to the eternal covenant, a double Benjamin portion, we fall back into the law, into the spirit of bondage, into the dark and lifeless region of works. True humility praises the glory of His grace, wherein He has taken us into favour in the Beloved.

2. Our perfection.

Christ, according to the teaching of our epistle, was perfected to be our High Priest. God consecrated Him to be the perfect and all-sufficient Mediator, who presents us to the Father, and who brings to us the blessings of the new covenant. After He had put away our sins by one sacrifice, He was, in His resurrection, ascension, and session at the right hand of God, perfected to be our royal High Priest. We are sanctified by the will of God through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. The Lord Jesus hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.* All who believe in the Lord Jesus, and as soon as they believe, receive the blessings of the new covenant; their sins are forgiven, Christ is their righteousness, and they are consecrated or sanctified unto God; they have access unto the throne of grace, and as a royal priesthood they worship and serve. Christ is our sanctification, He is our perfection. We have been made the righteousness of God in Him, and this the moment we accept in humble faith the gospel, that He who knew no sin was made sin for us. (*Hebrews 10:10; Hebrews 10:14.)

What other consecration can we speak of? The Son was consecrated (or perfected) for evermore, and the new and living way through the veil - that is to say, His flesh - was consecrated or dedicated for us; and we ourselves were brought nigh by His blood, and through faith we realized that we are not our own, but bought with a price. But the question may be asked, Is there not an inward sanctification of the Spirit? This aspect of sanctification is not brought prominently before us in this epistle, although the work of the Spirit in the heart is enumerated among the blessings of the new covenant. Sanctification by the Spirit is essentially connected with our only (objective and) heavenly perfection in Christ; it has no other root and source; and as in idea it has no separate and distinct commencement, so in actual realization its commencement is coincident with our justification. If the question is asked, How does our acceptance affect our walk and our relation to sin? the apostolic answer is, How can we continue in sin, seeing that we have died to sin? But when did we die to sin? Was this separate from and subsequent to our believing in the Lord Jesus as the Saviour? No; but when we accepted the Lord Jesus as our righteousness, even then were we set apart unto God, severed from our former life, transplanted into the kingdom of God’s dear

Son. And how did we die with Christ? Was it by a subsequent and separate act of ours, in which our sin, or the flesh, or the old man, was, by a volition or energy of our own, crucified? or was it not (really) when Christ died on the cross, and (actually) when we believe that Christ died for us? And is not this death the object of our faith, and of faith from the very commencement of its existence? To the believer the apostle says: Reckon yourselves, realize by faith, and bear in mind that you have been crucified with Christ. And this is meant by the exhortation: Yield your members servants to righteousness, put off the old man, mortify the members which are on earth. It is not by a separate and subsequent act converted and saved men are to be "sanctified;" believers are to realize, that by the cross of Christ the world has been crucified to them and they to the world; that they have died with Christ unto sin. The perfection of the believer is the same from the first moment of his spiritual life to the last, though his knowledge of it increases in depth and strength. Christ is his righteousness in heaven. In Him he is before God. There is no interruption or break in his acceptance and in his standing. In the light of this perfect love the believer discovers continually the true nature of sin and of the flesh. God condemned sin in the flesh, and therefore the believer looks upon the flesh as condemned. It cannot be purified. In us, that is our Adamic man, dwelleth no good thing. There is a fountain within us which cannot be cleansed, and out of which God-opposed evil thoughts continually ascend. Christ came in the likeness of sinful flesh, but His flesh was pure and holy. Whereas our flesh is sinful; when we are tempted, it is not apart from sin; for we to some extent, and though it be only for a moment, are pleased with the temptation. Besides, our sins of ignorance and omissions are many, and betoken the existence of sinfulness. And this sin, which dwelleth in us, we have to mourn over, to confess, and to fight against. Yet are we not in the flesh, but in the Spirit; for Christ dwelleth in us. Sin has no more dominion over us; for looking continually unto the Lord our righteousness, and reckoning ourselves to have died with Him, we are alive unto God. Still sin remains until we actually die, when beholding the glory of the Lord, seeing Him as He is, we shall be like Him.

According to the Scripture doctrine, there is one Christ and one faith and one life; and according to the Scripture doctrine, Christ Himself, and not what He effects in us, is the object of the believer’s contemplation, and the source of his peace, strength, and joy. To look to our own state, and to put our own state of so-called holiness as an object and aim before our mind, is an unscriptural and hurtful thing. We are to behold the perfection of the Lord Jesus as our High Priest in heaven; and beholding Him, we judge ourselves, we have no confidence in the flesh, and rejoicing in Christ Jesus, we are renewed daily after His image.

God’s ways are perfect, and they are simple. When Christ is received, all is received. The forgiveness of sins contains the only source and root of all godliness and true service. No subsequent supplement is needed. The apostles nowhere speak to the congregations of a higher Christian life, and of a second act of faith unto holiness; when they rebuke the sins and failures of the churches, and when they point out the remedy, it is always by showing the real meaning and power of the grace which at the first was preached unto them, and in which believers stand.

3. Lastly, let us remember the description of the Christian’s life given in this epistle, in which various and apparently contradictory aspects are combined. If we really wish to walk with God, to enjoy communion with Him, and to remain steadfast in the faith unto the end, we shall realize in our own experience that rest and labour, peaceful assurance of our acceptance, and holy, vigilant, and anxious fear can co-exist. Knowing that God worketh in us both to will and to do of His good

pleasure, we work out our own salvation with fear and trembling. Life-truths must be studied by living them. In theory it may be difficult to reconcile and combine the various aspects of spiritual realities and experiences; but when we do the will of God we come to know the divine character of Christ's doctrine. It is by faith, by a vital, trustful appropriation of truth, that we understand; it is in using the guide-book, in walking with God, that light shines on the path, and that we go on from strength to strength. Let us rejoice in the Lord, and let us rejoice always; yet let us remember that blessed is the man who feareth alway. "In the beholding of God we fall not, and in the beholding of ourselves we stand not; yet while we are in this life it is needful that we behold both at once. The higher beholding keepeth us in joy and in the true love of God; the lower keepeth us in godly fear and self-abasement. Our good Lord would that we hold us much more in the beholding of Him, and yet not wholly leave the beholding of ourselves, until the time when we shall be brought up above, where we shall dwell with the Lord Jesus, according to our heart's desire, and be filled with joy without end, beholding Him as He is.*(*From Reflectionsof Julian, Anchorite of Norwich, 1326)

18 - Heb_8:1

CHAPTER X V I I I. THE CROWNING POINT:

CHRIST THE HIGH PRIEST IN HEAVEN.

Hebrews 8:1

JESUS is our High Priest in heaven. This is the crowning-point in which all the previous teaching of our epistle culminates. It is the summary of the apostle’s preceding argument, in the sense that it is the highest and central-point towards which his exposition had constantly tended, and in which all the truths which he had deduced from Scripture are manifested in the clearest and most convincing light. "We have such an High Priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens." This crowning-point may be perceived already in the very commencement of the epistle; for there the apostle declares, that God has spoken to us in His Son, whom He hath appointed heir of all things, and by whom also He made the worlds; and that Jesus, after having by Himself purged our sins, took His position, according to the prophetic word, at the right hand of God, where He is now in royal power and dignity. If as Son Jesus is at the right hand of God, then it follows of necessity that the whole dispensation connected with the priesthood of Aaron and the first sanctuary has vanished, and that, no longer on earth, but in the Holy of Holies is now the true and eternal High Priest, the Minister of the new and better covenant. Here is the solution of all the difficulties which perplexed the Hebrews; here the only safety and consolation amidst the persecutions and temptations which pressed sorely upon them living in the midst of the Jews, who were still cleaving to that which was vanishing away. The Lord Jesus is our High Priest in heaven. These simple but majestic and weighty words sum up the teaching of the first eight chapters of our epistle. This is the crowning-point of the apostle’s profound and massive argument, Jesus, who suffered and died, is consecrated the priest forever after the order of Melchisedec, after the power of an endless life. He is the minister of the heavenly sanctuary and of the true tabernacle. The apostle seems to a superficial reader to interrupt frequently the thread of his argument, when out of the abundant love, sorrow, and solicitude of his heart he addresses solemn warnings and exhortations to the Hebrews, but he never for a single moment loses sight of that luminous center of doctrine and consolation, Christ, the Priest in heaven; his constant aim is to direct the minds and the hearts of the Hebrews to that perfection which in the glorified Saviour is given to all believers. In the very first verses he sounds the key-note, describing Jesus as the Son, and declaring His royal priesthood. The eternal glory of the Son, His divine power in creation, His central position in the future inheritance, His supremacy over the angels, His session at the right hand of God - all these great truths are brought before us, to show how perfect is the royal priesthood of Him who is on the throne. His true and real humanity, the mystery of His incarnation, is brought before us in the second chapter and for the same purpose; He was made like unto His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest. When in the third chapter the Lord Jesus is contrasted with Moses, it is to show that Jesus, the High Priest, is the perfect Mediator, that He, the Son, is greater than Moses, the servant. Our responsibility is indeed

greater than that of Israel in the wilderness, yet while it becomes us in our earthly pilgrimage to take heed, to fear, and to labour in order to enter into rest, and while the Word of God is given unto us, that it may judge and discern the thoughts and intents of the heart, we have more abundant reason to hold fast our profession, beholding Jesus, the great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, boldly we draw near to the throne of grace, for He is touched with the feeling of our infirmities. (Chap. 4) And after showing how Jesus fulfilled all the requirements of priesthood, being chosen from among men and called of God, and how in the garden of Gethsemane He entered into the lowest depth of human weakness and obtained the victory in the severest test of faith, he reminds the Hebrews that Jesus, being made perfect, both by the obedience which He learned by the things He suffered, and by His resurrection and ascension, was addressed by God an High Priest after the order of Melchisedec. (Chap. 5) Thus he has reached the long-desired and much-loved summit, but before he describes the glorious sanctuary, which opens here to our view his heart fails him by reason of the weak and infantine condition into which the Hebrews had lapsed, and by a most solemn and piercing, yet affectionate exhortation, he entreats them to go on unto perfection, that is unto that which is within the veil, to behold Him who by His death became the High Priest after the order of Melchisedec.

What is implied in this mysterious and comprehensive word, uttered by David when he was in the Spirit, and uttered by him as the solemn declaration and oath of the Most High, is explained in chapter 7, and again in this chapter, in connection with the new and everlasting covenant in which we stand. For if the priesthood is changed, there is of necessity also a change of the dispensation. And this according to God’s counsel. For even Jeremiah, six centuries before the advent of our Lord, had announced that the Lord would make a new covenant with the house of Judah and Israel. The High Priest is in heaven, the covenant is new and eternal, and therefore the sanctuary must likewise be in heaven. And to this latter point our attention is now turned. The old dispensation had a priesthood and an earthly tabernacle. The new dispensation has a high priest and a heavenly sanctuary, and the worship of believers - all of whom are priests - is in spirit and in substance, that is, in heaven itself, in the holy of holies. In no other portion of the new covenant Scriptures is the High Priesthood of the Lord Jesus explained. Hence in this precious and most essential epistle, more than in any other book, stress is laid upon the ascension rather than the resurrection, and upon the fact that Jesus is in heaven. In the book of Revelation also (between which and our epistle are many interesting and instructive points of resemblance and connection) heaven is brought before us; but there it is in connection with the royal dignity and power of our glorified Redeemer. There we behold Jesus, the Lamb that was slain, in the midst of the throne. From Him proceed all the manifestations of the Creator-power and government of God; and all the developments of history, as well as its ultimate consummation, are represented as having their central source in the Son of God, who died once, and who liveth now for evermore. But in our epistle heaven is viewed as the sanctuary, where the High Priest intercedes for us, and whence He bestows upon us all the benedictions of the new covenant in virtue of the blood, by which He entered into the holy of holies.

It has been noticed by attentive readers of the Scriptures that in this epistle, concerning whose authorship there is much difficulty, the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus is not brought forward prominently, as it is in all Pauline epistles. This remark is perfectly correct, and of great importance. Let me remind you that in all the epistles of the apostle Paul, as well as in most

apostolic epistles, the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead holds a very prominent position. In this epistle it is mentioned but once, in that beautiful passage where the apostle speaks of the God of peace who brought again (or rather brought up, i.e. to heaven, ■ναγαγ■ν) from the grave the great Shepherd of the flock. And here also the reference to the resurrection is more, as leading to the ascension and consummation of His exaltation. In all other epistles, where the apostle speaks of man's justification, of man's renewal, and of the headship of the Lord Jesus Christ, it is not the ascension but the resurrection which is represented as the great crisis, and as the foundation. He, who was delivered for our offences, was raised again for our justification. If we believe in our heart that God raised Jesus from dead, we shall be saved. Thus Paul teaches in his epistle to the Romans. "Now is Christ risen from the dead," is his triumphant exclamation in his epistle to the Corinthians, and therefore our faith is not vain, and we are no longer in our sins. Together with Christ - thus he explains to the Ephesians other aspects of this central truth, we, who were dead in trespasses and sins, were quickened, and as the first-born from the dead, Christ is the Head of the Church, is the teaching of the epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.* How important is the place assigned in them to the resurrection of our Lord in connection with the new life of the believer. As risen with Christ, he is to seek the things that are above, and in the description of the apostle's spiritual experience, we find that his great and constant desire was to know "the power of Christ's resurrection." (* Romans 4:25; Romans 10:9; 1 Cor. 15;Ephesians 1:20; Eph. 2;Colossians 1:18;Php 3:10.) The question naturally arises: "Why is it that in the Epistle to the Hebrews the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ is comparatively put into the background, and all the emphasis is laid upon the ascension?" The answer is simple. The object of the Epistle to the Hebrews was to comfort and also to exhort the Jews, whose faith was sorely tried because they were excluded from the services of the temple in Jerusalem; to confirm unto them the great truth, that they had the reality and the substance of those things which were only temporary and signs, and that the real sanctuary was not upon earth but high in the heavens, and that Jesus had gone to be the minister of the holy things, and of the true or substantial tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. Hence all the emphasis must be laid upon this, that Jesus, the Son of God, in human nature, by virtue of the blood which was shed upon Golgotha, has entered above all heavens into the real and true heaven, and on the throne of God, according to the prediction of the 110th Psalm, is a priest now after the order of Melchisedec. But in order to understand more fully what is meant by heaven, where the Lord Jesus Christ is now exercising the office of High Priest, let us see with what great clearness the doctrine of the ascension of the Lord Jesus is brought forward throughout the whole of the new covenant Scriptures.

Before the incarnation, the true sanctuary was not yet made manifest; but when the Word of God was made flesh He tabernacled in the midst of us, and we beheld the glory of the Only-begotten. Israel was taught that God, who made the heavens and the earth, was omnipresent, and yet combined with this spiritual conception of the omnipresence of God was the revelation of a heavenly sanctuary, of an eternal throne, of a special locality, in which the presence and the glory of God were manifested, unto which the prayers and offerings of His people ascend, and from which divine blessings and powers descend.* With the advent of the Son of God commenced the full manifestation of heaven. At His birth the angels sang, Glory to God in the highest; for the incarnation of Jesus was the unfolding and the accomplishment of that eternal counsel, in which the glory of God shines forth most brightly. The announcement of Jesus to the first disci ples, whom He gathered, was: From henceforth shall ye see the heavens opened. The kingdom of

heaven is come, was the declaration of the Prophet of Galilee. He speaks of the kingdom of heaven and the reward in heaven to the poor in spirit, unto whom He unfolds the blessedness and the character of His kingdom and righteousness. And in that solemn and decisive moment, in which Jesus, the Son of God, the heavenly High Priest, is brought before the representative of the Aaronic priesthood and the old Levitical dispensation, His testimony is, "From henceforth shall ye see the Son of man sitting at the right hand of power." (*Compare next Lecture.) Now let us look upon the ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ as it is narrated or testified in the Gospels.

I begin with the gospel in which the ascension, as an actual event, is not mentioned - the Gospel of John. The apostle, who dwells so emphatically on the divinity of the Lord Jesus, gives us no account of the ascension. Though not narrated, however, it is frequently alluded to; as in a similar manner the institution of the Lord's Supper is never mentioned by this evangelist, though his gospel is full of references to, and expositions of, that eating and drinking of which the Lord's Supper is the outward representation and blessed seal. Let us collect now the testimony of this gospel concerning the ascension. Jesus says to Nathanael, "Ye shall see the heavens open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man," the great Mediator between heaven and earth. He says to Nicodemus, "No man hath ascended up to heaven, but He that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven." Jesus here explains, that He had come down from heaven in order to go back again into heaven, to be the source of regeneration and life. Again, in the Saviour's arguments with the Jews, when they are astonished and offended at His words, especially at His declaration that He is the Bread come down from heaven, and that we are to live by Him, the Lord asks, "Doth this offend you? What and if ye shall see the Son of man ascend up where He was before?"1 Did He not refer to His ascension when He said to the unbelieving Jews, "Ye shall seek me, and shall not find me: and where I am, thither ye cannot come?2 Or when on that most solemn last night He spoke to His disciples "plainly" - "I came forth from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father"3 - of His Father's house and its many mansions, of the place He was going to prepare for us, of His return unto glory, and not merely to the apostles, but before them to His heavenly Father. Lastly, what fuller announcement of the ascension than His gracious and majestic words to Mary Magdalene: "Touch me not; for I am not yet ascended to my Father: but go to my brethren, and say unto them, I ascend unto my Father, and your Father; and to my God, and your God."4 When we consider these passages, which belong to every portion of this gospel, from its commencement to its conclusion, which consist of the Saviour's own words, addressed to inquirers, to opponents, to disciples, and to the Father; when we consider the manner in which the Lord connects in these passages His ascension with His pre-mundane glory, with His eternal relation to the Father, and with His mediatorial work, we feel that although the ascension of our Lord is not narrated by the Apostle John, it is taught by him in the most profound, radical, and comprehensive manner. (1John 6:62.2John 7:34.3John 16:28. 4 John 20:17.) In the Gospel of Mark, which narrates the incidents of the life of Christ in the most terse and graphic style, the ascension of the Lord Jesus is mentioned in one verse, in which everything that is necessary is comprehended; namely, that He was taken away from the earth, and that He took His position at the right hand of the Majesty on high. In the Gospel of Luke the ascension is narrated most fully and circumstantially. Both the place - Bethany, the Mount of Olives - and the manner of His ascension are mentioned. "Jesus lifted up His hands, and blessed them. And while He blessed them, He was parted from them, and carried up into heaven." The beloved physician, unto whom it

was given to write the gospel of the Son of man, thus describes the ascension of our Lord with most instructive and touching detail. In his account we hear the loving voice and see the pierced hands of our blessed Saviour. In the Gospel of Matthew the ascension is not narrated. It is distinctly implied in Christ's reply to the adjuration of the high priest: "Tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God. Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven."* In this gospel Jesus is chiefly represented as the Messiah, the King of the Jews. The great object is to show that Jesus, though rejected and crucified by His people, is the theocratic Lord; that the stone rejected by the builders is the corner-stone. Hence the conclusion, while implying the ascension in the words, "All power is given unto me in heaven and earth," points to the consummation of this age, to the restoration of Israel, and the Messianic reign. (*Matthew 26:63-64.)

Thus we have the most spiritual and theological account of the ascension in the Gospel of John; the most concise and terse statement in the Gospel of Mark; the most circumstantial and, if I may say so, human description, entering into the affections of our Lord, in the Gospel of the physician Luke; and a statement of the ascension of Christ, with special reference to His theocratic position as the Messiah and King of the Jews, in the Gospel of Matthew.

Now pass we on to that which is, as it were, the neck, the connecting-link, between the gospels and the epistles and Revelation - the Acts of the Apostles, written by the evangelist Luke, the friend and companion of the apostle Paul.

We have in the first chapter of the book of Acts another account of the ascension, and from a different point of view. Let us only bring to the reading of the Scripture a reverential spirit, taking for granted that the men that wrote it, even apart from the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, were men who approached their high task with the greatest solemnity and concentration of mind, whose every expression in the description of the grand events they narrate was based upon deep thought, and who always kept a specific and important purpose in view. In the book of Acts the evangelist Luke wishes to describe to us how the root of that tree that was now to be developed was not on earth, but in heaven. Therefore he shows unto us how, when Jesus parted with His disciples, they asked Him, "Lord, wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" It is not, as it is generally explained, a question of ignorance, or a question of prejudice, but a question of true spiritual insight into the Word of God. They had been taught by our blessed Saviour after His resurrection that it was from not understanding the whole Scripture that they expected the glory of the Messiah to be revealed without or before His sufferings. It was impossible for Christ to enter into glory, unless first He died upon the cross. But now that He had died, that He had offered the sacrifice, and that His glorified humanity had come forth from the grave, what hindered Him to establish the kingdom of Israel? Why should not now the prophecies be immediately fulfilled? If the apostles had asked Jesus the question before His crucifixion, "Wilt thou at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" the Lord Jesus would have told them, that now it behooved Him to suffer. But now that He had suffered the question of the disciples was a perfectly correct one; nor does Jesus in any way contradict them, but His answer confirms the kingdom. He only tells them that it is delayed, it is postponed: there is a new development. The river has taken a new turn unforeseen by Israel.

Now is the time of the Church, consisting both of Jews and Gentiles in one body. Its characteristic is not rule, but testimony; not power, but suffering; not Israel as a nation, and other nations, converted as such; but from among Israel and all the nations a peculiar people, unacknowledged and unloved by the world, witnesses who are to wait for the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven. It is in the Acts, and not in the Gospel of Luke, where it would not be in accordance with the scope of the whole book, that the ascension is related from this point of view. Jesus is King of Israel. He is not forgetting the earth, or the promises, which God had given to the fathers, of which He is the minister unto the circumcision. But in the meanwhile the apostles must be witnesses in Judaea, and in Galilee, and in Samaria, and to the uttermost ends of the earth. And finally, this Jesus shall so come in like manner, the angels declare, as ye have seen Him go up into heaven. The first chapter having thus explained the relation of the ascended Lord to Israel, and the earthly promise, and the nature of the intermediate Church dispensation, which does not set aside or take the position of a substitute of the earthly promise of the Christocracy, the rest of the book narrates the acts, not so much of the apostles, as of the Lord Jesus, the glorified Head of the Church. It is to the ascended Lord that Peter attributes the gift of the Holy Ghost on the day of Pentecost. It is of Jesus in heaven, and of His return thence to fulfill the promises spoken of by all God's holy prophets since the world began (for Enoch, the seventh from Adam, spoke of the coming of the Lord with His saints), that the apostle of the circumcision testifies, after the first miracle in Jerusalem. It is to the ascended Lord Jesus that the prayer of the proto-martyr is directed. The ascended Jesus appears unto Saul of Tarsus, and calls him to be His disciple and His apostle to the Gentiles. The Lord from heaven appears throughout this book as the Head and Ruler of the Church; He guides and blesses His messengers; He opens the heart of Lydia; He comforts and encourages the fainting heart of the apostle Paul in Corinth; His hand is with the evangelists, so that many believe.* The whole life, strength, and victory of the Church are derived from Jesus, seated at the right hand of God, who is in this book called emphatically Lord. (*Acts 2:33; Acts 3:20; Acts 7:56; Acts 9:5; Acts 16:14, etc.)

Let us glance now at the Pauline Epistles. In the teaching of this apostle we naturally expect that the ascension should hold a prominent position; for it was as the ascended Lord of glory that Jesus first appeared unto him, and thus we find in all his epistles the triumphant conclusion, the glorious consummation, of Christ's life and work on earth. He who was God manifest in the flesh was after His death "received up into glory."*(*1 Timothy 3:16.) In the Epistle to the Philippians we can see more clearly and fully than in any other portion of Scripture the peculiarity of the apostle's inward life. There is no more vivid and accurate portrait of his spiritual individuality. In other epistles we learn more of his conflicts both before and after his conversion (Romans and Corinthians); here the features of his spiritual countenance are, as it were, in repose, and we behold them in their most real and their most beautiful and placid character. And throughout this epistle we see that Christ in heaven was the apostle's constant thought, strength, joy, and aim. His experience was different from that of the twelve disciples. In their case there was gradual development. They knew Jesus of Nazareth as their Master and Teacher, as the Prophet of Galilee, as their Friend. Even after recognizing in Him the Messiah, they did not understand the mystery of His sufferings. After three years discipleship Philip asked, "Show us the Father." The risen Jesus taught them the whole counsel of God, and at Pentecost they entered into the full enjoyment of light. Not so with Paul. Jesus, the Lord from heaven, appeared unto him, and beholding Him, he entered into a new region, a new life. Here he beheld God's righteousness;

here he beheld perfection in glory; here he beheld the source of life and strength; here he beheld joy, which no circumstances could cloud, and the hope of the consummation of blessedness. What is earth now to him? What his former righteousness and all the national distinctions in which he used to trust? What are all things compared with the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus?*(*Phil. 3.)

"To me to live is Christ," "Rejoice in the Lord." "I can do all things through Christ which strengtheneth me." "Our citizenship is in heaven, from whence we look for the Lord." "Christ in heaven," this is his aim and hope; to be like Him, even in His glorious body, this is the perfection, heavenly in its character, for which at the return of the Lord he awaits in hope. In the Epistle to the Romans, and in kindred epistles, the object of the apostle Paul is to lead the sinner to God. He begins with man in his present condition. He shows the depth of the fall, the guilt of sin, the helplessness of the flesh; then the propitiation that was made by Christ, the death of the Lord Jesus, the resurrection, and the consequent gift of the Holy Ghost. He goes from earth upwards. Such is not the method of the apostle John. He always goes from heaven earthwards. He begins with God - the life that was with God from the beginning, the Word that was with God, and is now manifested to us. The apostle Paul begins with man, Jew or Gentile - the sinner guilty and condemned, dead and helpless. Now from this point of view the death and resurrection of Christ must needs form the center. There all lines meet, as in the central nexus. Yet the end must always be Christ enthroned in heaven - Christ at the right hand of God. Thus, in answer to the question, "Who is he that condemneth?" his answer culminates in the heavenly exaltation of our Lord. "It is Christ that died, yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us."*(* Romans 8:34. Compare also the expression, "Who is over all" (Romans 9:5); and the striking passage,Romans 10:6.) In the Epistles to the Corinthians the apostle's testimony is of Christ, the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, and he brings before us the glorious hope, "As is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly."1 He describes the attitude of the believer, living in the spirit and liberty of the New Testament, as with open face beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord; for the Lord Christ, exalted in heaven, is that Spirit.2(1 1 Corinthians 15:48; 22 Cor. 3.)

Look again at his experimental and prophetic epistles. We have already referred to the Epistle to the Philippians, as a comment on the words: "Our citizenship is in heaven."1 To the Thessalonians he writes more fully about our waiting for the Son of God from heaven, and of the descent of the Lord Himself to gather His saints.2 In his Epistles to Timothy he concludes his exulting and rhythmical summary of Christian truth, "Received into glory," the first link of the golden chain being God manifest in the flesh.3(1Php 3:20; 21Thess. 1 and 4.31 Timothy 3:16.)

Again, in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, which we may call Christological, referring chiefly to the person of Christ, the ascension of the Lord holds a very prominent position. In the Epistle to the Ephesians, although Christ is not spoken of as High Priest, yet His exaltation at the right hand of God is represented in the same manner as in our epistle. From the very outset the apostle speaks of all spiritual blessings as in heavenly places in Christ, and of the Lord as exalted by the Father far above all principality and power, and might, and dominion at His own right hand in the heavenlies, in order to be the head over all things to the Church. In like manner he connects in the fourth chapter Christ's rule over, union with, and gifts to the Church, with His ascension "far above all heavens, that He might fill all things." As in the Hebrews, Christ as High Priest is shown

to be in heaven, so here Christ, the Head and Bridegroom of the Church, the Center and Heir of all things. The Epistle to the Colossians contains the same teaching, and with some new aspects and applications. Here the apostle connects the pre-eminence of Christ, as the first-begotten of the dead and as the Head of the Church, with His eternal glory as the Word by whom all things were made. He shows that being risen and exalted with Christ we have been transplanted out of the region of law and earthly elements (touch not, taste not, handle not), out of the region of shadows and types, into the liberty and substance of heavenly realities; hence His exhortation, "Seek the things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God."* How very striking and close the resemblance is here with the teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews. (*CompareColossians 1:15withHebrews 1:1-3.)

Thus we find in all (the other) Pauline writings the same importance attached to the culminating part of Christ's first advent - His ascension into heaven.* [*Peter, who was an eye-witness of the ascension (as he was likewise one of the three favoured disciples who were with Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, and thus saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom; compareMatthew 16:28with2 Peter 1:16), declared with joyous emphasis the heavenly exaltation and power of the Lord both in his addresses to the Jews (Acts passim), and in his epistles. "He is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto Him." "God raised Him up from the dead, and gave Him glory." (1 Peter 3:22; 1 Peter 1:21.) The book of Revelation is from beginning to end a testimony of the ascended Lord.]

It is because the Son of man, who came down from heaven, hath ascended up into heaven, it is because Jesus is at the right hand of God, that He is the true and perfect mediator between God and man. Him we in common with all believers invoke, Him we adore as Lord; to Him, as exalted by the Father, pertaineth the name above every name, and the homage of the whole creature-world; unto Him, as the Lord in heaven, all celestial and earthly power is given, and all angelic orders are obedient to His command. From His throne in heaven He gives repentance and the remission of sins; from thence He gives unto His Church all needful gifts, even as He at first sent forth the Holy Ghost, because He had been exalted by the right hand of God. From heaven He shall descend and gather His saints, changing their vile bodies, that they may be fashioned like unto His glorious body; from heaven He worketh now, and will work, until He hath subdued all things unto Himself.

Christ in heaven this - sums up all our faith.

Here is our righteousness, and our standing before God; here our storehouse of inexhaustible blessings, and of unsearchable riches: here our armoury, whence we obtain the weapons of our warfare; here is our citizenship, and the hope of our glory.

What is meant by the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens? In the first chapter the apostle had used the similar expression, "the right hand of the Majesty," and with evident reference to the prophecy of the 110th Psalm. The expression does not denote the omnipresence of God; as the creed correctly and significantly says, "Sitteth at the right hand of the Father Almighty" Jesus is now on the throne of omnipotence. He ascended into the eternal, highest, and uncreated heaven. The term denotes the rank of equality which our Lord takes in His glory. He has entered into the participation of the sovereign authority. The right hand is the place of affection, as well as of honour and dignity.* Christ is on the right hand of the Father, being His beloved Son, in

whom He manifests His glory. The right hand is also the symbol of sovereign power and rule. Christ is Lord over all. (*So we are told in the 45th Psalm that the bride is to stand at the right hand of the King. As the apostle explains in the epistle to the Corinthians, in accordance with this, the husband is the head of the woman; Christ is the head of the Church; God is the head of Christ. The husband is the head of the wife; God is the head of Christ. The wife is the glory of the husband; Christ is the glory of God.)

Great is the mystery of the incarnation - the Son of God in human nature, both before and after His exaltation. It was not the human nature of Christ that suffered upon the cross, but the Son of God in human nature. It is not the human nature that is glorified at the right hand of the Father; but the Son of God in human nature, who humbled Himself, is now exalted above all heavens. Unto Him all power is given; the government of all things is upon His shoulder; Jesus rules now. In the book of Revelation His royal dignity is unveiled. There we behold the First-begotten of the dead possessing the keys of hell and of death; the Lamb, who alone can open the book; the Governor, the Lord; who overrules and directs all events; who controls all storms and tempests, and unto whose kingdom all developments of history, and all conflicts and movements among angels and among the nations on earth must serve; who shall finally be revealed, acknowledged, and obeyed as King of kings, and Lord of lords. The royal aspect of the word, "Sit thou at my right hand," is explained in the Apocalypse, where we behold the Lamb in the midst of the throne; in our epistle, the priestly aspect of the word is unfolded.

Heaven being the locality of Christ’s priesthood, it must needs be perfect, eternal, spiritual, and substantial. What are the things in which Christ is now occupied as a priest? In one respect He rests, because He finished His work upon the earth, and therefore He is described as sitting down on His Father’s throne; His is now the perfect and peaceful rest of victory, for He has overcome. But, on tire other hand, His is now a constant priestly activity. Every single individual that is brought unto God, is brought through His intercession; and day by day Christ is occupied with all His children who are upon earth, bestowing upon them the benefits which He has purchased with His blood, sustaining their spiritual life, and overruling all things for their good.

If Christ is in heaven, we must lift up our eyes and hearts to heaven. There are things above. The things above are the spiritual blessings in heavenly places.1 "Seek those things which are above;"2 faith and love, hope and patience, meekness, righteousness, and strength. The things above are also the future things for which we wait, seeing that our inheritance is not here upon earth. All that is pertaining unto the inheritance "incorruptible, and undefined, and that fadeth not away," belongs unto those things which Christ has now to minister in the tabernacle which God has made, and not man.3 Our transfigured body, our perfectly enlightened mind, our soul entirely filled with the love of God, all the strength and gifts for government (for we shall be called to reign with Christ upon the earth), all those powers and blessings which we have now only by faith and in germ, are in the heavenly places with Christ, who shall bring them to us when He comes again at the command of the Father. (1 Ephesians 1:3; 2Colossians 3:1; 3Compare 1 Peter 1.)

Let us pause here to examine the character of our faith and of our walk in the light of this truth. Our High Priest is in Heaven. The New Covenant Scripture explains to us that there are two kingdoms, two realms, two atmospheres or methods of life. The one shall pass away, and the other shall remain forever. The one is the world and the earth in its present condition; the other is heavenly,

and shall abide for evermore. The one belongs to the first creation, and the power of sin and death; the other belongs to the second creation, to the power of redemption and life through righteousness. To believe is to see the things which are unseen and eternal. It is to behold the land that is afar off, and to take possession of it."1 It is to enter into the kingdom2 prepared for us from the foundation of the world, existing at present, and ready to be manifested at the appearing of our Lord. It is to cherish the lively, animating, and purifying hope of the inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and unfading, even the heavenly kingdom.3 It is to be transplanted into this unseen and yet most real world of blessing and of power. It is to mind no longer earthly things,4 and to have the affections set upon the things above. It is to be entrusted with the true riches.5 Such is the nature of faith.6 It is to prefer spiritual things to carnal; eternal things to temporal; real things to things which are mere shadows. [1"Faith is the discovery and conquest of a new country." - J. MULLER.2 Matthew 25:34; 3 1 Peter 1:4;Colossians 1:12;2 Timothy 4:18; 4τ■■π■γ■ιαφρονο■τ■■.(Php 3:19.)5■ληθιν■ν.(Luke 16:11.)6 Hebrews 11:1;2 Corinthians 4:18.]

"Lay not up for yourselves treasure on earth; but lay up for yourselves treasure in heaven." Hence, the whole aim and purpose of our existence here below, all our endeavour, all our works, all our diligence, ought to be given to this one thing, the kingdom of God, which remains forever. So, while we are occupied with earthly duties, our great object should always be to lay up treasure for ourselves in heaven; to have our affections set upon the things which are above, that thus we may learn Christ in the occupations and discipline of our present life; to be filled with the mind which was in Christ Jesus, who humbled Himself, and obeyed the .Father in love; to be heavenly-minded, as they who have a lively hope, and whose citizenship is in heaven. Such is the Christian life - other-worldly, heavenly. A spurious or superficial conversion dwells rather on the peace of God than on the God of peace, contemplates the cross of Christ and not the Christ of the cross, rejoices prematurely in deliverance from punishment, instead of cleaving in repentance and faith to Jesus, who delivers us from this present evil world, and raises us unto newness of life; heavenly in its character and hope. Wretched and fatal self-deception, to imagine that after a worldly, selfish, self-centered life upon earth we shall be transplanted into the kingdom of glory, into a blessedness of which we have had no foretaste, into an inheritance of which we have received no earnest in the gift of the indwelling Spirit. Jesus, who died on the cross, is now in heaven; it is only from heaven that the blessings of redemption, forgiveness, and the eternal love of God, are now bestowed by Him; He never delivers from the wrath to come without drawing us unto Himself, without separating us by His cross from the dominion of sin and the tyranny of self, without sending into our hearts the Spirit, as the Spirit of life. If our life is now hid with Christ in God, then, when Christ, who is our life, shall appear, we also shall appear with Him in glory. Our citizenship is in heaven, and Jesus, whom we now love and serve, will come to receive us unto Himself. From the lowest depth of sin and guilt, of weakness and fear, look up to heaven, and behold there the great High Priest. It is because He finished the transgression, and made an end of sins, and made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness, that Jesus is on the throne of God. Behold in Him the forgiveness of sin, righteousness everlasting, perfect access to the Father, the fountain of renewing grace, of upholding strength, and of endless blessedness. Only believe! Our works and merit are of no avail. Into this height none can ascend. Jesus, who went to the Father, is the way. Faith beholds the great High Priest who died for sinners on the cross, and who as the sinner’s righteousness is now before God; faith beholds Jesus at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and faith can rest, and worship, and say, "The God and Father

of the Lord Jesus Christ is my God and my Father."

19 - Heb_8:1-2

CHAPTER X I X. THE TRUE TABERNACLE.

Hebrews 8:1-2.

IT is the locality where the great High Priest now exercises His functions which the apostle emphasizes. Here the contrast is not so much that of law and gospel, of grace and works, as in other epistles; the contrast is between the earthly and temporary and the heavenly and eternal. In spirit and reality, the Levitical dispensation terminated when the veil of the temple was rent in twain; actually and in outward appearance, it continued till the destruction of Jerusalem and of the temple declared unto all the world that the times of the old dispensation had come to an end. While the temple was still in existence, it was difficult for the Hebrews to understand the heavenly character of their calling and worship. It seemed to them that faith in the Messiah excluded them from the blessings and privileges of Messiah's nation. Levitical services in the earthly sanctuary still continued. Where was the place of believing Hebrews? The apostle shows that Jesus is High Priest in heaven, and that therefore ours is a heavenly sanctuary, where all is substance, and possessed of an eternal vitality and glory.

All this is implied in the fundamental fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God. The Lord said of Peter's confession that on this rock the church is built; but even Peter did not fully understand for some time the truths which necessarily follow from faith in the Christ, the Son of God. The Priesthood of the Son must needs be heavenly and eternal. It cannot be connected with the old covenant; but it is inseparably connected with the new, in which divine love and life are truly bestowed through the righteousness of grace, and in which forgiven and renewed sinners worship the Father in spirit and in truth. It must break down the wall of separation between Jew and Gentile; for through the exalted Saviour the Spirit is given, by whom both have the same access to the Father. Hence the apostle returns at the end of the seventh chapter to the key-note struck at first - Jesus the Son.

If our High Priest is Jesus, God and man in one person, the only mediator, the sanctuary in which we worship is above. He is the minister* of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. This tabernacle is contrasted with the tabernacle in the wilderness. It is "true," in the sense in which Jesus says, "I am the true vine;" that is, the real and substantial vine, of which the outward and visible vines are merely emblems. (*λ■ιτουργ■■- compareIsaiah 61:6;Jeremiah 33:21;Nehemiah 10:39- an expression used for the service of the priests in the sanctuary, especially as connected with the sacrifices and offerings.) In the second place, this tabernacle was made, not with hands, and not through the mediation of human beings, as was the tabernacle in the wilderness; but it was made by God Himself. And, in the third place, this tabernacle is not a tent in the wilderness, but it is an abiding place in the heavenlies, there to be forever. The tabernacle is one of the most important and instructive types. Here is such a variety of truths, here is such a fullness and manifoldness of spiritual teaching, that our great difficulty is to combine all the various lessons and aspects which it presents.

Now, the tabernacle has no fewer than three meanings. In the first place, the tabernacle is a type, a visible illustration, of that heavenly place in which God has His dwelling. In the second place, the tabernacle is a type of Jesus Christ, who is the meeting-place between God and man. And, in the third place, the tabernacle is a type of Christ in the Church - of the communion of Jesus with all believers.*(*The analogy between the tabernacle and man, or rather the individual believer, has struck Luther. He calls the outer court the body, the holy place the soul, and the most holy the spirit. As the passage is in itself interesting and instructive, I add a translation. Speaking of theMagnificat(Luke 1:46), Luther says: "Scripture divides man into three parts, as the apostle writes (1 Thessalonians 5:23), ‘The God of peace sanctify you wholly; that your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved unblameable.’ And each of these three, as well as the whole man, is divided in another manner into two, spirit and flesh, which is a division, not of human nature, but of its condition. That is, each of the three may be either good or bad, spiritual or carnal, of which subject we do not treat here. The spirit is the highest and noblest in man, whereby he is able to grasp incomprehensible, invisible, eternal things; and it is, in short, the dwelling-place of faith, and of God’s word, of which David speaks (Psalms 51:12), put into my inmost being a right spirit. (ComparePsalms 78:37.) The second is the soul; that is, the same spirit according to its natural aspect, in so far as it animates the body, and is often called in scripture life; for the spirit can live without the body, but not the body without the spirit. This soul, we notice, lives and works constantly even in our sleep, and can perceive and understand, not spiritual things, but the things of reason; for reason is the light in this house, and the soul cannot be free from error unless the spirit illumines and rules it with faith or the higher light. . . . The third is the body with its members, the works of which are only exercise and habit, according to the knowledge of the soul, and the faith of the spirit. . . . Now of this I shall show a similitude from Scripture. Moses made a tabernacle with three distinct parts. (Exodus 26:33-34.) The first,sanctumsanctorum, where God dwelt, and in which there was no light. The second,sanctum, in which stood the candlestick with seven branches. The third was calledatrium, or court, that was without, and in the open daylight. Which is a picture of the Christian. His spirit issanctumsanctorum, God’s dwelling-place, in faith without sight; for he believes what he cannot see, or feel, or comprehend. His soul is sanctum, in which are seven lights, reason, discernment, knowledge, and understanding of outward things. His body isatrium, this is open and patent to all, and every one can see what he does, and how he lives." No doubt this analogy is correct. (Compare on the distinction - soul and spirit, 1 Cor. 2) What is true of the whole Church, is true of each individual member; but to find in this the purport of the tabernacle chiefly or exclusively is erroneous and untenable.)

Moses, when he went up into the mount, after the glory of the Lord had appeared unto him and unto the elders, received from God a wonderful revelation.1 There was shown unto him - in what manner it is impossible for us to conceive - a pattern of the heavenly places; not the heavenly realities themselves, but he beheld, most likely in a vision, the model of heavenly places, the picture of heavenly realities. And according to that model he was instructed to give the orders in the framing of the tabernacle, and to execute the design; so that the tabernacle in the wilderness was to be a faithful representation of what he had seen, as far as it is possible to represent heavenly and spiritual realities by outward and visible things. Surely when God showed unto Moses the pattern of heavenly things, He showed unto him also the great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, by whom there would be brought about not merely a reconciliation, but also the indwelling of God in the hearts of His people; and as Abraham saw the day of Christ, and

rejoiced and was glad in it - as Isaiah, when he heard the trisagion of the seraphim, beheld the glory of the Lord, even of the Christ,2 - so there can be no doubt that, when Moses the man of God was on the mount, there was revealed unto him the mystery of the counsel of God, the incarnation, and the mediatorial work of the Lord Jesus Christ. [1It is stated four times in the book of Exodus that the tabernacle was built after the pattern shown in the mount. (Exodus 25:9; Exodus 25:40; Exodus 26:30; Exodus 27:8.) To this Stephen also alludes. (Acts 7:44.) In like manner the temple was built according to divine direction, as we read (1 Chronicles 28:11) that "David gave to Solomon his son the pattern of the porch, and of the houses, . . . and the pattern of all that he had by the Spirit." (CompareHebrews 9:8, where, speaking of the high priest's yearly entrance into the Holy of Holies, it is said, "The Holy Ghost this signifying.")2John 12] The tabernacle presented wonderful truths* to Israel. In the sacrifices and ordinances of the tabernacle God declared unto His people the forgiveness of their sins; He brought them near unto Himself through expiation and mediation; He healed their diseases and comforted their hearts. But the ultimate object in all this was to reveal Himself, to manifest His divine perfection, to show forth His glory. In all the gifts of pardon, and in all the privileges of approach unto God, the Lord revealed the perfection and manifold glory of Himself. Here Israel beheld the glory of the Redeemer-God. Everywhere the twofold object was accomplished, the need of sinful, guilty, and failing man was supplied, and in this very grace the character and glory of Jehovah was revealed. Thus, as in Christ crucified we possess all we need, and behold all the thoughts and purposes of God, so in the tabernacle the believing Israelite, receiving pardon and help, was taught to exclaim, "Who is a God like unto Thee?" (*Psalms 119:18: "Wondrous things." (Compare Lectures V. and VI.) The tabernacle was a symbol of God's dwelling. There is a sanctuary, wherein is the especial residence and manifestation of the glorious presence of God. Solomon, although he confesses that the heaven of heavens cannot contain God, yet prays that the Lord may hear in heaven His dwelling-place.1 Jeremiah testifies, "A glorious high throne from the beginning is the place of our sanctuary."2 The visions of Isaiah and of Ezekiel also bring before us the heavens opened and the likeness of a throne, and the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord; the likeness as the appearance of a man above upon the throne. 3 Of this heavenly locality David speaks, when he asks, Who shall abide in thy tabernacle? who shall dwell in thy holy hill?4 In the book of Revelation we receive still further confirmation of this truth. "And the temple of God was opened in heaven, and there was seen in His temple the ark of the covenant;" and again, "And after that I looked, and, behold, the temple of the tabernacle of the testimony in heaven was opened."5 As in the tabernacle there was a distinction between the Holy of Holies and the Holy Place, so we read of the throne of God and of the temple of the Redeemed, of Mount Zion and of the heavenly Jerusalem. Almost all expressions which are employed in describing the significance of the tabernacle, are also used in reference to heaven. As in heaven so in the tabernacle God has His dwelling, and manifests His grace and glory. The glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle. His manifestation in the tabernacle is generally called glory. God, the King, has His palace in the midst of His people. His palace is the sanctuary. The throne, from which He issues His royal law and the declaration of His sovereign grace, is between the cherubim, a symbol of the heavenly throne of divine majesty. "The temple of thy holiness" is the name both of the earthly and the heavenly sanctuary.6(12 Chron. 6.2 Jeremiah 17:12. 3 Ezekiel 1:26, andpassim.4 Psalms 24:3. 5 Revelation 11:19; Revelation 15:5. 6Psalms 5:7;Habakkuk 2:20.)

God, who dwells in heaven, and from His heavenly throne dispenses all blessings, manifests Himself on earth and holds communion with His people, and the place or sanctuary chosen for this purpose is a symbol of heaven, and there subsists a real connection between the celestial archetype and the earthly image. When Jacob awoke out of his sleep, in which the Lord appeared unto him, he said, "This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven." In the sublime prayer of dedication, Solomon constantly expresses the same thought: "That thine eyes may be open toward this house, even toward the place of which thou hast said, My name shall be there. And hearken thou to the supplication of thy servants, when they shall pray toward this place: and hear thou in heaven thy dwelling-place." But the tabernacle is, secondly, a type of the Lord Jesus Himself. For it is in Him that God dwells with us; in Him dwells the fullness of God head bodily, that we dwelling in Him should have communion with the Father.

See the fulfillment of the type in the first place in the Incarnation. "A body hast thou prepared for me." He was born of the Virgin Mary, conceived of the Holy Ghost. God, and not man, built this tabernacle. He dwelt in the midst of us even as the tabernacle was in the midst of the people. And as that tent, although it was made of materials which were common and earthly, was irradiated and sanctified by the indwelling glory of the Lord, so although He was born of the Virgin Mary, and was in every respect like unto His brethren, and was found in fashion as a man, yet is the humanity of Jesus called that holy thing, for it is the tabernacle in which was beheld the glory of the Only-begotten. In the second chapter of the Gospel of John, the Lord Jesus explains unto us how He is not merely the tabernacle, but the temple that was to endure forever. This temple had first to be broken, Jesus had to die, but it was to be built again on the third day by His resurrection. This is still more fully explained, when it is said that the veil of the temple was rent in twain. As the apostle teaches us, this refers to the crucifixion of our Lord, the veil of His flesh was then rent. For then heaven was not merely revealed, but the way of access was opened to all sinners who believe in Jesus. Nay, more than this. Jesus Himself went thereby into the holy of holies. And now we behold Him at the right hand of God, the true tabernacle, in which all believers worship, even in the very presence of God, before the throne, which is now a throne of grace.

Thus do we dwell in Him, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead; and thus has the Father brought us into His very presence, even in His Son, in a way which could not be adequately symbolized. It was by a gradual development that Jesus became the true tabernacle. First, by His incarnation. The tabernacle was pitched of God, and not of man. The Holy Ghost came upon the Virgin Mary, and the power of the Highest overshadowed her. Then Jesus, in His holy humanity, in His perfect walk of obedience, in His words and works, manifested the Father: God was with Him the Father was in Him; the glory of the Only-begotten shone through His body of humiliation. Then, by His death on the cross, the holy place became, as it were, the holy of holies; the veil being rent, all that separated God from sinners was removed according to righteousness. Then, by His resurrection and ascension, He actually entered in - as our representative - for us, and, so to say, with us.

It is difficult to combine all the aspects of Christ, who is Sanctuary, Priest, Sacrifice; but the more we dwell on Him as the One who is all, the more fully are our hearts established. Behold Him, then, as the tabernacle, where all sacred things are laid up. All that was in the tabernacle is in Him. He is the true Light, the true Bread of the countenance, the true Incense of intercession, with which our prayers and offerings come before God. All spiritual blessings in heavenly places are in

Christ.*(*"All the utensils of holy worship of old, all means of sacred light and purification, were placed and laid up in the tabernacle. And these were all patterns of the heavenly things themselves, which are all laid up in Christ, the true tabernacle. They are all enclosed in Him, and it will be in vain to seek for them elsewhere." - OWEN,Hebrews, vol. 3, p. 666.) But the tabernacle has yet a third aspect. There God and His people meet. The Ark of the Covenant was not merely the throne where God manifested Himself in His holiness, but it was also the throne of relationship with His people. In all the offerings and sacrifices God was manifested, just as regards sin, merciful as regards the sinner; there also God and the sinner met. So throughout the tabernacle there was the manifestation of God, in order to bring Israel into communion with Himself. In the tabernacle man's fellowship with God was symbolized through manifold mediations, sacrifices, and offerings. But in Jesus we have the perfect and eternal fulfillment. In Him God and the sinner meet; in Him God and the believer dwell and have communion. In and from Jesus we have received the Spirit. God now dwells in His saints by His Spirit, whereby they become an holy temple unto Him. We are builded together in Him (Christ) for an habitation of God through the Spirit.* We are, according to the testimony of another apostle, a spiritual house, in which sacrifices and offerings of thanksgiving and obedience are continually brought unto God. In this chosen Temple God has His rest and His joy. This is the glorious gospel: God in Christ, we in Christ, Christ in us. (*Ephesians 2:21-22.)

Thus we have seen that the tabernacle was a picture of heaven, a type of Christ Jesus, and of Christ Jesus in the saints. And therefore, when Jesus Christ comes again with His saints, it will be said, "Lo, the tabernacle of God with men." True, there is a locality where Christ and His saints have their abode. But the glory and substance of that heavenly place is the Lord Jesus, one with the saints. In thinking of the throne of God and of heaven, we must avoid a pantomiming hyper-spiritualism, and on the other hand a carnal and materialistic view. Heaven is not a state merely, but a place; yet in our present condition it is not possible for us to form a conception of that spiritual, substantial, and eternal abode which God has pre pared for them that love Him. It is sufficient for us to receive the Scripture statements, and to rejoice in the descriptions given in the prophetic books, and especially in the Apocalypse, of the glorious home, of the beautiful and eternal city, in which the Lamb and His Bride shall dwell. It is enough for us to believe the word of Jesus, so simple and sweet: "In my Father's house are many mansions. I go to prepare a place for you."*(*T■πον. Is it merely figurative language which the apostles use when they speak of the city of the living God, and proclaim what they beheld in the Spirit? One day John stood on the Mount of Olives, and beheld the city of Jerusalem at his feet, while the Lord ascended into the heights above. Again, on the Lord's-day, he was in the Spirit; an angel led him to a high mountain, and he beheld another Jerusalem descending from heaven. He numbered the gates of this holy city, and measured its walls; he recognized in the Lamb the temple and the light of the city. All this does not sound like mere imagery and similitude. Let us not exchange the green pastures thus revealed to our eyes for the vague abstraction of a colourless existence. There is a higher world in the strictest sense of the word; and into this world,Hishome, the Saviour returned when He ascended. - STEINMEYER.)

It is in heaven, and in heaven only, that the Lord exercises His priesthood. "For if Jesus were on earth He would not be a priest at all." As our Lord belonged to the tribe of Judah, and not to the tribe of Levi, it would have been impossible for Him to exercise the functions connected with the

Aaronic priesthood. How forcible a demonstration to the Jews, who saw the priests of Levi performing their daily office in the temple at Jerusalem. Godly Israelites might even in those days be taught by the image and pattern of heavenly realities; but those Israelites, who had recognized in Jesus the Messiah, were now to walk in the clear brightness of the gospel light, and in the fullness of the day to perceive the temporary and fragmentary character of the Levitical dispensation. But as with the Jews, so with us all, the great difficulty is, to realize the spiritual and heavenly character of worship. To lift up our eyes and hearts to heaven, to feel the power and the reality of things unseen, to hold communion from the heart, as man's holy of holies, with God Himself in His holy of holies - this is, indeed, the gift and grace of God, and blessed are all whom He chooses and causes to approach.*(*"The glory and worship of the temple was that which the Jews would by no means part withal. They chose rather to reject Christ and the gospel, than to part with the temple, and its outward pompous worship. And it is almost incredible how the vain mind of man is addicted unto an outward beauty and splendour in religious worship. Take it away, and with the most you destroy all religion itself: as if there were no beauty but in painting, no evidence of health, or vigour of body. The Christians of old suffered in nothing more from the prejudice of the whole world, Jews and Gentiles, than in this, that they had a religion without temples, altars, images, or any solemnity of worship. And in latter ages men ceased not, until they had brought into Christianity itself a worship vying for external order, ceremony, pomp, and painting, with whatever was in the tabernacle or temple of old, coining short of it principally in this, that that was of God's institution for a time, this of the invention of weak, superstitious, and foolish men. Thus is it in the Church of Rome. And a hard thing it is to raise the minds of men, unto a satisfaction in things merely spiritual and heavenly. They suppose they cannot make a worse change, nor more to their disadvantage, than to part with what is a present object and entertainment unto their senses, fancies, carnal affections, and superstitions, for that which they can have no benefit by, nor satisfaction in, but only in the exercise of faith and love, inclining us to that within the veil. Hence is there at this day so great a contest in the world about tabernacles and temples, modes of worship and ceremonies, which men have found out in the room of those which they cannot deny but God would have removed. For so they judge that He will be satisfied with their carnal ordinances in the church, when the time is come that He would bear His own no longer. But unto them that believe, Christ is precious. This true Tabernacle, with His ministration, in their estimation far excels all the old pompous ceremonies and services of divine institution, much more, all the superstitious observances of human invention." -Owen.)

Now of the holy things,1 the spiritual and heavenly blessings, and of the true tabernacle, Jesus is the minister or priest. He is ministering before God and towards God on our behalf; He is continually bestowing upon us the blessings of the new covenant. There was no approach unto God without continual respect unto sacrifice and oblation. However excellent the person of the high priest, it was an absolute necessity, that He should have somewhat to offer. And thus our great High Priest had somewhat to present unto the Father when He entered into heaven. The sacrifice, we know, was offered when Jesus died upon the cross. What was typified on the Day of Atonement, found its fulfillment on Golgotha. Jesus died outside the camp.2 His precious blood was shed on the accursed tree,3 But as was already understood in the type, the blood of Jesus, though shed on earth, pertains to the heavenly sanctuary. Jesus presents Himself, the victim, before the Father, and enters by His own blood into the holy of holies. This is the only perfect and efficacious oblation. This is the only true and real propitiation or atonement made for our sins.

Jesus Himself could not save us, or bring us unto God without this sacrifice; it was necessary that He should bring Himself, the victim and substitute, before the throne of God. (1The expressionτ■ν■γ■ωνis here neuter, and does not refer to holy persons, or those sanctified by Jesus. It seems to refer to holy things, those things which are essentially connected with the heavenly sanctuary, both the offering which Christ presents to the Father, and the blessings which He sends down to the Church.2Matthew 27:32-33;John 19:17-18. (Compare alsoActs 7:58;Hebrews 13:12:3Compare the important declaration ofDeuteronomy 21:23. There is a reference to the manner of Christ's death in His word,John 12:32. He was to be "lifted up from the earth.") But now the High Priest, by virtue of the one sacrifice, is in heaven. There can be only one temple. There was only one ark in the days of Noah, one tabernacle in the wilderness, one temple in Jerusalem. The forgiving, merciful, and glorious presence of Jehovah is manifested now in the throne on which Jesus is exalted. Now that the Antitype is in heaven, and the living reality of every act of the ritual is fulfilled, and that abidingly, the earthly type has no longer divine right and sanction to exist. Before the coming of Jesus, the shadows symbolized truth to believing worshippers. After the coming of Jesus it must fade and vanish before the substance.

If this is true of the Levitical priesthood, which was of divine appointment, how much more fearful is the assumption of any priestly title, position, and function during the new dispensation. All Christians are priests. To imitate a revival of that which God Himself has set aside by a fulfillment perfect and glorious, is audacious, and full of peril to the souls of men. It is not even the shadow of a substance; but the unauthorized shadow of a departed shade. The one sacrifice and oblation has been offered on Golgotha, and presented to the Father by the ascended Saviour, once for all;* and now believers are a kingdom of priests, drawing .near in full assurance of faith. (*How true and obvious is Owen's remark: "If anyone else can offer the body of Christ, he also is the minister of the true tabernacle. For the Lord Christ did no more. He did but offer Himself, and they that can offer Him do put themselves in His place.") The apostle Paul connects "the covenants, and the giving of the law, and the service of God, and the promises." (Rom. 9) These go together, and the character of one link deter mines that of the rest. In the first dispensation, of which Moses was the mediator and Aaron the priest, the service was connected with an earthly tabernacle, and the promises also possessed an earthly and temporal character. How much more glorious is the new dispensation, where all is substance, and not shadow; heavenly and eternal, and not earthly and temporal! Here one Person is Mediator-Priest; the law is written on the heart; the service is in spirit and in truth; the promise is life eternal. True, the contrast between the old and the new would be viewed in a false light, if we forgot that in the old dispensation spiritual reality and blessings were presented, and were actually embraced in faith by the people of God. The law had a positive or evangelical aspect; although herein also it was elementary and transitory, it acted as a guardian and a tutor; as the snow is not merely an indication of winter, and a contrast to the bright and genial sunshine, and the refreshing verdure of summer, but is also a beneficent protection, cherishing and preparing the soil for the approaching blessings from above. But now the winter is past, the fullness has come. The sanctuary being changed, the dispensation and covenant are likewise changed. The new covenant is now revealed, of which Jesus is both Surety and Mediator. In a previous chapter the apostle had inferred, from the superior excellence of the Priest after the order of Melchisedec, the superiority of the covenant, of which He is Mediator. He calls Jesus the Surety of a better testament. The expression reminds us that the Lord Jesus gave unto the Father all that divine righteousness and holiness demanded, that He gave to man every pledge and

assurance of our full and everlasting salvation. In the Lord Jesus, who sanctified Himself for our sakes, the Father possesses all believers; in Him all believers are brought into communion with divine love and life. The expression, "Mediator," used here is more comprehensive.*(*It occurs only in two other Pauline passages. The somewhat obscure passage,Galatians 3:20, and1 Timothy 2:5.) The mediator and surety of the old covenant was Moses, and not Aaron. Yet since the first covenant also could not be instituted without sacrifice, Moses acted as priest; the priestly dignity and functions were afterwards transferred to Aaron. But now is Jesus the true and eternal Mediator-Priest; not a servant like Moses, but the Son. True mediation is accomplished now because the Mediator as the Son is in the heavenly sanctuary at the right hand of God, and because from thence He sends the Spirit into our hearts. This new covenant is based upon better promises. The expression "established" means formally established as by a law. It reminds us that here all is arranged, fixed, and secured by inviolable sanctions. The "everlasting covenant is ordered in all things, and sure;"* it is based upon immovable foundations; it is according to the eternal purpose of God and to the divine and unchanging perfections. (*2 Samuel 23:5.) The promises are better, because they are now clearly and directly spiritual and eternal. Forgiveness of sin, the knowledge of God, communion with God, His indwelling in our hearts, the inheritance reserved in heaven, such are the promises and gifts of the new covenant. The promises are better because they are unconditional, secured by the great Mediator and High Priest. They are better because they were given to Christ before the world began, and are according to the infinite love which the Father has to His only Son, in whom He hath chosen us. The promises are better because in the new dispensation the blessing comprehends all, Jews and Gentiles, and unites all believers as a royal priesthood, who have access unto the Father by one Spirit.

There is a wonderful simplicity in the new covenant revelation. The true light which now shineth does indeed possess an exceeding greater brightness than that of the old dispensation; and yet everything is full of simplicity, directness, and peaceful calm. When we contrast the old and the new, then we become conscious of the wonderful transparency, simplicity, condensation of divine teaching which we possess. Our little children possess in the words Jesus, Lamb of God, trust in the Saviour, in the simple gospel declarations and promises, that which the old saints had to combine laboriously from the necessarily fragmentary types and teachings, and could only see darkly. We look to Jesus for everything; we have and receive all from Him. Our sins and infirmities, our trials and sorrows, so bind us to the grace of Jesus, and to His High Priestly ministrations, that we are constantly with Him, and experience the power of His blood, and the sustaining influence of His love. Jesus in heaven, at the right hand of God, the Lamb in the midst of the throne - this sums up all our faith, all our love, all our hope. It is the crowning point.

Looking back in the light of fulfillment on the history of God’s dealings with mankind and with Israel, on the long-and marvellous, the manifold and complicated, yet harmonious events, ordinances, types and predictions, in which the wisdom and love of God vailed, and at the same time revealed, the central mystery of redemption, we are impressed with a sense of the magnitude and the glory of the new revelation in Christ Jesus, who verily was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for us. We do not merely, like aged Simeon, rejoice in beholding the salvation which God hath prepared before all nations, but the salvation which He purposed in Himself from all eternity, to the praise of the glory of His grace.

How wonderful is the love of God, that from all eternity this was the secret, cherished purpose of His will - that He should manifest Himself in Christ Jesus, and bring poor, guilty, and helpless sinners nigh unto Himself, that they should dwell in Him, and that He should dwell in them. How wonderful is the grace of God - that purpose of grace which was in God before the foundations of the world were laid, according to which He has given unto us eternal life in Christ Jesus, that not in creation, that not in the perfection and purity of angelic beings, who never fell, but that in the redemption, and sanctification, and glorification of sinners there should be made manifest the fullness of God.

See then how everything leads you unto the ultimate love of God. Conceive in an enlarged manner, and with an assured and blessed confidence, that all the thoughts of God concerning you are thoughts of peace. You cannot think too highly of the love of God. You cannot exaggerate how important you are in God’s estimation, how precious your salvation is unto Him, how great is His joy and His delight in His people, how culminating is that position which He has given unto Christ as the head of the church, and how this is the one thought in God from everlasting to everlasting, so that in Christ Jesus and the church there should be summed up in one all things visible and invisible, whether they be in heaven or on earth. God loved us and chose us in Christ Jesus that we should be to the praise of the glory of His grace. "The Lord hath prepared His throne in the heavens;" and what is His throne but Christ Jesus, who is the tabernacle, and in whom we are also become the habitation of God.

Learn, in the second place, the wonderful grace of the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the Minister of the sanctuary. He is still going on with His service. His thoughts, His prayers, His affections, His energies, are all engaged now with regard to His people who are still upon the earth. He has ascended into the holiest, into the region of perfection and glory; but not to forget us who are still in the wilderness. As He loved His own even to the end, He loves them now, and throughout all the ages; and He will come again to receive us to Himself. He is the same loving, serving Jesus as He was on earth, the minister of holy things even now. In the fullness of His love, power, and glory, our exalted Lord, the Son of God, the man Christ Jesus, is ministering continually on behalf of and unto the saints.

Thirdly. Learn here the true character of worship. This is more fully explained in the subsequent chapters of the Epistle. But from what we have seen, it is evident that it is only by faith we can worship, for only by faith we can discern the heavenly and spiritual realities here set forth.* The heavenly sanctuary is the only place of worship. We are brought into the very presence of God in heaven, we draw near in the one great High Priest, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins through His blood. Such are now the elements of worship, and only faith can realize and appropriate these gracious truths and gifts. Believers only can worship; they worship in spirit and in truth. (*"The fundamental and essential contrast between the former and the latter things is, that the discernment by faith of things in visible is now the alone condition of true worship." A. PRIDEAUX.)

20 - Heb_8:6-13

CHAPTER X X. THE BLESSINGS OF THE NEW COVENANT.

Hebrews 8:6-13. THE Lord Jesus Christ, as our High Priest in heaven, is the Mediator of the new covenant or dispensation, which is based upon better promises. New as contrasted with old means in Scripture that which is perfect and abiding. The old vanishes, the new remains. God gives us a new heart that we may love and praise Him forever. If any man is in Christ, he is a new creature. Old things have passed away, all things have become new. "Behold, I make all things new," saith the Lord; I will create new heavens and a new earth; and in the new creation, all is eternal, perfect, possessed of vitality, beauty, and strength, which can never fade. The old covenant was temporary and imperfect. God findeth fault with it; for although the law was holy, just, and good, yet by reason of Israel's sin neither righteousness nor life could come through it. And as the purposes of divine love could not be attained by the old covenant, so the character of God, as the God of grace, could not be fully revealed therein. Hence the promise of a new covenant, which in itself proves the imperfection and insufficiency of the old; and this new covenant is represented as a contrast, unlike the old; it is new, that is, perfect, everlasting. God is pleased with it because it shows forth the glory of Jehovah as the God of salvation.

Let us remember that this covenant, announced by the prophet Jeremiah, is to be made first with the house of Judah and the house of Israel. It is a spiritual covenant, yet a national one. To Israel pertain the covenants, both of law and of grace. This is taught by Scripture throughout, and most clearly in the chapters in which this precious promise of the Messianic covenant is contained. No one can read this section of the prophetic word* and entertain the slightest doubt that literal Israel, the seed of Abraham, and their restoration in their own land, form the subject of divine promise. (*Jer. 30 - 38.) The prophet Jeremiah, called in early youth by God to announce unto his people the impending judgments on account of their ingratitude and impenitence, seems little fitted, by his natural disposition and temperament, to be the bearer of a message so awful and stern. A character eminently sensitive and tender, shrinking from conflict, almost feminine in his delicacy, was chosen by God to testify against the whole land, the kings of Judah, and the princes thereof, and against the priests, and against the people of the land. The Lord chose this gentle and timid child (Jeremiah 1:6) to be as a defensed city and an iron pillar and brazen walls against the whole nation. The prophet's heart was overwhelmed with grief; his eyes were filled with tears. His soul was distracted; his heart was faint within him, when he would comfort himself against sorrow. The message, that Israel's sin and iniquity had so abounded that judgment was inevitable, filled him with anguish. How solemn and touching are the supplications which he pours out before God! While he was thus consumed by zeal for Jehovah and sorrowful love for his people, he had to experience constant and cruel opposition, hatred, and scorn. His life was continually in jeopardy. Persecution, ignominy, and reproach were heaped upon him. Driven to the utmost verge of despair, he ex claimed, "I will not make mention of Him, nor speak any more in His name." But the Word was in him as a burning fire shut up in his bones. He was faithful to God; and with a breaking heart testified against the nation and her false prophets. During forty years Jeremiah stood firm, a

solitary witness among a rebellious and godless nation of adversaries and persecutors, led astray and fortified in their opposition by false prophets. He endured insult and mockery; he was beaten and imprisoned. And when the armies of Babylon proved the divine character of his mission and the truth of his predictions, the lofty height to which God had raised him did not separate him from his nation, his previous sufferings did not embitter his heart or blunt his sympathy and affection. He sat down on the ground as a mourner, and his lamentations over Jerusalem are to this very day the expression of the grief of desolate and banished Israel. Is he not a type of our Lord? Were the people, who said that Jesus was Jeremiah, not uttering a truth, which was then daily unfolding? For as Jeremiah announced the first destruction, so Jesus, in the days of Pharisees and scribes, predicted the second destruction of Jerusalem. Jesus wept when He beheld the city. And Jesus is greater than Jeremiah. For in the Spirit Jeremiah called Him Lord. Yet were the tears of Jeremiah in the Spirit of the Christ, who said, "If thou hadst known, even thou, at least in this thy day, the things which belong unto thy peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes."

It is in the night of adversity that the Lord sends forth bright stars of consoling hope. When the darkest clouds of woe were gathering above Jerusalem, and the prophet himself was in the lowest depths of sorrow, God gave to him the most glorious prophecies of Judah’s great redemption and future blessedness. The advent and reign of Messiah, the Lord our righteousness, the royal dominion and priesthood of Israel’s Redeemer, the gift of the Holy Spirit, the renewal and restoration of God’s chosen people, the days of unbroken prosperity and blessedness - all the golden Messianic future was predicted "in the last days of Jerusalem, when the magnificent fabric of its temple was about to sink into the dust, and its walls and palaces were about to be thrown prostrate on the ground."*(*Wordsworth.)

Thus, while Jeremiah announced the judgments of God, he was sustained and comforted by the promises of ultimate restoration and glory. Israel, the chosen nation of God, could not frustrate the purpose of God’s grace by their unfaithfulness. God’s promise unto Abraham rested upon no condition; it rested only on the electing, sovereign, free, and eternal love of God. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." Israel’s sin abounds unto judgment, and even (temporary) national death; but Jehovah’s grace abounds unto resurrection-life, unto restoration and everlasting blessing. Jeremiah predicts the national restoration of Judah and Israel. In most emphatic words the Lord declares, that as the ordinances of the sun, and moon, and of the stars shall not depart from before Him, the seed of Israel shall not cease from being a nation before Him. The prophet describes the prosperity of the cities of Judah, once desolate, and the melody and joy of the streets of Jerusalem, once filled with sorrow and lamentation. But this national and external restoration and prosperity are inseparably connected with Israel’s spiritual and inward renewal. It is the new covenant of grace in the Messiah, even King David, which brings life, strength, and joy to the chosen people. As the promise was of grace, to Abraham and to Abraham’s seed, so the fulfillment of the promise is not through the old covenant, of which Moses is mediator, but in the new and eternal Messianic dispensation. In like manner prophesied Ezekiel at the river Chebar among the captives of Babylon. He also beholds Israel restored; dwelling in their own land, in prosperity and gladness; the temple built in a new and glorious manner, and Jerusalem the city of the great king, whence the glory of Jehovah shall never depart again; for she shall be called Jehovah-Shammah (the Lord is there). For Israel restored and glorified is Israel pardoned, cleansed, and renewed. The blessing is both spiritual and national; the heart within and

the land without; thus do all prophets testify, and thus the apostle of the Gentiles explains to us in the light of the intermediate church-dispensation the counsel of God. Israel had once the land without the Spirit; Israel now has neither the land nor the spiritual knowledge of God and His love; but the time is coming when Israel shall possess the land, and receive the Holy Ghost from the Lord, whose feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives; in the liberty of the new covenant they shall worship and serve the Lord their God.

Apply this truth to the condition of the Hebrews, whom the apostle was addressing. The law of Moses, the old covenant, was vanishing; but the Messianic promises never were connected with the legal dispensation; they are rooted in the promise to Abraham; they are fulfilled in the covenant of grace. The relation of law to gospel as regards our justification, and also as regards the rule of life and conduct, is a different question, which is fully solved in the Epistles to the Romans and Galatians, and in the Apostolic Council at Jerusalem. The question which troubled the minds and hearts of the Hebrews was their relation to the Levitical priesthood, and to the old dispensation. The temple was still in Jerusalem, and the Levitical ordinances appointed by Moses were still being observed. Although the Sun had risen, the moon had not yet disappeared. It was waning; it was ready to vanish away. Now it became an urgent necessity for the Hebrew Christians to understand that Christ was the true and eternal High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, and that the new and everlasting covenant with Judah and Israel was connected with the gospel promise, and not with the law. God Himself hath made the first covenant old by promising the new. And now that Christ had entered into the holy of holies by His own blood, the old covenant had passed away; and yet the promises of God to His chosen people remain firm and unchanged. This is the very question which unbelieving Israel has not been able to solve during the last eighteen centuries. The temple of Jerusalem has been destroyed; the Levitical economy has been taken away; Israel has neither high priest, nor sacrifice, nor altar; it is without temple, and it is, strictly speaking, outside covenant. Where is the old covenant? The sanctuary, with its ordinances of divine service, was intimately connected with the old covenant, with the Levitical dispensation. It has vanished. During all these centuries Israel has not been able to account for their strange condition. When Moses was on Mount Sinai, and the people, in their unbelief and impatience, asked Aaron to make unto them gods which should go before them, they added: "For as for this Moses, the man that brought us up out of the land of Egypt, we know not what is become of him." In like manner Israel, since the destruction of Jerusalem, cannot understand the dealings of God. They know not what has become of Moses, the old covenant. It is impossible for them to keep its ordinances. And in this darkness they have formed to themselves a religion of their own traditions and reasonings,1 human and unauthorized substitutes for the divinely-appointed ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation. How clear is the light-shining from the cross of Jesus and from the heavenly sanctuary, where the Mediator of the new covenant is now enthroned. Moses himself and the prophets testified that communion with God in light and peace, that spiritual life and strength could only come by grace, not through the works of the law, not out of man’s unrenewed heart. The history of Israel abundantly showed that the law was not able to fill them with the knowledge and the love of God; for they remained a disobedient and idolatrous people, they understood not God’s character and ways, and continued not in His precepts.2 The purpose of electing grace can only be fulfilled in the gift of Jesus and of the Holy Ghost. The new covenant alone is the complete manifestation of God Himself. It alone is everlasting, because it alone is the fulfillment of God’s eternal counsel, according to which divine love and power accomplish the whole work of His

people’s salvation. (*Modern Judaism (both rabbinical and rationalistic) is not able to account for the cessation of sacrifices and the Levitical dispensation. The former acknowledges that in the destruction of the temple and the present condition of Israel without high priest and offerings, divine judgment on the nation’s sin is expressed: the idea of atonement through a vicarious sacrifice is not quite extinct, as appears in the rite of the cock performed on the eve of the day of atonement, though devoid of all Scriptural authority. Rationalistic Judaism has departed still further from the truth. Rejecting the idea of substitution and expiation in connection with sacrifices, it regards the present condition of Israel as a more spiritual development, misinterpreting the protests of David and the prophets against a mere external view of the ceremonial law. (Psalms 40:7;Hosea 6:6;Jeremiah 7:21-23.) The old has indeed vanished; but according to the will of God, because the true light now shineth, because the substance has come in Christ.)

(2In reviewing the history of Israel before the exile, it is most melancholy to notice that the periods of obedience and godliness are comparatively few; they are rather exceptional brief glimpses of light than the normal condition of the chosen people. The forty years in the wilderness, the age under the Judges and the Kings, are on the whole periods of darkness. There was always a remnant according to the election of grace, the seven thousand, who had not bowed the knee unto Baal; but idolatry and heathenish abominations co-existed beside the true worship and the testimony of the prophets. The reign of David and Solomon is a bright exception. The Law of Moses, with its stern denunciation of idolatry, with its loving and generous consideration of the poor and its requirements of liberality and devotedness, was rarely carried out, as is evident from the prophetic expostulations. Since the Babylonian exile Israel has not fallen into idolatry, but into an external and superficial view of the law, into dead formalism and self-righteousness. How true then, in the light of history, is the assertion of the prophet Jeremiah and of the apostle Paul, that Israel has not continued in the first covenant.)

Thus the apostle confirms and comforts his brethren, who were perplexed and tempted by the outward splendour of the temple, and the outward insignificance of the Christian assemblies. Theirs was the worship in spirit and in truth; they had received the better promises of the new covenant. For now they knew the will of God, not in the form of an outward commandment, but in the power of the indwelling Spirit; not engraven on tables of stone, but written on the renewed heart. Now the knowledge of God, a knowledge full of light and certainty, given directly by God Himself, was the privilege of each believer; they were a congregation of prophets and priests, to whom God revealed Himself, and who could draw near to Him in worship; and these unspeakable privileges are based upon the perfect and absolute forgiveness and remission of sin through the precious blood of Christ.

How great is the contrast between the old and the new covenant! In the one God demands of sinful man: "Thou shalt." In the other God promises: "I will." The one is conditional; the other is the manifestation of God’s free grace, and of God’s unlimited power. In the one the promise is neutralized by the disobedience of man; in the other all the promises of God are Yea in Christ, and Amen in Christ. In the new covenant Christ is all; He is the Alpha and Omega; all things are of God, and all things are sure and stedfast. The blessings of the new covenant are all based upon the forgiveness of sin. God promises to put His laws into our minds, and write them in our hearts, and to be to us a God, because He is merciful to our unrighteousness, and will remember our sins and iniquities no more. The forgiveness of sin is not merely the beginning, but it is the foundation,

the source; it is, so to say, the mother of all divine blessings. For as long as sin is upon the conscience, and man is not able to draw near unto God, he is separated from the only source of life and blessedness. In the forgiveness of sin God gives Himself, and all things that pertain to life and godliness. Hence David, in enumerating the benefits God hath bestowed on him, commenced with this fundamental one, "Who forgiveth all thine iniquities." Sin is removed, and we are brought nigh to God, and thus enter into the possession of all spiritual blessings. If we look at this most elementary and simple truth, the first which little children are taught,* we find it contains the germ of all truths. Hence all our progress in the divine life, and all the consolations of the Christian pilgrim, are rooted in this primary doctrine of forgiveness through faith in Jesus. (*1 John 2:12.) To know God is the sum and substance of all blessings, both in this life and in that which is to come. Now, although the law manifests to a certain extent the holiness and truth, the justice and unchangeableness, the goodness and bounty of God, the law does not reveal God Himself, the depth of His sovereign and eternal love, the purpose which He purposed in Himself before the foundation of the world was laid. When in Christ we receive the forgiveness of sin, we behold God.

Here is also the source and the commencement, the root and strength of our love to God. "We love Him, because He first loved us." We love much, because much is forgiven unto us. We are now a kingdom of priests unto God, because Christ loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood. When the doctrine of forgiveness in its fullness and freeness is scripturally set forth, it requires no supplemental cautions, restrictions, and additions; for it is the central truth from which all doctrines radiate. The new obedience, the spiritual worship,* the fight and victory of faith, the knowledge and fear and love of God, have their starting-point in the pardon of sin. (*ComparePsalms 130:4: "With Thee is forgiveness of sin, that Thou mayest be worshipped.") And this is the new covenant blessing. True, the servants of God always knew this blessing. Of the divine righteousness both the law and the prophets testify. David describeth this blessedness. The sacrifices typified, faith looked forward to the great atonement. But now that Christ has come, and that He died once for all, we receive forgiveness in a full and perfect manner: there is no more remembrance of sins; no repetition of sacrifice is needed; no yearly recurrence of the day of atonement; in Christ we have redemption in His blood, even the forgiveness of sins.

How precious is this emphatic declaration, "Their sins and their transgressions will I re member no more." Our sins are removed and buried in the depths of the sea, and this according to divine holiness, justice, and truth. Here is the righteousness of God. "The gospel of Christ is the power of God unto salvation; for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith."* Between God and us, there is now no longer sin; Jesus, and Jesus only, fills our view. (* Romans 1:16-17.)

It is in giving this perfect pardon that God renews the heart, and writes in it His laws. We must needs contrast law and gospel. Yet let us not forget that the law from the very outset showed its temporary and negative character, pointed beyond and away from itself; sighed, as it were, after Him, who by fulfilling would take it away, and by taking it away would fulfill it in us, and in fulfilling it in us, raise us to the still greater height of the new love! Oh that My people had a heart to obey My commandment! was the language of God in the ancient days. I will circumcise their hearts, was His promise. The law testified that fallen man could not keep it; that written on tables of stone it only condemned, that it had no power to inscribe itself on the hard, unrenewed heart of man. The law commands love, and love never can come out of law. The fulfillment of the law presupposes life and spirit; and by the law dead souls can never be quickened. As the Apostle Paul fully

explains in the Epistle to the Galatians, the Holy Ghost is received through the preaching of the gospel, the new covenant, the forgiveness of sins.

Now the grace of God, which bringeth salvation, hath appeared, and teacheth us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts. The law of God is fulfilled in the believer, in the spiritual man, who trusts in Jesus. Of this renewal of the heart and gift of the Holy Ghost the prophet Ezekiel also testifies.* May we not say that the whole of the Old Testament points (both as a contrast and a preparation) to this: Jesus saves His people from their sins; for He comes with water and with blood and with the Spirit: He is Righteousness and Life. (* Ezekiel 36:26-27.)

All spiritual life flows from Jesus as our Saviour. When we believe in Jesus we are not in the flesh but in the Spirit. His precious blood is not merely our peace, but our strength; and our strength because it is our peace. Justification and sanctification emanate from this One Source. When Israel is brought in repentance and faith to the Lord, then shall be fulfilled the gracious purpose of God, which under the law was frustrated through Israel's sin and disobedience. Although God was a Husband unto them, they break His covenant. But now, forgiven and renewed, Israel will be in actual reality, and not merely in position, God's people, and Jehovah will be their God. This is the most exalted and comprehensive blessing which was ever promised. Jehovah is not ashamed to be called their God. He identifies Himself with His people. All His glorious perfections are revealed in His relation to them. In them is fulfilled the good pleasure of His will. And because He is God to them, Source of Light and Life, they are His people. Not merely chosen and appointed; not merely called and treated collectively as God's people; but in reality, according to truth, according to their individual character and experience, the people in whom God's name is revealed, who show forth His praise, who walk in His ways and obey His will. For of Him shall their fruit be found; God working in them both to will and to do, they shall abound in the fruits of righteousness to the glory of His grace. For then each one individually shall know the Lord. "God is known in Judah," said the Psalmist. God had indeed revealed Himself unto His people. He had taught them and given unto them His Word. In their marvellous history, in the divine messages sent by Moses and the prophets, in the types and ordinances, in the Judges and Kings, God had revealed unto His people His name, His character and will, and His great desire was that they should know Him. How touching is the complaint of Jehovah, that after all the signs which they had seen, and after ail His mighty works of redeeming and guiding love, and after all the words of light and of grace which He had sent them, His people did not know Him! So long had He been with them, and erring in their hearts, they did not know His ways!* What could be more grievous to the fatherly heart of God, yearning to be known, trusted, and loved? What gives us a sadder picture of the fall of man, of the alienation of the human heart from God, of our utter incapacity to understand and to receive divine things, than the fact that Israel did not know the revealed God, who taught and blessed them constantly, abundantly, and with most tender compassion? But when the Holy Ghost shall be poured out upon them, they shall all know Jehovah, from the least to the greatest; though one shall encourage and exhort the other, yet they shall not need to teach and to say to their neighbour, Know the Lord. (*Isa. 1; Ps. 95.) In the Church this promise is already fulfilled.1 Although the apostle John distinguishes between little children, young men, and fathers, he writes unto the whole congregation of believers: "Ye have an unction from the Holy One, and ye know all things."2 It is true that he sends unto them an epistle, rich in doctrine and exhortation, but, as he expresses it, in full harmony with our passage, "I have not written unto you because ye know not

the truth, but because ye know it." "The anointing which ye have received of Him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you." "They shall be all taught of God." This promise, uttered by the prophet Isaiah,3 is regarded by our Saviour as the promise uttered by all prophets;4 for it is the great Messianic blessing, the promise of the Father. (1"And how do I know thee? I know thee in thee! I do not know thee as thou art in thyself, but as thou art to me, and that not without thee, but in thee, because thou art the light, which hath enlightened me. For what thou art to thyself is known only to thee; what thou art to me, according to thy grace, is known also unto me; I know, because thou art my God." -Augustine's Soliloquia.)

(2 1 John 2:20. Compare the apostle Paul's words (1 Thessalonians 4:9): "But as touching brotherly love ye need not that I write unto you: for ye yourselves are taught of God to love one another." Likewise2 Peter 1:12.)

(3Isaiah 54:13.4 John 6:45,■ν το■■ προφ■ται■) From Jesus, the Anointed, all Christians receive the Holy Ghost; they have, according to their name, the unction from above. Hence they possess the Teacher who guides into all truth. Knowledge is within them. There is within them a well of living water. They, are not dependent on external instruction. There is given unto them the Paraclete, who always reveals the things that are freely given unto us of God. The spiritual man knows all things - all the things of the Spirit, all that pertains to life and godliness. True, he does not know all things actually, or in any given moment; but he knows them potentially. There is within him the light which can see, the mind which can receive all truth. It is for this reason that apostles and teachers give instruction. They teach the God-taught; they present spirit-revealed realities to the spiritual. Human erudition, mental acuteness or profundity, are of no avail here. The youngest and most illiterate, the least gifted and most uncultivated, may possess the wisdom which is from above. And this knowledge, God-given, is full of assurance; it possesses the nature of light, of conviction, of absolute certainty. We know that our Redeemer liveth; we know whom we have believed; we know that we are born of God, and that all things work together for good unto them that love Him; we know the things that are freely given to us of God. Every Christian knows himself individually, and that because he is taught of God; he relies not on the testimony of man; his faith stands in the power of God. This personal knowledge of God is the secret of our spiritual life. It is our safeguard against error, and against sin. It is the great and the constant gift of God, the fruit of Christ's redemption. We now see and know God and His Son; we know Jesus, because Jesus always knows His sheep, revealing Himself unto them, and giving them guidance and life. This knowledge is nothing less than walking with God, walking in the light, praying without ceasing. The secret of the Lord is with them that fear Him. In much darkness, amid many difficulties, and in constant warfare we yet walk in the light of His countenance, until at last we shall see Him as He is, and know even as we are known.

How great is the blessedness of all who are in the new, the everlasting covenant; in the covenant of grace and life, in which God Himself is revealed, and in which all things are of God. Here Christ is to us wisdom, and righteousness, and sanctification, and redemption. Our transgressions are pardoned, yea, there is no more remembrance of sin. The heart is renewed, and the Holy Ghost is given as an indwelling Spirit. God works in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are in constant and filial communion with Him. He is our God, and we are His people; He is our Father, and we are His children. And all these blessings have their root and commencement, their vitality and permanence in the redemption, accomplished on Golgotha, they are dispensed from the

heavenly sanctuary by the Mediator, who was the Paschal Lamb on the cross. Little children and fathers, young converts and experienced Christians, always hear the voice of Jesus: This is the New Testament IN MY BLOOD.

Hallelujah! I believe!

Now no longer on my soul All the debt of sin is lying;

One great Friend has paid the whole.

Icebound fields of legal labour I have left with all their toil;

While the fruits of love are growing From a new and genial soil.

21 - Heb_9:1-5

CHAPTER X X I.

WORSHIP IN SPIRIT AND TRUTH.

Hebrews 9:1-5.

(Introductory Remarks.) THE nature of spiritual worship, even after it has been revealed in Scripture, is very rarely understood.

Apart from revelation, we do not find anywhere traces of spiritual worship. "Think of the religions of antiquity. Where do we seek and find the sanctuary of true, deep, manifold, and eloquent prayer? where the language and grammar, where the scale of all notes of supplication, typical for all humanity and all the ages? where, except in the assemblies of the worshippers of Jehovah, in the courts of that service which knew no image of the Unseen, in that temple where God, in His sublime, spiritual presence and reality, transcends all human thought, who for centuries since, and through all coming ages, fills and guides the hearts of all believers."* Only Israel and the Church possess the knowledge of God; the most cultivated and learned nations were not able to rise to a pure, spiritual, and exalted conception of divinity. And the spirituality, as well as the exclusiveness of true worship, Jewish and Christian, have at first a repulsive effect on the natural man. The Greeks and Romans were not merely astonished at, but felt irritated by the worship of Christians, who without image and altar, without priests and vestments, appeared to them to be ■θ■οι, men without gods, influenced by what they deemed a strange superstition, the mysterious power of which they could not comprehend, when they saw how it enabled Christians to rejoice in suffering, and to meet with calm courage and hopefulness the tortures of death. It was enigmatic, and the absence of all visible symbol, of all idols and altars, still more bewildered them. When they beheld how faith in the unseen Lord was a real and mighty power in the hearts and lives of men and women, filling them with earnestness, zeal, hope, and joy, how it lifted them above the sinful pleasures of the world, the love of money, the fever of ambition, the frivolity and emptiness of a selfish life, how it enabled them to bear calmly and patiently the trials, and sufferings, and persecutions which they had to endure, and to face the cruel and excruciating death to which they were condemned, not merely with equanimity, but with the fortitude of heroes, and the radiant joy of virgins going forth to meet the Bridegroom - their astonishment was boundless. They called it a mania, a demoniac possession, a mysterious moral epidemic, which had broken out and threatened to undermine the commonwealth. Of truth, of a real, living, and loving God, they knew nothing. They felt annoyed, that the small and insignificant Jewish nation would not adopt their gods and customs, would keep aloof from their temples, feasts, and banquets. It is narrated, that when Pompey had conquered Jerusalem, and without reverence penetrated into the interior of the temple, he proceeded into the holy of holies. There, a feeling of awe seized him, and he left all things untouched. Since that time, the Roman author says, it is known that the Jews worship something empty and vague, that cannot be seen. While the Greeks, proud of their culture and intelligence, looked down in contempt upon all other nations, and also upon Israel, the Romans,

proud of their power, judged of the gods of nations by the amount of victories achieved under their protection. You may know, remarks Cicero, what is the power of the Jews and their God, by the circumstance that their land has been subjugated and divided. (*Nitzsch.)

Having no knowledge of objective truth, regarding all religions as equally legitimate expressions of national traditions, sentiments, and modes of thought, they were quite willing to worship, in whatever country they happened to be, according to the prevailing usage. To add Christ also to the number of their gods and heroes would have been quite in accordance with their thought. Hence they could not understand the nature of that faith and worship which had for its object the true and living, the only God, and which could not be added to or mingled with any other faith and worship. Israel and the Church claim to possess the truth, to know, love, and serve the only true and living God. Therefore they must be hated by all who do not submit themselves to the heavenly revelation. Philosophers of every age, both before and since the advent, can tolerate every system of moral and spiritual thought and worship. They can find something good, noble, and elevating in every religion; but they cannot tolerate the one only God-revealed truth in Christ Jesus.* The adoption of the Christian name and of Christian terminology is very superficial. Only a short time may be required to complete that process of development, or rather chemical separation, which is at present dividing true spiritual Christians, who believe God’s word, and the world, who reject the counsel of God, in His incarnate Son and His cross. And again it will be seen, that of a truth against God’s holy child Jesus, Pontius Pilate and the heathen and unbelieving Jews have risen, denying God and His Anointed; for Christ is against the world, and the world against Christ. Modern Paganism (often using Christian terminology) only conceals this fact. Jesus claims to be the truth, absolute, exhaustive, ultimate; He claims to be, not one of many ways, not the best of all ways, but the way - the only, exclusive, divine way of access unto the light, love, and life of God. If He was not exclusive, He would be like the others, only giving guesses at truth, and not its revelation; He cannot but assert His absolute and exclusive Mediatorship. It is this exclusiveness of Jesus (like the absolute and jealous denunciation of Jehovah against all idolatry) which is met by the bitter, though often latent and unconscious, enmity of the world. He that is not for Jesus is against Him. All they that attempt, without Him, to enter into the fold are thieves and robbers. Jesus is the truth, and in Him alone we draw near to the Father. [*Man delights in the activity of his mental faculties, in fearless and free speculation, making his own mind the idol, even in inquiring after God and His service. Lessing said, "Did the Almighty, holding in His right hand truth, and in His left search after truth, deign to proffer me the one I might prefer, in all humility, but without hesitation, I could request search after truth." This is the very opposite spirit of the Jewish and Christian.God hath spoken. (Hebrews 1:1-3.)]

Apart from Revelation, men have not the idea of God as Lord, Spirit, Father. And even after the light of Scripture has appeared, God is to many only an abstract word, by which they designate a complex of perfections, rather than a real living, loving, ever-present Lord, to whom we speak and of whom we ask the blessings we need. How different from this vague life and colourless abstraction, without will and love, this incomprehensible All and Nothing is the God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. To Him we can pray. Without revelation prayer is regarded not so much as asking God in order to receive from Him, but as an exercise of mind which elevates, ennobles, and comforts. It is a monologue. Worship is viewed as a representation of our ideas of divine attributes and perfections, not the recognition of

God, as through revelation we know Him in His relation to us.

See how God reveals to the poor sin-convinced soul - to the humblest, the most ignorant, the most guilty - what the wise and righteous of the world can neither discover nor attain. A sinful, thoughtless, frivolous woman, living in the darkness of an ungodly life, and belonging to a race possessing only dim and imperfect knowledge of divine truth, had been drawn into conversation by a mysterious stranger, who beginning with the lowly request of a favour had brought before her in words (whose meaning she scarcely comprehended, but which roused deep longings within her soul), the misery and emptiness of the world, the existence and blessedness of a higher spiritual and divine life; and He who at first spoke as a weary traveler had gradually presented Himself as the mysterious Mediator and Dispenser of a divine and transcendent gift. But the heart and the conscience, the deepest centre of her being, had not been touched yet. Jesus then reveals Himself as the Searcher of Hearts, the Lord and Judge, who knoweth secret things. He brings before her the guilty past. The arrow is sent forth by a strong yet gentle hand; its purpose is to wound and to heal. The woman exclaims: I perceive thou art a prophet; that is, a seer, a messenger of God, one entrusted with a divine message. Brought thus unto the presence of God, realizing God, as only the sin-convinced conscience and heart do, she immediately wishes to please, worship, serve that Supreme Lord. The question she now addresses to the Saviour is not a skilful evasion of a painful and humiliating subject; it proceeds from the depths of a wounded heart; it is the question of repentance and profound desire after God. If God is He must be worshipped. Hitherto theological disputes had no interest for her, but now she thirsts after God, the living God, and longs to come unto Him in true worship.

It was to this poor and sinful Samaritan woman that Jesus explained, in that solemn, lonely hour, the profound truths of spiritual worship. He reminds her, first of all, that the question of worship is not to be decided by man, but by God. Human thought, sentiment, traditions, cannot have authority in this highest and most sacred matter. The Samaritans, as all other nations left to themselves, have no knowledge of worship, because they know not God. True worship can only be found on the territory of revelation. In Israel God had revealed Himself, and His revelation of Himself was as the God of salvation. Because salvation is of the Jews, with them also was found true worship. True, it was for a long time under a limited, preparatory, symbolical dispensation, but at the same time real and spiritual, and the germ of the universal and free worship which has been brought in through the fulfillment in Christ Jesus.

Spirituality is not an inherent subjective quality, it is the reflection of the person worshipped; as the God so the worshipper. The words of the Saviour, "Ye worship ye know not what," have a far more extensive application than to Samaritans. The most cultivated and refined men cannot, by their reason, intuition, or learning, find God; and their conception of the supreme, ethereal and ideal as it may be, is not spiritual but carnal. But Israel knew Jehovah as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; as the God who had appeared unto their fathers with condescending, familiar, loving favour, guiding and comforting, blessing and helping, the God who had chosen them, and who had redeemed them out of Egypt to be His peculiar people, and to show forth His praise. They were called to the knowledge and service of God, that through them light and salvation should be brought to all Gentiles, even to the uttermost ends of the earth. And we await still the fulfillment of the immutable promises connected with the Abrahamic covenant when, from Israel as a centre, the light of God’s salvation shall shine forth unto all nations, and all the ends of the earth shall

worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness. The dispensation of the law came in as an intermediate and preparatory one. One great object was to show forth by types the redemption which is in Christ Jesus, and the character of true worship. There are only two chapters of Scripture to narrate the creation of the world; but no fewer than sixteen chapters of the inspired record are devoted to the description of the tabernacle. It has been remarked, that God took only six days in the work of creation, but spent forty days with Moses in directing him to make the tabernacle. The work of grace is more glorious than the work of creation. Three times the book of Exodus gives a full account of all the parts of the tabernacle. First, when the command is given to build it; then again, when its preparation is narrated; and a third time, after it was actually erected. For the tabernacle shows forth the redemption in Christ; and the whole world was created that the glory of God should be manifested in Christ and the Church. And Scripture, by thus attaching a far greater importance to the description of the tabernacle than to the narrative of the world's creation, teaches us to contemplate the things that are unseen, to fix our thoughts and affections on the eternal and heavenly world, to lift our eyes to those heights whence descend the light and love of our blessed God.

Scripture teaches us that the tabernacle was built according to the divine revelation given unto Moses. It was according to the pattern of heavenly things beheld by him on the mount. The idea of the structure in its grand outlines, as well as the arrangements of the detail, were not of human origin. They are not to be traced to the ingenuity of Moses, or to the model of heathen sanctuaries. All things were of God, everywhere the Holy Ghost did symbolize. The tabernacle was to the believing Israelite full of symbols, showing the grace of their Redeemer God, and shadowing forth the manifold mercy of God, who forgives and sanctifies His people, who brings them into His presence, bestows upon them His blessing, and enables them to worship and serve Him with thankful and rejoicing hearts. And to us who read these chapters in the light of fulfillment, they are full of gospel instruction and comfort; unfolding the varied treasures of grace, the many aspects of Christ and His work, and of the experience of His saints.*[*We find here, to use Owen's words, such an evidence of divine wisdom and goodness, as gives them beauty, desirableness, and usefulness, unto their proper end. There is that in them, which unto an enlightened mind will distinguish them forever from the most plausible inventions of men, advanced in the imitation of them. Only a diligent inquiry into them is expected from us. (Psalms 111:2-3.) When men have slight considerations of any of God's institutions, when they come unto them without a sense that there is divine wisdom in them, that which becomes him from whom they are, it is no wonder if their glory be hid from them. But when we diligently and humbly inquire into any of the ways of God, to find out the characters of His divine excellencies that are upon them, we shall obtain a satisfying view of His glory. (Hosea 6:3.)] The people offered with exceeding liberality and willingness of heart all the material needed for the building, and the skill and genius of enlightened workmen prepared the various portions of the structure and the vessels. Thus according to the condescending wisdom and goodness of God, the affections and energies of His people were enlisted, and they were workers together with Him of whom and by whom are all things. When afterwards the temple was built, and the tabernacle of the wilderness was changed into a permanent and stationary house on Mount Zion, the palace of the great King, whose chosen city is Jerusalem, the affection and reverence of the nation clung to it with great intensity. From the very excess of superstition and formalism into which this feeling degenerated, we can infer its original strength. And indeed, though we find in David and Solomon the most spiritual and elevated

conceptions of the divine omnipresence, and of the true nature of prayer and sacrifice; though in all the prophetic writings we meet with constant warnings against a merely outward service, and a constant reference to inward purity and to the adoration and obedience of the heart, yet the temple, where God revealed His presence and His glory, where His beautiful ordinances were observed, and the most solemn transactions took place between Jehovah and His people through the appointed mediation of priests and high priest, was necessarily most sacred and endeared to every true Israelite. How touching is the description in the book of Ezra of the laying of the foundation at the rebuilding of the temple: "But many of the priests and Levites and chief of the fathers, who were ancient men, that had seen the first house, when the foundation of this house was laid before their eyes, wept with a loud voice; and many shouted aloud for joy: so that the people could not discern the noise of the shout of joy from the noise of the weeping of the people: for the people shouted with a loud shout, and the noise was heard afar off." The position of Israel at the time of our Lord was one of great solemnity. It was the most solemn crisis in Israel's history. The Lord whom they sought (some really, and others only in profession) came suddenly to His temple. Jesus came as a minister of the circumcision to fulfill the promises made unto the fathers. He came first as a prophet, preaching repentance; for the kingdom of God was at hand. He came to gather them. He was the last as well as the greatest messenger sent unto Jerusalem. But they did not reverence the Son. They understood not the time of their visitation. Jesus with tears predicted judgment on the beloved city, the city of the great King. "For the days shall come upon thee, that thine enemies shall cast a trench about thee, and compass thee round, and keep thee in on every side, and shall lay thee even with the ground, and thy children within thee; and they shall not leave in thee one stone upon another: because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation." And of the temple He said, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down." But between the announcement and the execution of the judgment forty years intervened. The Lord is slow to anger; He is long-suffering, and gracious. He delays judgment to gather in a remnant, and to show to the whole world the righteousness and the mercifulness of all His dealings. How important and solemn, how wide-reaching in their influence, are these forty years of the patience of God, of the further probation of Israel! Israel had hated Jesus "without cause," and with cruel hands nailed Him to the accursed tree; yet Jesus on the cross prayed, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." Israel had committed the great and culminating sin; they had rejected the Lord of glory, the Son of the Most High, yet God hath not cast away His people. The gifts and callings of God are without repentance, and the everlasting covenant shall yet be made with them, when everlasting joy and glory shall be given unto the children of Abraham. And as a pledge of this ultimate favour, in answer to the prayer of the dying Saviour, and through the preaching of the apostle Peter, three thousand were converted on the day of Pentecost, and many thousands (tens of thousands) were added unto the number of disciples. The apostle Peter preached to the men of Israel. He addressed the whole nation, delivering unto them as a nation the message that God had sent Jesus unto them first. He called upon them to turn unto the Lord, in order that the fullness of divine blessing might come upon them according to the promise. In the same patriotic spirit as the prophets, with the most tender regard for the national privileges and customs, the apostles addressed themselves unto the nation, preaching the first and second advent of Israel's Messiah and King. The apostle of the Gentiles also came as a Jew to the Jews, as under the law to those who were under the law, and in all his addresses to his people breathes the same fervent national consciousness; he declared the hope

of the promise made of God unto the fathers.

But, alas! the nation resisted the counsel of God, and took no heed to the voice of the Holy Ghost, speaking to them with such clearness and love through the apostles. They counted themselves unworthy of eternal life. God, in the abundance of His love and wisdom, made Israel's unbelief the occasion of sending the gospel to the Gentiles. Still the period of mercy to Israel was prolonged. The testimony was still sent to them. The doctrine of the Church, as the body, consisting of both Jews and Gentiles, was now fully revealed; the apostle Peter, who opened the door to the Gentiles in the baptism of Cornelius, and the apostle Paul, who was specially led to the uncircumcision; the Council of Jerusalem, with reference to the relation of the Gentiles to the law of Moses; and finally, the full and explicit teaching of the Pauline Epistles; - all this unveiled what had been hitherto hid, the intermediate position of the Church, when Israel as a nation was to be set aside. From the very commencement, in the parables and warnings of the Saviour, in the experience of Peter and John after Pentecost, in. the first persecution of the saints, in the martyrdom of Stephen, in the opposition against the apostle Paul, the dark clouds were gathering, and the wrath to the uttermost was approaching.

Meanwhile, it was most difficult for many Jewish Christians to understand the true character of the transition period, and to enter into the spirit of the new era, which in reality had already commenced, though not actually and formally. If it is difficult at present for the Church to remember that they have not taken the place of Israel, if, as the apostle anticipated, the Church in many ages has become ignorant of the "mystery," that all Israel shall be saved, that Jesus shall reign as king over His chosen people, when all the blessings promised to Abraham and through all the prophets will be fulfilled, can we wonder that the Hebrews could not readily understand the character of the Church dispensation, while they were still, and with apostolic sanction, observing the law of Moses?

We learn from the book of Acts, and this very epistle, how much the believing Jews suffered from their countrymen. Their goods were confiscated; they had to suffer imprisonment; some were put to death; they were banished from what was most sacred and precious to them. Israel, as a nation, would not submit to the righteousness of God. They became obdurate in self-conceit, self-righteousness, and formalism. They rested with a false security in their mechanical obedience of legal enactments, and in the possession of the temple services. They were without fear, while the terrible judgment was approaching. Destruction came suddenly, unexpectedly. Even to the last moment the inhabitants of Jerusalem expected divine deliverance. They had not heard the loving voice of Him who said, "Ye daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me;" they understood not the fearful words which they had uttered, when they cried: "His blood be upon us, and upon our children." This is, indeed, the tragedy of history. It is most melancholy to notice the enthusiasm, the intense and tenacious trust, which moved them to resist the invincible might of Rome. They could not believe that God would give up His beloved city, and the place of His sanctuary. They hoped and trusted against all hope. But the hour of God's righteous judgment had come. Jerusalem was destroyed; their house was left unto them desolate.*(*The character of Roman conquest and rule is most graphically symbolized in the prophetic vision (Dan. 2) "Strong as iron: forasmuch as iron breaketh in pieces and subdueth all things." The Greco-Macedonian monarchy was characterized by the presence of poetical and ideal conceptions; but in Rome we see an embodiment of force. State policy, and the cold haughtiness of violence and power, must have

been very hard to bear. No wonder Tacitus speaks of the hostile hatred (hostile odium) of the Jews against the Romans, who regarded them with great indignation and contempt, because the Jewish God could not be conquered as the other gods. This small nation would not yield to Roman idolatry. In the whole of Asia, as Caligula complained, there was not a single temple, a single city or province of the empire, which had refused to admit his statue, and to honour him as a divinity, except in Judaea. The last struggles of Jerusalem show a most extraordinary strength and energy. Never was conflict so unequal, as the Emperor Titus points out to the two captive leaders of the Jews (according to Josephus, whose want of patriotism and Jewish spirit is very melancholy), when neither the Germans, so renowned for their physical vigour, nor Britannia, guarded by the ocean, nor Carthage, with all its courage, and with all the skill of its generals, could successfully resist the power of Rome. He did not know of their trust in Jehovah, and in His word, which, notwithstanding their grievous apostasy, and amidst fearful perversions and fanatic zeal, still lodged in their hearts. Hence their unparalleled sufferings, and the agonizing grief with which the destruction of the beloved city and the temple filled their hearts, could not extinguish the hope of a future restoration and glory. Rabbi Akiba was walking with some friends about Jerusalem. They saw nothing butdebris, and caves of wild beasts. A fox was bounding past them. The friends of Akiba are grieved; he himself laughs. How can you laugh when unclean animals inhabit the sacred soil! This is why I laugh; as sure as the word is fulfilled, uttered by Jeremiah (Jeremiah 26:18): "Zion shall be plowed like a field, and Jerusalem shall become heaps, and the mountain of the house as the high places of a forest," that which was spoken of by the prophet Zechariah will also come to pass.Zechariah 8:4: "Thus saith the Lord of hosts; There shall yet old men and old women dwell in the streets of Jerusalem, and every man with his staff in his hand for very age." The destruction of Jerusalem is not like the fall of Troy, of Babylon, of Carthage. Even while the divine judgment is on Israel, and Jerusalem is trodden down of the Gentiles, the Scripture entrusted to their guardianship, and the gospel which first was preached among them, goes forth among all nations, gaining the affection and prayers of multitudes for their conversion and restoration, while under the special care of God they are preserved until the appointed time of her favour is come, and God shall visit and rebuild her in great mercy. But the judgment is yet awaiting Rome, who passed unrighteous sentence against that Just and Holy One, and delivered Him up to be crucified, who destroyed the holy city, and scattered the chosen people, who for many centuries shed the blood of the martyrs, and who is still the centre of the most God-dishonouring perversion of His truth.)

Extremely solemn and awful is this catastrophe as the end of centuries of the most marvellous revelations and dealings of divine love, wisdom, and power. God, who revealed His truth by His Spirit to His chosen saints among Jews and Gentiles, has manifested to the whole world His counsel by the solemn judgment which descended on Jerusalem. Amid all the vicissitudes and struggles of the covenant-people, the sanctuary and the Levitical service continued; only once it had been interrupted during the Babylonian captivity. During the centuries that Israel had to live under the Roman yoke, though no Son of David sat upon the throne, the temple stood in glory, and Israel rejoiced in the beauty of its stones and in the splendour of its services. But since the rejection of Jesus, no human power has been able to restore this visible sanctuary and the sacrifices and priestly ordinances. God had spoken to His people by the voice of apostles. At last He spoke by the voice of Judgment. The destruction of the temple and the removal of the whole Levitical dispensation teaches, by actual historical demonstration, truth which the epistles set forth

doctrinally. It is an anachronism to speak now of priests in the sense of sacerdotal mediators. It is an anachronism to speak of symbolic worship, of ordinances, which are figures and shadows of spiritual realities. The Levitical dispensation was given only to Israel, and to Israel only, for a certain period of their history. Since the destruction of Jerusalem, Israel is without high priest, without sacrifice, without temple. God Himself has removed the shadow, because the substance is come. God Himself has by severe judgment taken away the earthly, elementary, and fragmentary, that Israel may turn to the heavenly, eternal, and perfect. But unto the Gentiles God never gave an Aaronic priesthood, an earthly tabernacle, a symbolical service. From the very commencement He taught them, as Jesus taught the woman of Samaria, that now all places are alike sacred, that the element in which God is worshipped is spirit and truth, that believers are children who call upon the Father, that they are a royal priesthood, who through Jesus are brought nigh unto God, who enter into the holy of holies which is above.*(*While the temple stood, Jesus and the apostles honoured the temple. The Lord said unto the leper, "Show thyself unto the priest." He and His apostles went daily into the temple. After His resurrection, and while the gospel was being preached unto Israel, the temple services and ordinances may have been blessed to souls, as images and prophecies of the heavenly realities. But any imitation of the Levitical dispensation in the present day must needs be contrary to God's mind, and obscure the clear revelation in Christ Jesus. The expression "priest," in the sense of■ερε■■, applied to a Christian minister, can in no wise be defended. The expression "consecration," as applied to buildings, ought also to be given up, and with the expression every remnant of the old leaven, which attaches some kind of "sanctity" to any place. Sacred places there are none now. We never read of the apostolic Christians going to Bethlehem, where Jesus was born, or to Golgotha, where He died, or to the garden, where He rose, or to the Mount of Olives, where He ascended, or to the temple- chamber, in which the Pentecostal gift was received. "Where two or three are gathered together," there,because, andwhenthey are gathered together in the name of Jesus; wherever we worship in spirit and truth,thereandthenwe may say, How dreadful is this place! This view does not in the least affect the necessity and the desirability of having spacious, suitable, and attractive buildings set apart for the meetings of God's people and the preaching of the gospel. Here is a proper field for Christian liberality and also for architectural skill.) As the apostle says so frequently to the Hebrews, "We have," we do possess the reality and substance of those things of which the unbelieving Jews boast, so may we say in these days of priestly pretension and false views of the Christian ministry and worship, We have, blessed be God, the true sanctuary, the new and consecrated way into the holy of holies, we have access by one Spirit through the blood of Jesus unto the Father. We have the real presence, even Jesus, dwelling in our hearts by faith; Jesus, where two or three are gathered in His name; Jesus making Himself known in the breaking of bread; Jesus speaking by the Holy Ghost through the Word read and preached. Where two or three are gathered together in His name, there it is not merely as if He was in the midst of them, but He Himself is with them in truth and reality, in Spirit and in power, in love and in blessing. If any man love Him, the Father and the Son will come and take up their abode with him. Jesus is our Immanuel in the heart, in the assembly, in the world. We have Christ, and in Him we have all.

How difficult is it to rise from the spirit of Paganism to the clear and bright atmosphere of the gospel! How much inclined are men to welcome everything which does not reveal to them their true condition, and bring them into the very presence of God. Priesthood, vestments, consecrated buildings, symbols, and observances - all place Christ at a great distance, and cover the true,

sinful, and guilty state of the heart which has not been brought nigh by the blood of Christ. Look again at the woman of Samaria. Ignorant, guilty, degraded as she was, Jesus brought her at once into the presence of the living, loving Redeemer-God. He revealed unto her the fullness of divine love. He revealed Himself as the giver of the living water. As a free gift He declared to her salvation. The sinner believes, and as a child He is brought by Jesus unto the Father. High above all space, high above all created heavens, before the very throne of God, is the sanctuary in which we worship. Jesus presents us to the Father. We are beloved children, clothed with white robes, the garments of salvation and the robes of righteousness, we are priests unto God.

There is one expression in the teaching on worship, which the Lord gave unto the woman of Samaria, which in its simplicity and height exceeds the teaching of our epistle. Jesus said, "The Father seeketh such to worship Him." The doctrine of adoption or sonship is rather implied1 than developed in this epistle. In it God is never called our Father,2 or the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Our epistle rather prepares for the higher and yet simpler view, which presents to us God as our Father in Christ Jesus, and believers as His adopted and beloved children. In this present dispensation the Father seeketh worshippers, and it is in children that He seeketh worshippers. Now we understand the full meaning of Christ’s blessed and sweet word: After this manner shall ye pray, "Our Father, which art in heaven;" for the Holy Ghost, whom the ascended Saviour hath sent into our hearts, teaches and enables us to cry, in the Spirit of adoption, Abba! The shadow has vanished; unto us the true light shineth; but Israel is still in darkness, and the world without the knowledge of God. But the day is approaching when Israel shall seek the Lord and their King David; when the idols shall be utterly abolished, and the Lord alone be exalted. Meanwhile, let us, who are gathered out of the world, and who invoke the Name of the revealed Lord, worship in Spirit, having no confidence in the flesh, but rejoicing in Christ Jesus. (1Hebrews 2:11.2Hebrews 12:9is no exception. Only one who fully saw the doctrine of adoption could have written this epistle; for although from the aim and scope of the epistle it does not move, as it were, in this highest plane, yet is all the teaching harmonious with the full New Testament doctrine.)

22 - Heb_9:1-5

CHAPTER X X I I. THE FIRST TABERNACLE.

Hebrews 9:1-5. THE apostle had shown (Hebrews 8:13) that the old covenant was ready to vanish away; yet he is anxious to show that it was given of God, and for the appointed time full of blessing and instruction. It also possessed ordinances of divine service; that is, the divine service connected with it was given of God, instituted and sanctioned as a law among Israel. But the sanctuary was "worldly," that is, visible and tangible, according to this present world, and built with materials belonging to this earthly creation.*(*The force ofδικαι■ματαis, like the Hebrew judgments, ordinances, statutes in Deuteronomy. The service wasjure divino. The antithesis to worldly (κοσμικ■ν) is heavenly, uncreated, eternal. Thus in the epistle to the Galatians, the apostle, speaking of the legal parenthetical dispensation, says we were then in bondage under the elements of the world; and in the epistle to the Colossians, he contrasts with the rudiments of the world the heavenly position of the believer who has died with Christ, and "is no longer living in the world" (Galatians 4:2,Colossians 2:20), but seeking the things above. Of the temporary character of the Jewish service, we have very striking indications in the prophets. Thus we read in the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 3:16): "And it shall come to pass, when ye be multiplied and increased in the land, in those days, saith the Lord, they shall say no more, The ark of the covenant of the Lord: neither shall it come to mind: neither shall they remember it; neither shall they visit it; neither shall that be done any more." It was already noticed by ancient Jews, that the sacrifices, described by Ezekiel in connection with the new temple in Jerusalem, are different from those ordained by Moses. The cleansing of the sanctuary at the commencement of the year, is substituted for the atonement at the end of seven months. "The defective and imperfect form of the old law gives place to a higher and more complete order." -Hävernick. Everything is simplified; the passover and the feast of tabernacles are the two characteristic festivals of the new condition; redemption and the rest and enjoyment of harvest.) But now we worship in the heavenly sanctuary. By the destruction of the Temple, God declared unto the whole world, in the solemn language of judgment, what He had before revealed by His Spirit to His saints. They knew the mystery of the church: that during the times of the Gentiles, while Israel, on account of unbelief, is set aside as the theocratic and central nation, God gathers to Christ a people from among Jews and Gentiles, who, united in one body by one Spirit, and through the mediation of the High Priest, have access unto the Father. They possess the substance, the body, the fullness of which Israel had shadows, pictures, and manifold and imperfect emblems. Through the death of Christ, and by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, the new covenant saints have entered into the true worship of sons. Jesus is the perfect mediator; He perfectly accomplishes mediation; He brings us nigh unto God by His Blood, He brings God nigh unto us by His Spirit.

There is no room in the Church-dispensation for anything like the Levitical priesthood and symbolism. We who believe in Jesus, who honour the adorable Lord as the one Mediator between God and man, regard with profound sorrow, dismay, and abhorrence the antichristian attempt to introduce priestly mediation between Christ and His people. Christ is the only Prophet, and of Him,

and none else, the Father says to us, "Hear ye Him." Christ is the only High Priest; and because He is on the throne of God, we are to come boldly, even out of the depth of our sin and weakness; we ascend above angels and principalities into the highest heaven, and find there help in time of need. Jesus is King, and has all power in heaven and on earth; and by the Holy Ghost He energizes in every saint who cleaves to Him. It is true, that in the old dispensation there were symbols. They were not man-invented, but God-given, they descended from heaven; they derived their authority from God; they originated in the divine mind; they were framed by Him, who seeth the end from the beginning, and who in the most elementary and partial revelation has regard to the harmony and organic unity of the whole. Again, these symbols were to teach, to signify, to illustrate spiritual truths. The divine word, the teaching of the prophets, and the very instinct of the godly, continually pointed away from the symbol to the reality, to the heavenly sanctuary, to the worship of the broken and the contrite heart. And last of all, they were known to be temporary, the star and moonlight to guide and cheer the faithful who waited for the sunrise, the promised redemption. What has Israel’s symbolism - God-given, inspired, spiritual, heart-searching, and Christ-unfolding - to do with the inventions and institutions of men, substituted for the Word of God, and placed, not to illustrate, but to obscure the truth as it is in Jesus? Has the Church of Rome been, like the law, a schoolmaster to lead men unto Christ, to deepen the knowledge of sin, to exalt the holiness of God, to magnify His boundless grace, to point to the Lamb of God, and to the one perfect and all-sufficient Sacrifice?

What a marvellous confusion of Jewish, Pagan, and Christian elements do we see here! Jewish things which have waxed old, and vanished away; preparatory and imperfect elements which the apostle does not scruple to call beggarly now that the fullness has come - revived without divine authority, and changed and perverted to suit circumstances for which they were never intended. Pagan things, appealing to the deep-seated and time-confirmed love of idolatry, and of sensuous and mere outward performances; the Babylonian worship of the Queen of Heaven; the intercession of saints and angels, the mechanical repetition of formulas, the superstitious regard of places, seasons, and relics. Buried among these elements are some relics of Christian truth, without which this ingenious fabric could not have existed so long, and influenced so many minds - a truth which in the merciful condescension of God is blessed to sustain the life of His chosen ones in the mystical Babylon. This so-called Church, vast and imposing, opens its door wide, except to those who honour the Scriptures, and who magnify the Lord Jesus. It can forgive sins, and grant pardons and indulgences, extending the astounding assumption of jurisdiction even beyond the grave; yet it cannot bring peace to the wounded conscience, and renewal to the aching heart, because it never fully and simply declares the efficacy of the blood of Jesus, by which we obtain perfect remission, and the power of the Holy Ghost, who joins us to Christ. This community speaks of sacrifice, of altars, of priest hood, and stands between the people and the sanctuary above, the only High Priest, who by His sacrifice has entered for us into the holy of holies. And in our day this great apostasy has reached a point which we would fain regard as its culminating point, when it places the Virgin Mary by the side of the Lord Jesus as sinless and pure, and when it arrogates for man infallible authority over the heritage of God. But I have referred to this great perversion of truth, to this apostasy, which exerts such a potent fascination, in order to remind you by contrast of the simplicity of the Gospel.*(*The true character of the Church of Rome was well described by Martin Luther in these forcible words: "The Church of Rome is built not upon the rock of the divine word, but on the sand of human reasoning." It is a rationalistic church. The only

method to fortify young minds against Rome's fascinating errors, is to instruct them fully in the truths of God's word. The blood of atonement and the indwelling Spirit are the two great and precious gifts by which we obtain perfect peace, and knowing these two truths we shall not look for an outward infallible authority.)

They who believe in Jesus are, a royal priesthood, a chosen generation, the people who are God's peculiar portion; all whom Jesus loves, and whom He has washed from their sins in His own blood, are made by Him kings and priests unto God and His Father. So we are taught by the apostles Peter and John.* And in our epistle we are reminded of the heavenly calling and the spiritual worship of all believers who consider with believing and simple hearts the great Apostle and High Priest of their profession. (* 1 Peter 2:5-9;Revelation 1:5-6.) God prepared the present dispensation of reality and substance by one of types and shadows.

Among the high and august privileges of Israel which the apostle Paul enumerates in his epistle to the Romans, and which culminate in the transcendent fact, which is also their root, "Of whom as concerning the flesh Christ came, who is God over all," he mentions also the service, including in this expression all the divine institutions concerning worship which were given unto the people through Moses. The people whom God had chosen and redeemed were separated to be a holy nation, to draw near unto Jehovah, and to worship Him. This was the great purpose of election and redemption. Hence the God-appointed service is as important as "the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the law." The word service is apt to convey an erroneous impression, because in the nominal church the character of spiritual worship has been so frequently and during protracted periods misunderstood. The service which God appointed in Israel must not be compared with ritual imposed by human authority, and arranged according to man's ingenuity or aesthetic feeling. In the tabernacle, which Moses built according to the pattern of heavenly things, shown unto him of God, everything, down to the minutest detail of number and colour, was of divine authority, and full of meaning. The Holy Ghost Himself teaches here by signs. When the apostle, after enumerating the vessels of the sanctuary, adds that he cannot now speak of them particularly,* he thereby establishes, or rather confirms, the truth, well known to the Hebrews, that everything in the tabernacle was of divine appointment, and was symbolic of spiritual realities. (*This expression plainly indicates, that although the apostle hastens to the consideration of the most important and central truth of which he is treating here, he could enter into a minute exposition of the various parts of the tabernacle. Hence the endeavour to find the typical meaning of those portions of the tabernacle which are not explained in the New Testament is perfectly legitimate, even as there are many more types and Messianic passages than those referred to and expounded by evangelists and apostles.)

If we understand the nature of worship, we also see that the method of worship must be given and appointed of God. Man neither knows whom or how to worship. Even the chosen and redeemed people need to be taught how to worship; and herein is only a fuller revelation of the character of God Himself. Genesis is the fundamental book, the book of election; Exodus is the book of redemption; Leviticus the book of worship. The inference which the Puritan Divines drew from the second commandment - "Thou shalt not make to thyself any image;" viz., that it prohibited all methods and ceremonies in the worship of God invented and appointed by man, was not merely perfectly correct, but touched the very vital and sensitive point to which the superstition of centuries had become dead and obtuse. God taught Israel worship. The fulfillment of the types is

in Christ; and now there is no other worship but worship of the forgiven and renewed believers, who through the great High Priest are before God, and know and love Him as Father.

Let us consider now the earthly tabernacle, as we are here reminded of it. The saints of old, whose souls thirsted for the living God, who could find no happiness and rest in the things of time and sense, whose hearts could not be filled with mere form, found in the ordinances of God's house their greatest delight. "How amiable are thy tabernacles, Lord God of hosts! My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of the Lord: my heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God." And in still stronger words: "One thing have I desired of the Lord, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to enquire in His temple." And we, who live in the bright light of the gospel, shall also find it good to be here, and to contemplate the divinely- appointed images of the spiritual blessings in heavenly places. "The Holy Ghost explains to us in the New Testament the highest mysteries of eternal redemption by words which are taken from these types, and says to us, Know the Lord, by unfolding to us the Person, the Sacrifice, the High Priesthood of Christ, prefigured more profoundly and completely by the types than in the prophecies, properly so called."1 "Types were institutions intended to deepen, expand, and ennoble the circle of thoughts and desires, and thus heighten the moral and spiritual wants, as well as the intelligence and susceptibility of the chosen people."2 Tyndal says: "These similitudes open Christ, and the secrets of God hid in Christ, and have more virtue and power with them than bare words, and lead a man's understanding further into the pith and marrow and spiritual understanding of the thing than all the words that can be imagined." (1Stier.2From Dr. A. Bonar's excellent introduction on the nature of the book,Comment on Leviticus.) The apostle does not give a full description of the tabernacle. He makes no mention of the outer court, of the brazen altar, of the golden altar of incense, and other important parts. He hastens to point out that the way into the holiest was not then made manifest. His object is not to explain the meaning of the tabernacle, but to show how the tabernacle itself pointed beyond the earthly and temporary symbol.

God reveals Himself unto Israel as holy. Holiness, according to the Old Testament, is not so much one of the divine attributes, such as goodness, power, grace; but rather means the unity of all divine attributes, the very nature of God in His covenant relation to Israel. We bless His holy name, and mean thereby His forgiving grace, His healing mercy, His renewing power, His faithfullness and loving-kindness.* All His mighty wonders, and all the marvels of His guidance and rule, are to show forth His holiness. As in the new covenant we say God is love, so the Israelites said God is holy. (*Psalm 103)

Because God is holy, His people, whom He has chosen, are by this very fact holy. There is no other holiness but that which is rooted in divine election. But this people, chosen and redeemed, called holy, is in its actual condition ignorant, guilty, and polluted; in reality it is distant from God, and therefore God brings them nigh unto Himself. For this purpose the priesthood is chosen and the tabernacle is built.

God dwells in heaven, and therefore heaven is holy. The expression, God dwells in heaven, was well understood by Israel to refer to the manifestation of His glory, and not to any local limitation of His infinite and incomprehensible Majesty. The heaven of heavens, they acknowledged, can not contain Him, yet is the throne of God in heaven; there His glory is beheld, and His presence

adored. Now as there is in heaven the holy of holies, where God Himself is, and the heavens the holy place where God's angels are; so in the earthly tabernacle the holy of holies and the holy place are the two places where the presence, the glory, and the gracious blessing of the covenant God are vouchsafed to Israel. God condescends to reveal Himself there, and to give the blessings of His forgiving and sanctifying grace. In the holy of holies was no light. "The Lord said that He would dwell in the thick darkness."* We read that clouds and darkness are about God, and yet we know that He is light, and covereth Himself with light as with a garment. But the light in which God dwelleth is dark by excess of brightness. No man can approach unto it. No man hath seen God at any time. "Verily thou art a God that hidest thyself," is the exclamation of even His worshippers, who know Him as the Holy One of Israel. Yet this God, who is infinite and incomprehensible, dwelling in light and glory ineffable, is the Holy God, whose love delights to draw His chosen people unto Himself, and to enrich them with the inexhaustible riches of His grace. From the throne of God shines forth the revelation of God. He who is the brightness of God's glory, the image of the invisible God, is sent forth, and we behold light in God's light. As God, who is light, said on the first day, "Let there be light: and there was light," so He hath given us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ. How peaceful and gentle is this light. They that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death can bear and welcome it; it is the tender mercy of God, whereby the Dayspring from on high hath visited us. Yet how perfect and infinite is this light. For he that hath seen Jesus hath seen the Father. Christ is the brightness of the Father's glory; not in that He is less glorious than the Father, less unsearchable and inexhaustible, for no man knoweth the Son, but the Father, but that men can behold the glory of the Only-begotten; for the Word was made flesh, and tabernacled with us. (*1 Kings 8:12.) Of this light the candlestick, which stood in the holy place, was the significant emblem. Here we behold Jesus Christ, the Son of God incarnate, the light of the world; the Lord, upon whom was the Spirit of the Lord, anointing Him, to declare salvation unto the broken-hearted; the Messiah, who came in the sevenfold plenitude of the Holy Ghost, and who was continually revealing the Father. The light of the holy of holies, which was unapproachable, the glory of the Most High, was beheld when Jesus lived on earth, when He, who was in the bosom of the Father, came to reveal Him. But as He manifested the Father, so He also revealed the perfection of humanity; He was filled with the Spirit, and always walked in the Spirit. It is as Immanuel that He is the candlestick. He came to be a mediator, to reveal God, and to bring the light of God in our hearts. He is the light of the world in such a way, that sinful men, becoming one with Him, are also the light of the world. He is able to say unto His disciples: "Let your light so shine before men!" Our light, and yet His light, even as the branches have life, but no other life than that which the True Vine gives them. Hence in the book of Revelation we behold seven golden candlesticks, the seven churches. Christ the Lord walks in the midst of them; nay, He is the light within them. And although in that which is spiritual every part forms a complete and individual whole, yet are the seven one; even as every believer may be viewed as a temple, yet is there only one temple, one spiritual house, even Christ's, who is one with all His saints.

Wonderful light, so clear and simple that little children behold it, and rejoice; so peaceful and consoling that they who cry out of the depths salute it as the dawn of sweetest hope; so perfect and infinite that the more we contemplate it the more we desire "to know Him," and long for the day when He shall appear, and we shall know even as we are known; so high above us and so deep within us, even in the very central seat of vision, transfiguring and transforming us, nay,

shining out of us into the dark world of sin and misery. "I will dwell in the thick darkness," saith God; for He is God, and through all the ages all His angels and saints shall worship Him, vailing their faces and adoring His awful majesty; but He is the Holy One who delights in mercy, in giving, in shining forth into our hearts, in filling heaven and earth with His glory. In Jesus Christ we have and are light. Oh that the waves of light out of the heavenly sanctuary would descend continually into our souls with sanctifying, gladdening, and transforming power! But in the holy place stood also the table and the shew-bread. Jesus Christ is the light of life. Life and light; these mysterious highest blessings are inseparably connected. In Christ, as the eternal uncreated Word, was life, and the life is the light of men.* The Word is only another name for light; it is the manifestation, the expression of that which is hidden. We behold, we hear God in the Son of His love. The Lord brings to us both life and light. There can be no spiritual light proceeding from God without life. To know Him and Jesus Christ is life eternal. Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. And there is no spiritual life without light. With God is the fountain of life, and in His light do we see light. (*John 1:3.)

Bread is the symbol of life. Bread is the peculiar food of humanity. It grows out of the earth, and is the result of human labour and diligence. It is of all nourishment the most important, essential, and precious. When we combine the symbolism of earthly bread with the symbolism of the manna which God sent to the Jews in the desert, we are prepared to understand the deep teaching of our Lord who presents Himself as the living Bread, the Bread that comes down from heaven, the Bread of life. He is the Son heaven-given, the Child earth-born, the Life and the Giver of life; and through His death on the cross He became bread for all poor sinners, whose faith in Him can be so fitly compared with eating, satisfying their hunger after righteousness, and in their emptiness grasping and rejoicing in the fullness of God’s redemption. The shew-bread, or bread of presence, set before God was a type of Jesus, as the delight of His heavenly Father, who was always well pleased in Him, and satisfied with His love and obedience. The number twelve shows that for each tribe which the High Priest bore on His breast-plate, there was bread and abundance; for Jesus came that we might have life, and that abundantly. The priests, even all Christians, feed now on the true bread in the presence of God. And as in the candlestick we behold in the first place Christ, the true light; and in the second place Christ in the Church, the light of the world; so may we also behold in the twelve loaves a reference to Christ in His people. Jesus was the corn of wheat that died. Jesus was the sheaf of the first-fruits, which, on the morrow after the Sabbath, on the first day of the week, was waved before the Lord; and fifty days after His resurrection the Holy Ghost descended, and the disciples were filled with the Spirit. Then was the Church born, then the two loaves of fine flour were presented unto the Lord; for we are the first-fruits of His creatures. And thus we read also that Jesus, entering the heart, sups with us and we with Him. The apostle does not mention the golden altar of incense symbolizing the intercession of our adorable Lord, and the presentation of our petitions by Him unto the Father. The candlestick, the table, and the golden altar - light, life, and acceptable worship, are inseparably connected. Christ Jesus, God and man, is the true Light, the true, substantial, living, and life-giving Bread, the true Intercessor. Yet so perfect is His mystical union with His believing people, according to the love of the Father, and by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, that we also are seven golden candle sticks, children of light, and light-bearers; that we also are an acceptable offering unto the Lord; and that the prayers of saints ascend as incense unto the heavenly throne. To us it is given to understand the full meaning of these divine symbols, to behold in the one Lord Jesus Christ the manifold wisdom of God, to

receive in the one unspeakable gift all the gifts of eternal blessedness. The brightness of gospel light brings us to the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus. Knowing Him, who is all, we contemplate with delight each single type, that so we may grow in adoring knowledge, and be increasingly established in the comforting and sanctifying truth. Let us, then, look also with reverence into the most holy, which was separated by a veil, itself a type, from the first tabernacle. The apostle enumerates seven things as belonging to it - types of seven divine and heavenly realities: (1) The golden censer; (2) The ark of the covenant overlaid roundabout with gold; (3) The golden pot that had manna; (4) Aaron’s rod that budded; (5) The tables of the covenant; (6) The cherubims of glory; (7) The mercy-seat*(*In the sanctuary we noticed three things, in the most holy seven.) The apostle does not explain the meaning of these things, but he simply refers to them. His wish therefore is merely to remind us of the manifold symbols by which the solemn realities of the heavenly sanctuary were signified by the Holy Ghost.

1. In the book of Exodus (Exodus 30:34-38) we read a full description of the incense, which was regarded as most holy. The golden censer containing it brings before us the intercession of our Lord at the right hand of God; this is the only perfect prevailing mediation, fragrant and delightful unto the Father, whereby all our sin-defiled and imperfect petitions, praises, and gifts are well-pleasing unto the Most High.

2. The ark of the covenant, sometimes called simply the ark, or the ark of testimony; or in the last passage where it occurs, "The holy ark," with (3) The golden pot that had manna; (4) Aaron’s rod that budded; and (5) The tables of the covenant. The ark was a symbol that God was present among His people, that His covenant blessing was resting upon them. It was the most sacred and glorious instrument of the sanctuary; yea, the whole sanctuary was built for no other end, but to be as it were a house and habitation for the ark.1 Hence sanctification proceeded unto all the other parts of it; for, as Solomon observed, the places were holy whereunto the ark of God came.2 The nations took it to be the Gods that the Israelites worshipped.3 "God gave this ark that it might be a representation of Christ, and He took it away to increase the desire and expectation of the Church after Him and for Him. And as it was the glory of God to hide and cover the mysterious counsels of His will under the Old Testament, whence this ark was so hidden from the eyes of all men, so under the New Testament, it is His glory to reveal and make them open in Jesus Christ."4 It contained originally (and the apostle is not here giving an account of the actual condition of the temple, but of the original and perfect design) the manna, or the symbol of the heaven-descended, real, spiritual, and therefore hidden bread,5 which they who overcome shall know and taste perfectly in the Paradise of God. It contained also the rod of Aaron that budded, whereby God confirmed the election of Aaron and his sons to be priests unto Him. This is a beautiful and striking type of Him who is Priest according to the power of an endless life, of Him who was dead, and, behold, He liveth forever more, of the Rod out of the stem of Jesse, of the Man whose name is the Branch, and who shall be a Priest upon His throne.6 It contained also the tables of the covenant, in which God had written His holy law. These tables testified against Israel’s sin and hardness of heart. And at first sight it seems strange and alarming that in the ark of merciful covenant-presence, besides the manna and the symbol of resurrection-life and unfading youth, we should behold the accusing and condemning witness of the broken law. But the law which condemns us is and ever remains holy, just, and good; and the God who justifies us is none other than the just God. Not merely is the propitiation, the covering and atoning blood, sprinkled upon

the mercy-seat, but the law of God was magnified and fulfilled by Christ; as is written in the psalm, "Thy law is within my heart."7 Our Advocate with the Father is Jesus Christ the righteous. (1 Exodus 26:33.22 Chronicles 8:11.3 1 Samuel 4:8.4 2 Corinthians 3:18. - Owen.5 Rev. 2.6Isaiah 11:1;Zechariah 3:8; Zechariah 6:12-13; 7 Psalms 40:8.)

Then there were the cherubim of glory. There is no reason why we should view the cherubim as mere personifications either of divine powers or the Church. We read of them as of other celestial beings, as of the seraphim who stand before God's throne, and as of the angels or messengers whom God sends forth to do His commandments, and to minister unto the heirs of salvation. We read of them as guarding the entrance into the garden of Eden after man's fall. Afterwards in the Psalms, as the chariot of the Lord, and in the visions of Ezekiel, they appear as the representatives of creation and the mediators and agents of divine life-power in the world. In the book of Revelation also we read of them as the living beings. We may in a general way call them angels, as the apostle Peter does with evident reference to the mercy-seat. These high angelic creatures - thus mysteriously connected with the divine world-rule - behold with eager and adoring desire the glory of God in Christ Jesus, God in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself, the eternal counsel of divine love fulfilled in the redemption through the blood of the Lamb. Thus the apostle teaches us, that by the church the manifold wisdom of God is shown unto the principalities and powers in heavenly places. And in harmony with this sublime truth is the song of the heavenly host on Bethlehem's plains, "Glory to God in the highest," and the majestic ascription of praise to the Lamb, which the myriads of angels offer in the vision of the apostle John, and to which the four living beings respond, Amen. (* Psalms 18:10;Ezekiel 1:4, etc.) And what shall we say of the mercy-seat? Even in the holy of holies, when we have contemplated so many symbols of the most solemn character, we pause in reverential silence as we are brought to this highest manifestation of the divine presence of holiness and love. Here we behold the propitiation through faith in the blood of the Son of God; the atonement which, while it covers our sins, manifests the glory of God, and reveals to us and to all angels the depths of divine wisdom, grace, truth, the marvellous union of all His glorious perfections: God is love. Have we come to the blood-besprinkled mercy-seat? What other position can we take than either remain outside, far from God and strangers to His love, or enter by faith, now that the veil is rent, into the holy of holies? If it is true that Jesus is the way, and that no man cometh to the Father, but by Him, can we approach, can we pray, can we adore in any other way than in and by Jesus? in any other place than in the heavenly sanctuary? We cannot go back by the works of the law into the Garden of Eden. The cherub with the flaming sword guards the entrance. But even the cherubim will adore with children of Eve, guilty and fallen, when in repentance and trust we look unto the Lord our righteousness, the Lamb in the midst of the throne! A bond of more thrilling tenderness binds Jesus to us sinful men than to the angels.

23 - Heb_9:7-14

CHAPTER X X I I I.

CHRIST ENTERED IN BY HIS OWN BLOOD.

Hebrews 9:7-14. THE apostle, having briefly referred to the glory of the first tabernacle, contrasts now the entrance of the high priest into the holy of holies on the day of atonement and the typical sacrifice, which sanctified to the purifying of the flesh with the entrance of our Lord into heaven itself by His own blood, and the real and spiritual purification connected with Christ's one oblation. The type was necessarily imperfect; the fulfillment is perfect. The former consisted of many parts. There is a multiplicity of sacrifices, and yet, even when combined, there is still imperfection. The latter possesses a marvellous simplicity, for Christ is the one sacrifice, by whom all the purposes of God, as to our redemption, and sanctification, and future glory, are fulfilled. In the type, the purification was legal, ceremonial, provisional - it admitted the worshipper to the services of the worldly sanctuary; in the fulfillment, the conscience is purged, and we have access, continuous and forever, unto the throne of God. In the type, the very sanctuary itself required to be cleansed by expiatory sprinklings, the sins of priests and worshippers in their relationship to the sanctuary needed atonement, and through this purification the continuance of typical sacrificial communion with God was secured; in the fulfillment, through the blood of Christ, heaven itself is the sanctuary in which we worship, and as Christ is there forever, our acceptance and worship know no interruption or cessation. Thus the type itself, witnessing throughout of its imperfection, points to the glorious fulfillment. The way into the holiest, access to the very presence of God, was not yet made manifest While the priests went always into the holy place, accomplishing the service of God, kindling the lamps, laying shew-bread every Sabbath-day upon the table, and offering incense on the golden altar, they were not allowed to enter into the holy of holies. Even the high priest could not enter, except once a year, on the day of atonement - that solemn and awful day, on which, divested of his golden and glorious robes, without the mitre, the embroidered vest, and the breast-plates, he entered in the garments of humility, offering for himself and for the errors of the people. Even on that day the high priest's entrance into the holy of holies was imperfect; for he was by no means to see clearly the ark of the covenant with the mercy-seat; the cloud of incense was to be a covering, lest he die.*(*This then was perfectly evident, that the Jewish dispensation was characterized by the holy place, and that access into the "most holy" was as yet not revealed and given to the chosen people. The whole structure of the tabernacle, and the whole arrangement of services, made this clear to every single-hearted and conscientious Israelite. He must have known, and was continually reminded, that the most holy place with the mercy-seat was hid in deepest mystery; that it was as yet veiled and inaccessible; that the blood of goats and calves could not really take away sins; and that the imperfection of these sacrifices was manifest both because they had to be repeated, and because the veil remained, which separated even the priests from the mercy-seat. The God-fearing Israelite must have felt that meats and drinks, and divers washings and carnal ordinances, were only figurative, preparatory - an intermediate education as well as promise and pledge of the times of reformation, of fulfillment and substance.)

But now Christ is come, and now begins the dispensation, not again of the first tent, or of the holy place, but of that symbolized by the Most Holy - of the heavenly sanctuary itself - of the worship in Spirit and in truth - of entrance into the holy of holies, where the great High Priest is enthroned at the right hand of the Father. What a contrast to the Levitical dispensation!

Even in the first tent, or part of the tabernacle, the relation of the people with God was through the priesthood. The sacrifice, by which alone access could be given to sinful men, according to divine holiness, had not yet been offered; hence the conscience of the worshipper was not perfect, and his service was not in liberty. But now, through the death of Christ, believers are brought from the first tabernacle and priestly mediation into the true archetype of the earthly holy of holies, into the heavenly sanctuary itself, having the conscience perfect according to divine righteousness, and in the spirit of liberty, in the knowledge of the infinite love of God.

Hence, there is a real and great difference between believers in the new covenant dispensation and in the old. It is true that there was at all times only one way of salvation, only one righteousness through faith in the divinely-appointed Substitute provided by God for guilty sinners. But the difference between the condition of believers before the death of Christ and those after is indicated fully in this and the succeeding chapter, in harmony with the whole Pauline teaching.*The law made nothing perfect. (* Romans 3:25.)

But, as the apostle triumphantly continues, Messiah is come, the high priest of good things to come; that is, of eternal blessings which shall be fully revealed and bestowed in the ages to come, but the substance of which is ours already, even spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ. He Himself is the true tabernacle. Conceived of the Holy Ghost, born of the Virgin Mary, He is called from His very infancy that holy Thing or Sanctuary. This Body the Father prepared; He built it by the Holy Ghost to be the tabernacle of divine glory. The Word was made flesh, tabernacled with us, and we beheld the Son’s glory. He was the Light of the world, the golden candlestick; He was the Bread of the countenance, and from His pure humanity, as well as His filial divinity (inseparably united), ascended the true incense unto God, even as afterwards He intercedes in the holy of holies. But while on earth Jesus is only the Holy Place; not yet has He entered into the very presence of God, into heaven itself. Before He can ascend to His God and our God, to His Father and our Father, He must die; His flesh is the veil, and the veil must be rent. True, His flesh also is without sin. Blessed be God, in Him was nothing but Spirit and life. He came in the weakness and in the likeness of sinful flesh, for thus it was necessary in order to bring us unto God. He learned obedience, He submitted His human will to the Father’s, and in all His walk, trial, and suffering He was holy, harmless, and undefiled. But, as the apostle explains it, because man was without righteousness, inasmuch as the law could not be fulfilled in us, through the sinful weakness of the flesh, God sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and by a sacrifice for sin, condemned sin in the flesh. When Jesus died on the cross, then God condemned sin. When the body of Christ was broken, then God judged sin - executed sentence on it - and in the true and real sense destroyed it for evermore.

Notice how careful the apostle is to remind us in this very passage of Christ’s divinity.* Who is this man on the cross in the weakness of sinful flesh? Who is this man in whose sacrifice of Himself God the Judge condemns sin? He is God’s own Son, eternal, infinite, all-glorious. Wonderful veil rent by God Himself! But now is Christ no longer the Holy Place, but the Most Holy, the Holy of

Holies. See Him on the right hand of God; see now the throne of God a throne of grace; with His own blood He entered, and the manifestation of God between the cherubim is now God reconciled to us in Christ Jesus, our Father and covenant God. Jesus, who glorified the law, manifesting it in His person and life, and fulfilling and exhausting both its precepts and its curse, is the ark wherein the tables of the law were hid; He Himself is the mercy-seat, the propitiation, revealing the holy love of God with such brightness and perfection that angels desire to look into this mystery. He has the hidden manna by which He sustains our inner life on earth, and shall communicate to us in eternity renewed strength; and He is the rod, which, though cut off and given over unto death, budded forth in resurrection-power, and is living for ever more; thus proving Him to be the true Priest after the power of an indissoluble life. The veil is rent; Christ died on the cross; we see the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath chosen us in Him before the foundation of the world. The darkness is past; no cloud of incense conceals the mystery; Christ has no veil on His face when for us He appears in the presence of God; and we also with open face behold the Father. (*Romans 8:3.) The whole throne of God is irradiated now by the sweet and peaceful light of mercy, for the Lamb who found an eternal redemption is at the right hand of God. The Father Himself loveth us; God the just and holy One hath accepted us in the Beloved. Here is what no symbol could prefigure. Jesus, both Sacrifice and Priest, has fulfilled Aaronic types, and reigns after the order of Melchisedec, while presenting us continually unto the Father, is always sympathizing with us in our infirmities and temptations, and supplying all needful strength unto us in our earthly pilgrimage and conflict. But let us reverently consider the way by which Jesus entered, and the position which is thereby given unto all believers of God. We notice two expressions. He entered in once by His own blood, having obtained eternal redemption for us, and, the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself unto God. Not without awe and trembling, and yet with deep and solemn joy, ought a Christian to speak of the precious blood of Christ. Here is the very heart, the inmost sanctuary of our faith. Marvel not, brethren, that this doctrine is at all times, both to wise Greeks and self-righteous Jews, the stumbling-block and the rock of offence. But where man’s reason can see no wisdom, where the unrenewed mind doubts, cavils, and mocks, the saints of God adore, and expect to adore forever. Here is indeed the centre of all divine revelations. With increasing clearness this mystery shines through the whole Scripture. Do we not see it in the better sacrifice of Abel? Do we not behold it on the door-posts of Israel, on the memorable night of the passover? Does it not meet us on every page of Leviticus? Do we not hear it in the solemn and emphatic declaration: "Without shedding of blood there is no remission of sin?" Does it not shine forth in all the ordinances of the tabernacle? Can we not discover it in the words of Isaiah, when he speaks of Messiah pouring out His life? and in the words of Zechariah, "They shall look unto me, whom they pierced"? Jesus the Lord declared "Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you;" and on the last evening said, "This is the new testament in my blood; this is my blood, shed tor the remission of sins." In like manner all the apostolic epistles assign peculiar importance as to the death of the Lord, so especially to the shedding of His precious blood; and in the culminating book of Scripture, the Apocalypse, the doctrine is asserted with peculiar solemnity. The beloved disciple ascribes glory and honour unto Him who loved us, and washed us from our sins in His own blood, and hath made us a kingdom of priests unto God and His Father; and all the heavenly doxologies, the voice of celestial angels and saints, ascribe redemption to the blood of Christ; to the blood they ascribe the righteousness of the saints, as well as their triumph over sin and evil. On no subject is the

apostolic teaching so emphatic, so lucid, so abundant. This truth tilled their hearts, and was their central thought. By the blood of Christ we who were far off were made nigh; by His blood we are justified; Christ suffered that He might sanctify us by His blood; we possess (and that forever) redemption through His blood; His blood cleanseth us from all sin, and the Church has been purchased with this precious price.*(*Ephesians 2:13;Romans 5:9;Hebrews 13:12;Ephesians 1:7;1 John 1:7;Acts 20:28;Revelation 1:5; Revelation 5:9, etc.) As the types teach us, the great object of the death of Christ was, that His blood might be shed. By His own blood He entered into the holy place. And as in no single sacrifice could be adequately represented the power and efficacy of His precious blood, the apostle mentions here, not merely the blood of bulls and of goats, but also the ashes of an heifer. By the former the high priest, the priests, and the people were ceremonially purified, their iniquities and transgressions being removed, and the sanctuary cleansed for continued worship. By the other was symbolized the cleansing and vivifying power of Christ's blood, keeping us during our pilgrimage in this wilderness of sin and defilement.* But while these types could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience, but were given in the mercy of God for an intermediate period, and to bring in a better hope, the blood of Christ, by which He entered into the holy of holies, brings unto us eternal redemption and heavenly perfection. Here the sanctification (■γι■ζ■ιν. 13) is real. [*The ashes of an heifer. It was to take away the defilement of death. The institution is recorded in the book of Numbers as relating to the provision God makes for His people in their wilderness journey. As no blood of the slain victim was "incorruptible," it was necessary, in order to show the cleansing by blood from defilement through contact with death, to have as it were the essential principle of blood presented in a permanent and available form. The red heifer, which had never been under the yoke, symbolizes life in its most vigorous, perfect, and fruitful form. She was slain without the camp. (Hebrews 13:11;Numbers 19:3-4.) She waswhollyburnt, flesh, skin, and blood, the priest casting cedar wood, hyssop, and scarlet into the fire. The ashes of the burnt heifer, put into flowing water, were then sprinkled with hyssop for ceremonial purification. It is also important to notice that it was not Aaron or the high priest himself to whom the red heifer was given, but to his son or successor. The high priest was to be separate from death. Here also we see the imperfection of the type. Our victim is the Lord of life, who by the eternal Spirit offered Himself and rose in the power of an endless life. Christ is the fulfillment. For the blood of Christ is not merely, so to speak, the key unlocking the holy of holies to Him as our High Priest and Redeemer, it is not merely our ransom by which we are delivered out of bondage, and, freed from the curse, are brought nigh unto God; but it also separates us from death and sin. It is incorruptible, always cleansing and vivifying; through this blood we are separated from this evil world, and overcome; by this blood we keep our garments white. (John 6:53;Revelation 7:14.) What had necessarily to be separated in the types, is here in unity and perfection. Likewise, whatreallyandpotentiallyis given to us when we are first brought into the state of reconciliation and access, of justification and sanctification, is in our actual experience continually repeated. We have been cleansed and sanctified once and forever; the same blood, remembered and believed in, cleanseth us continually. The difference between this continuous cleansing and the first (according to John 13) must never be forgotten, or we fall into a legal condition, going back from the holy of holies into the holy place. But, on the other hand, we must not forget thelivingcharacter of the blood, which by the Spirit is continually applied to us, and by which we have peace, renewal of the sense of pardon, and strength for service, (1 Peter 1:2.)]

We are separated from God the Holy One by sin, from God the living One by death. In order to bring us into communion with God, and to purge our consciences, we have to be delivered both from the guilt of sin and the defilement and power of death. Now of the types which purified unto the (typical) service, the blood of Jesus is the antitype. By the blood of Christ we are brought into the presence of the holy and living God. This is our sanctification, in which we are separated and cleansed unto the worship and service of God. We are separated from the world of sin and death, from dead works; by which we must understand everything which is not the manifestation of a divinely - given and wrought life; because nothing is fit to be brought before and unto the living God unless it be living, or spiritual, or proceeding from communion with the living One. But if we ask, Why is this blood so precious, so efficacious, so all - prevailing? the answer is, Not merely because it is innocent, pure, and sinless, the life of a perfect and holy Man laid down voluntarily, the blood of One who had perfectly fulfilled the law of God, but because Jesus through the eternal Spirit offered Himself; that is, Jesus who died was God, eternal, infinite, and according to the eternal counsel of the triune Godhead He laid down His life. To Him the Father had given to have life in Himself. He is the Lord of glory - Spirit1 The Scriptures always remind us of the Godhead when they speak of the death of Jesus. The Son of God loved me, and gave Himself for me. God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself. God purchased the Church with His own blood. He, who died, is the Son of God in human nature. And as in Him the divine nature and the human nature are one Person, so His blood, which in His infinite love He shed on the cross, is of eternal and unspeakable value, and possesses divine power to redeem, sanctify, cleanse. The Son of God became man, and His Holy life was poured out for us and shed forth in His blood; for He "offered Himself without spot to God." That freedom from all blemish which the ceremonial law prefigured in the sacrifices, was fulfilled in absolute perfection in the Lamb of God. It was not merely short-sighted men who could not convince Him of sin; it was not merely the testimony of Judas, who betrayed Him, and of Pontius Pilate, who pronounced the unjust sentence, and of the centurion, who stood by the cross, that Jesus was innocent, and that there was no fault in Him; it was not merely the testimony of the demons, who called Him the Holy One of God. Here we have the testimony of God. Christ was the Servant, and the Elect in whom the Father delighted. And when He offered Himself as the perfectly pure and spotless Lamb, in this His act of highest obedience as Man, He possessed all the perfection and value of His divine person; for He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit, which expression refers not so much to the Holy Ghost as to His Sonship and union with the Father, to the eternal purpose and will of the Godhead. God was in Christ reconciling. The purpose of Christ in offering Himself was in divine as well as human perfection. His sacrifice therefore possesses the character of eternal, absolute perfection, absolute efficacy, and everlasting value.2(1 1 Corinthians 2:8;2 Corinthians 3:17.2The expression in verse 12 is very emphatic -δι■το■■δι■υ α■ματος(through the blood of His own). "Through the eternal Spirit." CompareHebrews 7:16"The power of an endless life." His divine and everlasting Spirit concurred with the Father’s counsel of love: This point is more fully explained in chapter 10.)

We who believe that Christ has entered by His own blood into the holy of holies have thereby received a fourfold assurance:

1. Christ has obtained for us eternal redemption.

2. We have access to God.

3. Our consciences are purged by the blood of Christ to serve the living God.

4. The things to come are secured to us by Him, who is the heir, and in whom even now all spiritual blessings in heavenly places are ours.

1. The redemption which Christ has obtained is eternal. The apostle uses the expression "found" redemption* So Abraham answered the question of Isaac, God has provided the Lamb for the offering; so in the book of Job the messenger or angel, the interpreter or mediator, one above a thousand, reveals to afflicted and sin-convinced man God’s righteousness, and saith, "Deliver him from going down to the pit: I have found a ransom." Marvellous redemption, in which all divine attributes working together are revealed, so that glory is to God in the highest, and perfect peace on earth to the men of His good pleasure. God only could provide our ransom. (Psalms 49:6-9.) The expression brings before us in a human way the wonderful wisdom of God, wherein He has abounded toward us, the marvellous plan of redemption, which, high above all created thought, originating in the divine mind, brought together mercy and truth, justice and grace in harmonious unity, and made the dark object of sin the occasion of the brightest manifestation of divine glory. Thus the Lord commends His own wisdom, and in the prophets frequently stirs up our sluggish mind to regard with wonder and astonishment His great salvation. Christ’s precious blood can never lose its power, till all the chosen saints of God are gathered unto glory. It is a real redemption from the guilt and power of sin, from the curse of the law, from the wrath of God, from the bondage of Satan, and from the second death; an eternal redemption, because sin is forgiven; Satan, death, and hell are vanquished; everlasting righteousness is brought in; we are saved for evermore. Jesus has redeemed us. By dying in our stead, by bearing our sins in His own body on the tree, by satisfying all the claims which a holy God had against us, by being made a sin-offering and a curse for us, the Lord delivered us from our bondage and captivity. His blood was the ransom. Because we are redeemed according to divine righteousness, death has no sting; we are no longer through fear of death subject to bondage. Sin has no more dominion over us, for the death of Christ has set us free to the service and obedience of God. The wrath of God abideth no longer on us, for the atoning blood speaks now only of mercy and everlasting love. Satan can no longer lay anything to the charge of God’s elect. (*"Found for Himself (lit.) as a thing of insuperable difficulty to all, save divine omnipotence, self-devoting zeal and love to find." - Dr. BROWN.)

He found redemption where man would never have thought of it. He found it after His incarnation and path of obedience in the death of the cross, in the darkness of agony, and He brought it forth in brightness and beauty, glory and strength, by His resurrection from the dead.

2. We have now access to God; we are brought into the very presence of God; we enter into the holy of holies. The veil no longer conceals the counsel of God’s wonderful love; sin in the flesh no longer separates us from the presence of the Most High. Very awful, and yet most blessed and sweet, is this assurance. God is very near to each one of us. Though we see Him not, yet is He nearer than the very air we breathe; for our very being and living and moving is in Him. He is very near unto us, and all our thoughts and desires are open before Him, who is the searcher of hearts. Yet, although such is the exceeding nearness of God to us, we are at an exceeding great distance from God. Who can measure the distance of the prodigal in the far country from the father’s house? But we can describe that distance by one syllable, short though terrible - sin. Now He by whom alone sin can be forgiven and removed is nowhere else but on the throne of God - on His

right hand. With Him is forgiveness of sin. In heaven is my righteousness; in the throne of God, and nowhere else, my hope, my comfort, and my trust. He who has found and saved me, lost and guilty sheep; He who by His death has redeemed me, has taken me on His shoulder. He is no longer here. As He died unto sin once, I seek Him no longer among the dead. He is ascended. Rejoicing has He gone home, and called His friends together to rejoice over the sheep now with Him in the land of peace. Hence there is no other place for me but heaven itself. Everywhere else I see only sin and condemnation. Where can I pray or approach God without a Mediator, without the blood, without the High Priest? But the blood of Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, the interceding High Priest Jesus, is in heaven itself. Then I also must pray and worship there. I have no other hiding-place but Christ in heaven.

You who have come to Jesus, who have looked unto Him and were healed, you stand now on the other side of the cross, within the veil, in the holy of holies. You have obtained mercy. God forgave all your sins, and clothed you with Christ. In this state into which God has brought you there can henceforth be no change. Your knowledge and enjoyment of it may vary and grow, your faithfulness and service fluctuate, your experience may rise and fall; but you are always children of God, forgiven, beloved, compassed about with divine mercy, and embraced in the very love which the Father has to Jesus.

We are not like the Jewish priests, who, under the former tabernacle stayed outside the unrent veil, and never came into the presence of God; not like the believer in the old dispensation, who offered continually sacrifices, which were needed on account of his repeated sins, but which were shadows, and only procured a ceremonial cleansing in hope of the future expiation. We have been pardoned, redeemed, made righteous once for all; God beholds us in Christ His Son; we are always before God by reason of that sacrifice which has put away sin, and by reason of the presence of the Lord, whom the Father calls My Son, and who is not ashamed to call us brethren. If the blood of the passover-lamb protected the Israelites in Egypt, and secured to them perfect safety, if the blood sprinkled on the mercy-seat in the holy of holies covered Israel’s transgressions of the divine law, how much more does the precious blood of Christ, by which He entered into heaven itself, and with which He there appears before God for us, cleanse us from all sin, so that we are accounted by Him holy and without blame? For (3) to you has been given, what the old covenant saints did not possess, perfection - the absolution and remission of sins. Your conscience has been purged and made free; once for all God has received you in Christ Jesus, has pardoned and accepted you, has invested you with everlasting righteousness. You have no conscience any longer of sin. There is no guilt on you. There is no condemnation. You have been acquitted judicially. That which in the eternal counsel was decreed for you, that which by the death and resurrection of Jesus was obtained for you, was actually and perfectly given unto you when the grace of God was exceeding abundant unto you, with faith and love, which are in Christ Jesus. Our conscience pronounces us just and accepted, even as God pronounces us just and accepted, and that for the same reason. The same blood which was sprinkled on the mercy-seat has touched and purged our consciences. We know that we have been made the righteousness of God in Him; we know that according to all the perfections of God we are forgiven and saved. No longer, therefore, is our conscience burdened or denied by the knowledge of alienation from God, and the fear of His displeasure. But are there many such heavenly worshippers in the liberty and power of the new covenant? While we mourn over Israel’s blindness, and the veil on their hearts,

are we with open face beholding the glory of the Lord? Among the people who listen to the gospel, are there not many who hear and speak constantly of divine mercy and pardon, and yet never come to a full, decided, and conscious reception of the grace of God? They believe that those who are justified by faith have peace, but they themselves have no peace. As the Jews of old had continually to offer sacrifices, so they repeat continually the same petitions for pardon and acceptance, and with the same indistinct and vague consciousness as to their acceptance. The Jews were not in the full light, but it was not owing to their unbelief; but now that the true light shineth, why are souls in gloom and uncertainty; now that the summer is come, why is the heart dreary without sunshine and melody?

It is because the conscience has not been set free by the blood of Christ. In that mysterious judgment-chamber, where busy thoughts, like subtle and eager pleaders, accuse and excuse one another, a voice, whose authority we cannot dispute, declares us guilty, and the testimony of God, which is greater than our conscience, reveals to us more fully our sin and condemnation. But when we are convinced of our sin, and utter ruin and helplessness, God is revealed as a just God, and the justifier of the guilty, who believe in Jesus; the blood of Jesus Christ, the Son of God, reveals to us the holy and perfect way in which all iniquity is pardoned and all transgression removed. And as that blood avails in heaven, so it delivers the conscience from the burden of guilt, and from the burden of all our own miserable attempts at pleasing God and lulling our fears: dead works which like a dead weight only increase our wretchedness. Now we truly turn from sin unto God. In Christ Jesus God and the sinner meet; both behold the blood of the Lord Jesus, and in the high sanctuary above and in the inmost sanctuary of the conscience there is peace. And now if Jesus says to thee, "Be of good cheer; thy sins are forgiven thee," then be of good cheer, and rest in the love of God. See how in all the epistles addressed to God’s children forgiveness of sin, redemption, acceptance in Christ, are fundamental blessings and gifts, which all believers are supposed to have received by faith, and once for all.

Yet the conscience thus purged is more sensitive. We know now more of our sinfulness; for we behold sin in the light of God’s love. What then? Of sin we have no conscience; but of our sinfulness and constant sinning we have. We confess our sins; we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses;" we mourn over our unfaithfulness; we behold and abhor our vileness; we have no confidence in the flesh. But we confess to the Father as children; we confess before the throne of grace, and in the hearing of the merciful and compassionate High Priest. We learn the deepest and most self-abasing lesson; to go with sin and unworthiness to infinite Love, to boundless compassion, to never-failing mercy, to the Father who loves us, to the Lord who always intercedes for us. We have been washed once for all when we came to Jesus. We need now to have our feet washed. Peter either refuses to have his feet washed by Jesus (false humility), or wishes Jesus to wash not merely his feet, but also his hands and his head (unbelief and false humility again); but when afterwards he understood the ways of God, he strengthened his brethren. For in his epistle he teaches them, that if we forget that we have been purged from our sins we become unfruitful and blind: the knowledge of our perfect and complete acceptance is the strength of obedience. For with the conscience troubled and defiled, man has only dead works. There is no life in his feelings, prayers, words, or actions; for is he not separate from the fountain of life? But, as Martin Luther delighted to say - for what we are always experiencing, we must express always - where there is forgiveness of sin, there is life and all blessedness. We do not obtain forgiveness by good works,

but through the forgiveness of sin come good works. First remove sin from the conscience, and it will also be dethroned in the heart.

There are three classes of men. The worst, those who do not feel sin as a burden on their conscience, but cherish it as an idol in the heart. Oh what a discovery in the eternal world, that the burden is intolerable, and that the idol is an everlasting torment! Then there are men who try to cleanse the heart, and to lead a pure life, and hope thereby to remove the burden of guilt on the conscience. Who can help loving such? But not so can you obtain either a peaceful conscience or a God-loving heart. Christ is God’s righteousness for man. First the conscience is delivered, and thus the heart is renewed; and out of the renewed heart flows living obedience. "To serve the living God." It is by a constantly-exercised faith in and by the power of the blood of Christ, that we now serve the living God. Being made free from sin, by the death of Christ, we became the servants of righteousness, servants to God, and have our fruit unto holiness, and the end everlasting life.1 Dead works cannot please a living God; but we walk now in newness of life, serving Him with gladness of heart.2 The living God - it is said emphatically; for only the believer realizes God as living, present, sending down continually the influence of His grace. (1Romans 6:22.2The character of the New Testament obedience is liberty. As it proceeds from the love of a forgiven and renewed heart, and as it is in the power of the indwelling Spirit, it does not stand in need of outward regulations and legal enactments. We are to reverence, and diligently to study all the instruction and precepts of God’s Word. But how different are these from that kind of devotional and ascetic help of our day, which seeks to regulate the inner life, by prescribing prayers for different hours, etc. Such things keep the soul, if not in bondage, in an infantine condition of weakness. Contrast with this: "Enoch walked with God;" "The joy of the Lord is your strength;" "Follow Me.")

Men speak of going to heaven. Go to heaven now! Not death, but faith, will take you there. Jesus is in heaven, the Son of man, who came to seek and to save that which was lost. Look up to heaven, all ye ends of the earth, poor, guilty, needy ones. Believe it, you will see there a Father, a Saviour, the Mediator of the new and eternal covenant, the blood of atonement; you will see a throne, and adore; a throne of grace, and you will rejoice. Thus you will in truth and reality belong to heaven. You will be able to say even in the present time, "My citizenship is in heaven;" for Christ is your High Priest and Lord at the right hand of God, and He ministers even now "good things," spiritual and heavenly blessings, of which the full and perfect manifestation will be the inheritance at His second coming.

Thus all depends on the character of worship. Opposed to the condition of the self-righteous or careless world, and contrasted with the condition of the Old Testament dispensation of figure, which never led believers beyond the first tabernacle or holy place, is the new covenant worship in Spirit and truth. It is with a conscience purged from sin; it is in the very presence of God; it is through the mediation of the one High Priest; it is in virtue of that same blood, in which alone is eternal redemption. In this worship only are we free, in heavenly places, and separated and delivered from this evil world.

24 - Heb_9:15-28

CHAPTER X X I V. THE MEDIATOR OF THE NEW TESTAMENT.

Hebrews 9:15-28. THE scope of the apostle’s argument, from verses 15-28 (Hebrews 9:15-28), is as follows:

Christ entered with the price of an eternal redemption into the presence of God. The first effect of His entrance is, that our conscience is purged from dead works to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:14.) The second effect is, that thereby Christ has become the Mediator of the New Testament, in order that the called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance, (Hebrews 9:15.) The death of Christ was necessary to establish this testament; for even the first covenant was "not without blood." And this blood was applied to the book and the people; to the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry; and to "almost all things," in order to continue the approach of Israel and their service, (Hebrews 9:19; Hebrews 9:21; Hebrews 9:23.) The antitype or fulfillment in the New Testament is, that our conscience has been purged; the heavenly sanctuary has been purified with better sacrifice; and after the One and perfect offering which Jesus brought once for all, no repetition of the sacrifice is possible or needed. Christ has abolished sin, and we wait now for His second coming in glory.

Jesus by His death has become the Mediator of the New Testament. It is because Jesus died that He now dispenses the gifts which He has purchased. The New Testament is in His hand. He is the Mediator, bringing us as true worshippers, unto God; and bringing the inheritance, with all its blessings and gifts, unto us.

There is perhaps no word with which we are more familiar, and which is more frequently used by us than the word "covenant" or "testament." We are in the habit of calling the sacred books of Israel and of the church, the books of the Old and New Testament. And in that precious ordinance of the Saviour, which according to His will is to be the joy of His disciples, as well as their testimony to the world until He come, we hear constantly the solemn words: "This cup is the New Testament in my blood."

Words which are frequently used are not necessarily correctly understood or rightly valued. And then our very familiarity with them is the source of danger. For the incorrect or inadequate idea, which we connect with the expression, becomes deeply fixed in our minds, and the fundamental misconception brings forth abundant and widely- ramified error. For these very familiar and constantly-recurring words express mother-ideas of primary importance. Our only safety is a constant and diligent study of Scripture, and a conscientious adherence to the principle, that Scripture thoughts and words are to be explained and judged on Scripture territory according to the Scripture circle of truth, and the Scripture mode of viewing and expressing things. If we apply this canon to the subject before us, we shall find that the ordinary conception of a covenant as a mutual agreement is not identical with the Biblical use of the word, and also that there is an intimate connection between the idea of an inheritance bequeathed through death, or a testament

and the Scripture view of covenant.

Now the first and primary idea of covenant and testament is a disposition and order of things, made of God, and shown forth in a promise or institution. For instance, we read that God established a covenant with Noah. " Here is a divine promise, unconditional and immutable, based upon His sovereign grace; an order of things which it pleased Him to establish, and whereof He gave a double assurance, His word and the rainbow, seal and pledge of the covenant of His grace. Again the Lord made a covenant with Abraham. He promised to be the God of Abraham and of his seed; to give unto them the land; to give unto them the seed, in whom all families of the earth will be blessed. This covenant is also unconditional and unchangeable, it is not a mutual agreement, it does not depend on man's faithful and complete fulfillment of stipulated conditions. And as it originates entirely in the purpose of eternal wisdom and love, it is impossible that it can ever be changed or frustrated. Nothing that happens in time, and subsequent to the announcement of the covenant, can in any way interfere with its fulfillment. Neither the law, given four hundred years after, nor the awful sin of Israel in rejecting their Lord and Messiah, can alter God's covenant of grace. "The gifts and calling of God are without repentance." The Abrahamic covenant had also a twofold assurance and manifestation - the word of promise, and the ordinance of circumcision. (* Genesis 6:9.) In this covenant the testament-nature is already apparent; for here is an inheritance, and, as the apostle explains to us,* it was by promise, and given unto the one seed, Christ. The Abrahamic covenant, he also teaches us, was confirmed by God in Christ. And the meaning of this is evident now in the light of fulfillment The covenant with Abraham was also a testament, and, as all testaments are, connected with death. It promised an inheritance, but an inheritance which could become ours only by the death of Jesus, in whom alone there is redemption for sinful and guilty men. But in order to bring out fully the character of the covenant of grace, the intermediate dispensation of the law was given, And here it is difficult to see both the contrast, sharp and distinct, between the old covenant and the new testament, and also to recognize the bond of connection between them; there is the antithesis, law and grace; there is the contrast, shadow and truth; but there is something which bound these two aspects together in the actual history and experience of God's ancient people. (*Gal. 3.) For the promise given to Abraham, and not to Moses, was not superseded or forgotten in the giving of the law. When God dealt with Israel in the wilderness, He gave them the promise that they should be a peculiar treasure unto Him above all people; "for all the earth is mine;" and that they should possess the land as an inheritance.1 Based upon this promise, and corresponding with the divine election and favour, is the law which God gave to His people. As He had chosen and redeemed them, so they were to be a holy people, and to walk before Him, even as in the Ten Commandments the gospel of election and redemption came first. "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of Egypt." Hence this covenant or dispensation, although it was a covenant, not of grace and divine gifts and enablings, but of works, was connected with and based upon redemption, and it was dedicated, as the apostle emphatically says, not without blood. Both the book, or record of the covenant,2 and all the people, were sprinkled with the blood of typical sacrifices.3 For without blood is no remission of sins, and the promises of God can only be obtained through atonement. But we know that this is a figure of the one great sacrifice, and that therefore all the promises and blessings under the old dispensation, underlying and sustaining it, were through the prospective death of the true Mediator. When therefore the spiritual Israelite was convinced by the law of sin, both as guilt and as a condition of impurity and strengthlessness, he was comforted by the promise of the

inheritance, which always was of grace, unconditional and sure, and in a righteous and holy manner through expiation. (1Exodus 19:5-6; Exodus 23:30;Deuteronomy 15:4.2"The book of the covenant," mentionedExodus 24:7, in which Moses wrote the first fundamental group of laws. (Exod. 21 - 23.)3"The blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop." Water, scarlet wool, and hyssop are mentioned in connection with the purification of those who had come into contact with death (Num. 19); also of the lepers. (Leviticus 14:4-7.) Compare also the passover (Exodus 12:22), and the prayer of David, "Purge me with hyssop." (Psalms 51:7.)]

Through the blood sprinkled by Moses on the book and people, and afterwards on the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry, they were set apart unto the holy God. The tabernacle was itself established as an ordinance of mercy in the midst of a people who had been guilty of grievous transgression,* and the very tabernacle required to be purified by blood before the Lord could meet there with His people. (*Exod. 32.) How evident is the meaning of these earthly things now, when we see the fulfillment in the heavenly and eternal things!

Jesus desired with desire to eat the Passover with His disciples. It was on that night that He took the cup and blessed it, and said, "This is the cup of the New Testament in my blood." He as the true Sacrifice - fulfillment of all the varied types - was offered for us on Golgotha. Through His death the inheritance is obtained for us; it is of grace, and it is reserved for us in heaven, while we live even now in the enjoyment of its power and blessedness. The testator is, properly speaking, God; for we are God’s heirs; but it is God in Christ, even as in the death of Christ for sinners we behold God’s love. Jesus is the Heir. This is the Scripture teaching. The Lord Himself in the parable presents the last Prophet sent by God into the vineyard as high above all the servants; He is the one Son, the Only-begotten of the Father. And even His enemies draw the correct inference, that He is the Heir.1 This is the Son whom the Father loved from all eternity, and unto whom He hath given all things.2 This is He by whom the world was made, and who was appointed Heir of all things. We are joint-heirs with Christ, and the inheritance is blood-bought. But, as the types prefigure, this precious blood belongs to the heavenly sanctuary. It does not belong to earth, even as it does not open the way to an earthly temple and secure earthly blessings. It is precious, incorruptible.3[1 Mark 12:7.2 Hebrews 1:3.3Compare in 1 Peter 1, the incorruptible inheritance, the incorruptible price of redemption, and the incorruptible seed of regeneration. The whole covenant refers to Jesus; yea, He Himself is the covenant; for thus it is written of Him: "I will give Thee for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles." (Isaiah 42:6.)]

Jesus entered with His own blood into the holy of holies. And here is the antitype of the earthly tabernacle being sprinkled with blood. Heaven is now opened to believers; the most holy place is anointed with the blood of atonement.* Our sins no longer ascend to heaven. The adversary can no longer accuse us before the throne of God. The Father, having made peace through the blood of Christ’s cross, hath reconciled all things unto Himself, "whether they be things in earth, or things in heaven."2 So great and real is the efficacy of the precious blood of Christ. (1 Daniel 9:24.2 Colossians 1:20.) The Saviour, who by His own blood entered into heaven itself, to appear in the presence of God for us, is the Mediator of the New Testament; as the First-born He has entered into the inheritance, and He now dispenses to us the very blessings which through His death He has purchased for us.

1. Jesus has put away sin, once for all, by the sacrifice of Himself. All that stood in the way of the infinite love of God flowing into our hearts has been removed, and that forever, unto all who believe in Jesus. In that He died, He died unto sin once for all; and we who believe in Him are delivered out of the region of sin, of defilement, and of death.

2. The blessed Lord having entered in by His blood, we also have ascended with Him. This is implied by the apostle's saying that Christ appears now in heaven for us. In a different but harmonious light the same truth is taught in the epistle to the Ephesians. The apostles were filled with amazement when Jesus was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight; the men of Galilee stood gazing up into heaven. But when the full import of the ascension was disclosed to them, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy. The beloved disciple regretted no more that he could no longer lean on the bosom of the divine Master. The apostles no longer felt that Jesus had left them, and had gone alone into the heavenly home; for they knew that they had ascended with Him, that they had died with Him, had been buried together with Him, had risen together with Him, and were seated together with Him in heavenly places.*(*The "together with" Christ begins at the crucifixion. Not the incarnation, not the prophetic life and work on earth, but the cross is the point where the Shepherd finds the lost sheep, and the two are joined.)

3. Hence with increasing clearness it became evident that believers are always before the Father as accepted worshippers; that in the archetype, of which the tabernacle was a picture, there was no division of the holy place and the most holy, but that all believers, as priests, are in the most holy, because Jesus Christ, the High Priest, is there "for them," and one with them.

All these truths are presented to our view and sealed to our faith in the ordinance of the Lord's Supper. We notice three very strange and sad ways in which this ordinance has been misunderstood and misused. In the first place, though it was intended to illustrate and confirm the strong and sweet bond which unites all the disciples of the One Master, it has been the occasion of dividing and separating brethren, and of substituting other bonds, not so fundamental, not so comprehensive, not so profound as the one which Christ alone acknowledges, that vital faith in Him which manifests itself in love.

Secondly, whereas the Lord's Supper was designed, by a simple illustration, to show forth spiritual mysteries, the Lord's Supper itself has been asserted to be a mystery which it is difficult to comprehend, or when comprehended to explain to others. Now, the union of Christ and the believer is indeed a mystery. Great is the mystery, exclaims the apostle. Our spiritual life, growth, and joy are rooted in Christ, in His broken body and shed blood. Here faith beholds also the communion of saints, the second advent, and our glory with Christ. But of these spiritual and unseen realities, we have in the Lord's Supper an illustration so simple, so comprehensive, that it is the easiest way of explaining to little children the gospel of our Lord. Many minds are thinking about the mystery of the sacrament, instead of thinking about the mystery of the union with Christ by faith and through the indwelling Spirit. For such the Gospel of John is most instructive, both on account of its silence as to the institution and its profound exposition of the "mystery," which in the Lord's Supper is set before us. But thirdly, the very purpose of the Lord's Supper is to show that by one great sacrifice, once for all, Christ has put away sin. As often as we eat this bread and drink this cup, we do show the Lord's death. It is the commemoration of the one offering by which we are perfected. Hence to speak of a repetition of the sacrifice, in any shape or form, is to contradict

the essential meaning and purpose of the ordinance.* Christ died once upon the cross, once He entered by His own blood into the holy of holies, and by this one death and once entering in we have redemption and access unto the Father. Hence all the blessings of the New Testament are ours. (*All assertions that the Lord's Supper is a sacrifice, from the glaring fiction of Rome, of an unbloody sacrifice in the mass, down to more mystical and vague views, are refuted by this chapter and the whole teaching of Scripture. Beside the one sacrifice of our Lord, offered and presented to the Father once for all, the New Testament speaks only of spiritual sacrifices, praise, prayer, and the offering of ourselves (Romans 12:1;Hebrews 13:15-16;1 Peter 2:8), and only of the priesthood of all believers, while it never calls ministers■ερε■■, but bishops, presbyters, etc. These spiritual sacrifices are to be offeredcontinually, the remembrance of Christ's sacrifice is to befrequently, A remembrance not so much of Himself, who is always with us and of whom we constantly think, but of His One oblation. There is a higher aspect of the Lord's Supper as asealingordinance.)

Consider the teaching of our passage in the light of the Lord's Supper. Once we were under the sentence of death on account of our guilt, the transgression of God's holy law. We had forfeited the inheritance. Christ came. He is the Son; He is the Heir. He came to save us. He came to redeem them that were under the law from the curse of the law. He redeemed us by His death on the tree, by the shedding of His precious blood.* This is the bread; this is the cup. (*Compare Gal. 3, where the subject is viewed in connection with inheritance.)

Jesus the Mediator of the New Testament gives us the inheritance; and of this inheritance we have now the substance, for we eat and drink in the presence of the Father. Yet is the inheritance still future; for the Lord's Supper points to the fulfillment. "Till I come" is the golden link between Christ's first advent and His return, when we shall be glorified together with Him. Jesus said to His disciples on the very night in which He instituted this ordinance: "I appoint unto you a kingdom, as my Father hath appointed unto me; that ye may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, judging the twelve tribes of Israel."* We are to be made manifest with Christ, and reign together with Him. The promise is not fulfilled yet, "He that overcometh shall inherit all things." But when we show the death of the Lord we look forward in hope to the final salvation, which shall be brought unto us at the revelation of Jesus Christ. (*The originalδιατ■θ■μαι■μ■ν βασιλ■■αν,means, I ordain to you in a testamentary manner. CompareRevelation 3:21;Revelation 12:11;Revelation 21:7.)

How solemn sound the words, "This is the new testament in My blood." This is indeed the central, the fundamental, the eternal mystery. "Thou hast redeemed us by Thy blood," we sing at the Lord's table - it will be our song in eternity. This is the new song for ever, even as it is the new testament forever.

Blessed are we if we read Scripture, as the testament; if, as children and heirs, we see in the word the record of our inheritance, the promise of glory, as well as the assurance of our present possession of the unsearchable riches of Christ.

See here the perfection of the fulfillment, (Hebrews 9:24-27.) As the Levitical high priest entered into the holy of holies with the blood of the sacrifice, to appear before God as the representative of Israel, so Christ by His own blood entered heaven itself for us. But not as the type is the fulfillment. The Levitical high priest entered every year; Christ once for all. Hence there is no need of a repetition of His sacrifice. Once He appeared in the end of the world, in the consummation of the

ages. In the fullness of time1 Jesus was made manifest to put away sin really and forever. He was made manifest, for in the counsel of God He was, from before the foundation of the world, the Lamb; but now the time was come when He fulfilled the salvation-will of God.2 Once He bore the sins of many;3 as their substitute He endured that which sin deserved according to the holiness and righteousness of God. This is accomplished, and perfect; it now lies behind Him. (1Galatians 4:4; 2Comp.1 Peter 1:20;3 Isaiah 53:12.)

What then is our position? The apostle by a very significant transition speaks now of man; leaving the contrast between Jewish type and heavenly reality, he enters, strictly speaking, into the sphere of the gospel, the glad tidings for mankind. Now the contrast is Adam and Christ. The apostle's statement Hebrews 9:26-28) may be rendered more faithfully thus: But now once for all, in the conclusion of the ages, hath He been manifest to put away sin* by the sacrifice of Himself. And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after that judgment (or decision); thus Christ, having been once offered in order to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time without sin for the salvation of them that wait for Him. (*■■■ ■θ■τησιν■μαρτ■α■(Hebrews 9:26), for the abolishing of sin is a very forcible expression.)

There are two chains; the one dark and the other bright; the one pertaining to man, earth, and time, the other entirely of God, from heaven, and eternal; the one ending in eternal glory, the other in everlasting misery. The one chain is thus described by the apostolic word: "The wages of sin is death." The links are sin, death, judgment. Unto fallen and guilty man it is appointed to die, and after that the judgment. This chain is the chain of the covenant of works, the relation between the links is that of man's doing and its consequence, according to divine justice and truth. It is impossible for this sequence to be broken. The day sin entered into the world, death also entered, and death as leading to judgment. Death is not, as many, alas! deceive themselves, the transition from sin to glory: as sin leads to death, death leads to judgment. Inevitable is the connection between sin and judgment, and our death cannot sever this connection; it is, on the contrary, the intervening link. In vain do men seek to put something between death and judgment. It is on this side of the grave that we must be taken out of the region of this dark chain. For there is another chain. It came down from heaven. It originated in the eternal wisdom and love of God. It is of God from beginning to end. Jesus came; this is the first link. Jesus died; this is the second. Jesus comes again to receive us unto Himself; this is the last. Instead of man, the Son of man, God's own Son; instead of the death of the sinner, Christ's death; and instead of judgment, the saints glorified together with Christ. But the logic of this chain is not so apparent as of the first. Sin, death, judgment - this is a right sequence. But the incarnation of the Son of God and the cross; the sinless, perfect Son of man and death, seem to be rather contradictions than consequences. One single word explains it, but this word is a stumbling-block to many. It is Substitution. Jesus came to die as the substitute; the just laid down His life for the unjust; the Father laid on Him the iniquity of us all. And now, sin having been taken away by His one offering of Himself once for all, we look forward to His glorious return. The first time He appeared with reference to sin; the second time He shall appear - apart from the work of atonement, for it is accomplished, and they who love His appearing shall then receive the inheritance. As death is the conclusion of our earthly life, and does not lead to a repetition of the same, but to judgment; so by the death of Christ all that was connected with sin and atonement is finished, and now there is nothing before Him but His second coming. He shall come again in glory. At the Lord's table we behold nothing but grace - not wages,

but the gift of God; gospel or glad tidings, righteousness instead of guilt, life instead of death, glory instead of judgment. Instead of looking back to Adam and transgression, we remember Christ and His obedience, the obedience, even His death; instead of looking forward to judgment, we wait for the coming of the Lord, who shall give us then the full adoption and inheritance, the redemption of the body and the glory.

If we were thoroughly fixed and rooted in this apostolic "once for all," we should have perfect peace and a lively hope of the glory of God. Here is our weakness, that we do not put all our confidence in Christ, in His one and only death once for all. Though we so often say, "Christ is all," yet we have some secret feeling that Christ is not all, and that the work is not quite complete. If Christ is all, then blessed be God! He came, He died, He ascended, He will return for us. As He died for us, so His return must be for our glory.

"Christ is all," the Lord’s Supper says. Nothing can be added to this bread, or mixed with this cup. "Drink ye all of it;" the blessed Saviour includes the weakest believer, encouraging the bruised reed and the smoking flax. "The blood was shed for the remission of the sins of the many." The apostle uses almost the same expression as the prophet - He was once offered to bear the sins of many.

Now we rejoice in hope. Sin is removed, and therefore faith looks back and beholds the love of God in a crucified Saviour. Hope looks forward, and beholds the Lord bringing the crown and the inheritance. And though we also have to pass .through the valley of the shadow of death, we know that Christ has abolished death, He has taken away its sting, it is to us no more a link in the dark chain of sin and judgment. We have been transplanted out of the kingdom of darkness, and whether we fall asleep before the Lord’s return, or are still living on earth at His advent, to us there remains now only one thing to expect: Christ appearing the second time, apart from sin, unto salvation. Our Lord on earth came as the Prophet; after His death, and by His blood, He entered into heaven to be our Priest, and at His second coming He shall appear as King in great majesty and glory.1 He who on earth was without sin, who knew no sin, and yet was made by God to be sin for us,2 shall appear unto His people waiting for His return, looking with joyful, though humble and contrite, hope to His return. For He comes unto salvation. The Coming One is the same Jesus who ascended; it is emphatically the Saviour who delivered us from the wrath to come.3(1 Rev. 19, 20.22 Corinthians 5:21;Romans 8:3;3 Acts 1:11;1 Thessalonians 1:10.)

25 - Heb_10:1-7

CHAPTER X X V.

"LO, I COME."

Hebrews 10:1-7. THE apostle has contrasted the high priest of the Levitical dispensation with our Lord. The one entered into the earthly, Christ into the heavenly sanctuary; the one with sacrifices which could not purge the conscience, Christ with His own blood, by which we are sanctified; the one entered every year, Christ once for all. From this sublime contrast the apostle now argues that the law itself, the whole Levitical dispensation, was not able to give perfect peace to the conscience, and access into the presence of God; for it is evident from the constantly-repeated sacrifices and offerings that the worshippers had never attained to the condition of true acceptance and sanctification - that they had never reached a point where further sacrifice was not needed. Hence the apostle says: "For" (referring to his demonstration of the perfection of the one offering, Hebrews 9:24-28), "the law having a shadow* (only) of good things to come, that is, of the then future salvation, blessing and inheritance, and not the express image of the things (as we have now in Christ, who is the manifestation and the fulfillment, or body), can never with the same yearly sacrifices, which they offer regularly, make the comers there unto perfect" (*Shadow (σκι■ν) is put first emphatically; only a shadow or outline of the substantial and eternal blessings promised. A shadow has no substance, but brings before the mind the form of the body from which it is projected. The image itself (ο■κ α■τ■ν τ■ν■■κ■να) is given to us in Christ; a full and permanent embodiment of the good things to come.) The prophetic Word supplied the description of the contrast and the fulfillment. It testified of the insufficiency of the sacrifices and offerings, and spoke of the self-sacrifice, the self-devotedness of the true servant of Jehovah, the Redeemer of Israel. It is to this special aspect of Christ’s offering that our attention is directed in this chapter.

He who was offered, offered Himself; in His sufferings He showed the greatest strength and most concentrated activity of self-surrender; and because thus He fulfilled the eternal will of God concerning salvation, He has perfected forever by one offering them that are sanctified. And thus we are led back to the fundamental and central truth: Jesus is the Son of God. Obedience belongs to a servant; concurrence and co-operation are the characteristics of a son. When we think of the eternal glory of the Only-begotten, and the sufferings and obedience of Jesus, it is the divine Sonship on which our minds rest, and in which we see the sacred identity of the Lord and the servant unbroken.

It is a characteristic feature of this epistle, that it shows forth most clearly and fully the glory of Jesus exalted at the right hand of God, while at the same time it enters more deeply than most portions of the inspired record into the consoling truth of our Lord’s true humanity, of the reality of His temptations and struggles, of His faith, prayers, and tears, and of His perfect sympathy with us, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren. Nowhere in Scripture do we meet with a representation of Jesus the Messiah in which His divine majesty, and His human compassion and sympathy, are so distinctly and yet harmoniously brought before us. It is for this reason, though

there be many things hard to be understood in this epistle, it has always exerted a most powerful and consoling influence on the Christian, whose joy it is to confess with adoring love that Jesus is Lord, and to rest with peaceful assurance in the marvellous truth that the Lord, unto whom all power is given in heaven and earth, is the man Christ Jesus; "this same Jesus" of the peaceful gospels,* that in the midst of the throne is the Lamb as it had been slain. (*Acts 1:11.)

Jesus, the Messiah, the Son, by whom all worlds were made, and who is appointed Heir of all things, is now exalted high above all angels and powers; He who humbled Himself, and was obedient unto death, is for this very obedience enthroned at the right hand of God; in His humanity He has received a name above every name; angels and men adore Him, and in the heavenly sanctuary He is our royal Priest; He is the Son who abideth for ever, the Lord over His own house, the chosen people of God. It is on the divinity of our Lord that our faith and hope rest; on this rock ("thou art the Son of the living God") the Church is built. The apostle brings before us the divine glory of the exalted Messiah, asserting it in a tone of joyous triumph, and illustrating it by the most varied and abundant testimony of the ancient Scripture; he reviews all previous revelations and ordinances to exalt the Saviour; above all prophets He is the Son, the only adequate, comprehensive, and ultimate Revelation of God; above Moses, the servant, He is the Lord, the mediator of a better covenant; above Joshua, He is the only true and everlasting rest of God, in whom we also have rest here and a perfect Sabbatism hereafter; above Aaron, the true and royal priest, who after the power of an endless life is our Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary. In Him alone, and that because He is God, are all promises fulfilled, all types summed up, and all symbols substantiated. Nay, He excels them all; for His divine fullness could only be shadowed forth imperfectly even by God-appointed symbols, and by inspired prophecies. And beyond the territory of man Jesus is represented as the Mediator, by whom all worlds were created, and by whom they are still upheld; in Him, whom angels worship, both before the throne and in ministering unto the heirs of salvation, the counsels of God and the whole universe find their center.*(*The original (Heb. 1) implies that the angels ministry to us is an act of worship unto God.)

If this view of Christ’s glory, like the appearance of the exalted Saviour in the opening scene of the Apocalypse, is so bright and dazzling that it overwhelms even loving and trustful disciples, so that their souls fall prostrate before the Son of God, the same epistle unfolds to us the humanity of the Lord, and gives to us a picture so vivid and touching of His brotherhood, that not even the gospel of Luke leads us into so profound and consoling knowledge of the Son of man, the Friend of sinners, the Physician full of pity and tenderness. And while we see Jesus here taking upon Him our flesh and blood, enduring temptation, entering into all our difficulties, struggles, and sorrows; while here we have explained to us the reality of Christ’s human nature, of His faith in God and dependence on Him, of His tears and conflict in Gethsemane, we are taught that He went through all these experiences in order that in His glory He may sympathize with us and succour us in all our trials; that as Man He regards now with an infinite compassion and tenderness all His disciples on earth; and that therefore, though with awe and trembling, because He is God, yet with perfect liberty and enlarged confidence, we may draw near the throne of grace, where Jesus, the God-man, is still our Brother as well as our Lord.

These two aspects, so marvellously and inseparably united, must always co-exist, if we are to have access unto God and communion with Him. The neglect of the doctrine of either the divinity or the humanity of the Lord Jesus is the source of all heresies, maladies, and infirmities which

afflict Christendom. Unless Jesus is God, we have not seen the Father, we have not been reconciled to Him, we have not been brought nigh as His redeemed and accepted children. Nor can a soul-renewing influence be exercised except by the divine Lord, who can pour out the Holy Ghost. If Jesus is the Son of God, nothing need or can be added to His sacrifice, to His intercession, to His soul-transforming and sanctifying power. And as the Hebrew believers, if they rightly understood Christ's divinity, were thereby emancipated from all the shadows and types of the Levitical dispensation, so the subsequent introduction of human and angelic intercessors, of a so-called repetition of the sacrifice, of priestly mediation, of supplemental merits, is rooted in a defective view of the divine glory of Christ's person and all-sufficient, because infinite, value of His work. But equally essential is it to hold fast our faith in His true humanity. Emphasizing not too strongly, but in a one sided and untrue manner, the divinity of Jesus, men fancied that His perfection, His spotless purity, His majestic holiness, stood in the way of our coming to Him with confidence, and with that free and unrestrained trust fullness which alone enables us to pour out our whole heart, Jesus seemed so majestic and glorious, so high exalted above the heavens, so holy and spotless, that men forgot His infinite mercy and tenderness, and the inexhaustible fullness of His human sympathy, and imagined that some human sinful being, better than themselves, yet imperfect, ought to intervene as mediator between themselves and Jesus; that they fancied especially to find such a mediator in the Virgin Mary, whose womanly gentleness and compassion made it easier for them to approach in their weakness and sinfulness. Oh, how little do such thoughts harmonize with the blessed gospel! How dishonouring are they both to the divinity and humanity of our Lord! This is the great mystery of godliness, that our Mediator is God, of infinite love and mercy; that He is man, perfect in His sympathy and tenderness. As if imperfect and sinful men, or any created and therefore limited angels, could ever fully know the human heart; as if finite compassion and love could ever fully fathom and heal our sorrow; as if anyone but Jesus could unite perfect sympathy with the sinner, and the perfect aim and power to bring us into fellowship and harmony with God. Between Jesus, the Bridegroom of the Church, and the soul none can intervene. He alone knows what is in man; He alone loves us perfectly; He alone has the way to the heart, and power to say, "Let not your heart be troubled." Our sorrow, our sin, our need, lie too deep for human ministry.

Once, when He was still on earth, His mother Mary, whom we also in common with all generations of believers call blessed, ventured to interfere on behalf of the guests, and said, "They have no wine." But the same Lord, who as a child was subject unto Mary His mother, and as a son remembering her with gratitude and affection even on the cross, commended her to the beloved disciple, recognizes here no mediatorial position or special claim on His affection and help. Here He does not call her mother. He does not acknowledge her maternal authority. The tone of His reply appears strange and severe: "Woman, what have I to do with thee? " The evangelist John, who records this incident, was especially near the blessed virgin, and regarded her with peculiar veneration and affection. She had been committed to his care by his beloved Lord. What is the meaning of Christ's words, recorded by John? He who, even as a child, had said to Mary and to Joseph, " Know ye not that I must be about my Father's business? " and had thereby revealed to them His divine sonship and His exalted position above all men, returned with them to Nazareth, and in humility was subject to His parents, thus obeying the commandment of the Father who had sent Him. In Nazareth, as a child and youth, He doubtless always called Mary " mother," and always obeyed and honoured her. But now He had entered on His work. He had commenced His

ministry, being filled with the Holy Ghost. At the marriage of Cana, Jesus appears as the Lord, as the true Bridegroom of the Church. Here He manifests His glory; here Jesus knows none but the Father, and the children whom God has given Him. "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren? He who doeth the will of my Father in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother." The Lord shrinks back from Mary, because she brings her maternal authority and influence into a region to which it does not belong; she attempts to put herself by His side in the kingdom, where He is the only monarch. Jesus is Lord, and there is none in heaven or earth to share in any way or to any extent His mediatorial throne.

How plainly does this incident teach us that, highly favoured as Mary was in the kingdom of Christ, she is only one among myriads, a disciple of Jesus. Thus we find her mentioned in the Acts as one of the believers who united in prayer for the promised descent of the Spirit. In none of the epistles does she occur again. While we hear constantly of our Lord’s ascension and exaltation, is there the slightest reference to her ascension? In the visions of the heavenly glory vouchsafed unto John, do we ever read of Mary as enthroned with or near the Lord - as holding any peculiar position among the angels and glorified saints? We read of angels and living beings, and elders and martyrs, and multitudes with white robes; but where do we read of the Virgin Mary, of a queen of heaven, of a merciful and indulgent intercessor, appealing to the filial affection of her son? No; Jesus said unto her, "Woman, what have I to do with thee?" How much more now in His exaltation is He the one and only Lord who alone is the searcher of hearts, the consolation of Israel, the healer of the wounded spirit, the Head, from whom all blessings descend to His members. It is He who gives us the oil of gladness and strengthens us with the true wine. Mary recedes from her position as mother, and from the false attitude she had assumed; her sensitive heart understands Jesus immediately; she points as a true disciple to the one Lord and Saviour, and directing all eyes and hearts exclusively to Him, utters the great word, "Whatsoever He commandeth you, do." I think we honour and revere and love the Virgin Mary more than the Romanists in their false and un-scriptural devotion. Her word, "Whatsoever He saith unto you, do it," reveals to us her true greatness, her humility, her faith; her soul again magnified the Lord, and rejoiced in her Saviour. She points the whole Church away from herself to the Lord Jesus. She acknowledges Him to be the only Master. And so we rejoice in Him, the only Mediator, who is infinitely holy, infinitely merciful; of whose love all fatherly forethought and strength, all motherly tenderness, minuteness, inventive quickness, and persevering patience, all brotherly faithfulness and sympathy, are but feeble images; the man Christ Jesus, in whom is all manly and womanly perfection, the Lord who is from above, omniscient, omnipotent, all-good; we have, we need no other mediator than Christ Jesus. But in our passage the apostle brings before us another aspect of Christ’s person and work. We are reminded of the truth that Jesus is the self- subsistent and eternal Word and Son of God. We need always to go back to that fundamental and most comforting truth of the divinity of our Lord. Only the Father which is in heaven can so reveal this mystery to our minds and hearts, that with adoring love and trust we look unto Jesus. We do not worship a deified man, but God incarnate; not a perfect man, who by reason of His complete and holy humanity was exalted into a heavenly position, but the Son of God, who came down from heaven, and returned into the glory which He had before the foundations of the world were laid. Jesus, who was born of the Virgin Mary, who lived in obedience to the Father, who suffered and died, and is now at the right hand of the Majesty on high, came into the world, not merely sent by the Father, but by His free concurrence, accordance, and co-operation. In Bethlehem’s manger the child born unto us is The

Wonderful, The mighty God, The everlasting Father. The prophet of Galilee declares to his contemporaries, "Before Abraham was I am." The grace which appeared in His death had its fountain in the everlasting love which the eternal Wisdom had to the sons of men.* He is the Son of God from all eternity, and in that mysterious eternity before the creation of the world, in His pre-mundane glory, this mind was in the Son, that He would humble Himself, and take upon Himself the form of a servant, and obey the whole counsel of God concerning the redemption of fallen man. His whole life on earth, embracing His obedience and His death, His substitution for sinners, was His own voluntary resolve and act. (*Prov. 8)

True, the Father sent Him; but such is the unity and harmony of the blessed Trinity, that it is equally true to say, the Son came. The love of Jesus, the sacrifice of Himself in our stead, the unspeakable humiliation of the Son of God, have their origin not in time but eternity, in the infinite, self-subsistent, co-equal Son of the Father. He took on Him our nature. By His own will He was made flesh. From all eternity He offered Himself to accomplish the divine will concerning our salvation, He must needs be God, to have the power of freely offering Himself; He must needs take upon Him our nature to fulfill that sacrifice. Only the Son of God could undertake the work of our redemption; only as man could He accomplish it.

It is for this reason that Scripture unveils to us the great mystery of the eternal covenant. It is not to gratify an unhallowed desire to look into things too lofty for our vision, but to show unto us the marvellous love of the eternal Son, and the true character and infinite merit of His obedience and death. The counsel between the Father and the Son must ever remain a mystery of solemn and awful majesty. We think of eternity before creation, of that silent eternity before the word was uttered, "Let there be light;" before the angels sang together, and the morning stars shouted for joy, and faith hears even then the uncreated Word, which was with God, and was God, the voice of the Only-begotten responding to the Father’s purpose, and saying, "Lo, I come." In this eternal region is the only sunshine, which is never clouded; here alone the foundation, which can never be moved. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hands." "Therefore doth my Father love Me, because I lay down My life for the sheep." "Thine they were, and Thou gavest them Me." "None shall pluck them out of My hand. I and the Father are one." What are all these consoling and precious assurances but declarations of that eternal concord between the Father and the Son, in which the Son under took to do the salvation-will of God, comprising His incarnation, obedience, and death, on the one hand, and the Father exalting and crowning and enriching Him as the Head of the Church, and the Heir of all things. Now Jesus sees of the travail of His soul, and is satisfied; and we also rejoice; Christ’s joy remains in us, and our joy is full.

Three most practical truths follow from this revelation.

1. None but the Son of God could offer unto the Father a sacrifice to please Him, and to reconcile us unto Him in a perfect manner. The burnt-offerings and sin-offerings were ordained merely as shadows and temporary types of that one offering, the self-devotedness of the Son of God to accomplish all the will of God, the counsel of salvation. It is the divine and eternal offering of Himself unto the Father, in which the incarnation and death of the Lord Jesus are rooted; it is the voluntary character of His advent and passion, and it is the divine dignity of the Mediator which render His work perfect - absolutely unique, with which nothing can be compared, and a repetition of which is impossible. Hence it is impossible to sever the doctrine of the divinity of Christ from the

doctrine of His expiatory sacrifice. The character of Christ’s sufferings must be utterly misunderstood, when we do not acknowledge Jesus as the Son of God, who came to lay down His life. In the death of our Lord, the Father was pleased; this sin-offering was also a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour Here was not merely punishment endured, but the doing of "God’s will," the fulfillment of His eternal counsel, righteousness exalted, and divine love manifested in sufferings of infinite depth, and in the strength of perfect faith.

2. Rise from the river to its source, from the rays of light and love to the eternal origin and fount. You know the grace of the Lord Jesus, how He was poor on earth, and had not where to lay His head. Remember He who was poor had of His own free will become poor, though He was rich, the Lord of heaven and earth. You know the grace of the Lord Jesus, that He was born of a woman, and made under the law. Remember that it was Himself, of His own free will, and by His infinite power of love, who laid aside His glory, and emptied Himself. You remember His gentleness and meekness, His labour and toil, His unwearied zeal, and His undisturbed patience. He learned obedience; but remember it was the Son, co-equal with the Father, who of His own choice learned obedience. You see Him rejected and reviled, buffeted, smitten, spit upon, scourged, nailed to the cross. You say a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; remember also to say, strong and glorious Son of God, whom all the hosts of angels "obey; who of thine own divine will and power bearest the sin of the world, and offerest thyself by the eternal Spirit a ransom for thy brethren. See in the life, the obedience, the agony of Jesus, the expression of that free surrender of Himself and espousal of your cause, which was accomplished in eternity in His own all-glorious and infinite divinity. Beware lest you see in Him only the faith and obedience, the sufferings and death of the Son of man; see His eternal divinity shining through and sustaining all His humanity Because His blood is the blood of the Son of God, shed freely according to the everlasting covenant, it cleanseth from all sin. Who can fathom the depth of such love, of such grace, of such sacrifice? And lastly, this truth is revealed to us, not merely to establish our hearts in peace, and to fill us with adoring gratitude and joy, but here, marvellous to say, is held out to us a model which we are to imitate, a principle of life which we are to adopt. So wondrously are high mysteries and deep doctrines intertwined with daily duties and the transformation of our character, that the apostle Paul, when exhorting the Philippians to avoid strife and vainglory, and to brotherly love and helpfulness, ascends from our lowly earthly path unto this highest region of the eternal covenant: "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others." Then he proceeds in a sublime and profound transition: "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus" (from all eternity): "who, being in the form of God, ... made Himself of no reputation, and took upon Him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross." Blessed apostle, who was always beholding in fervent adoration and love the image of that Lord Jesus, who appeared unto him as the Lord of glory and the Saviour of the lost. Paul found it easy to serve, to stoop, to suffer, to endure reproach and mockery, to be beaten and scourged, to be hated of his brethren, and to be suspected by his fellow-disciples, to bear the burden of all the churches, and the more vehemently he loved, to be repulsed with enmity, because he remembered that the Son of God loved him before the foundations of the world were laid. Remembering the dark origin of selfishness, of disobedience, of ambition, of pride, let us rise to the celestial and eternal foundation of humility, obedience, love, self-denial, to Christ; and as we

owe all to Him who loved us and washed us from our sin in His own blood, let us be not merely debtors, but also followers of Him who came, not to do His own will and to be ministered unto, who came to love and to serve, to give and to bless, to suffer and to die. He loved me! Oh, what a contrast! Let us then receive the love of Christ, and love with His love. One with Christ, let us present ourselves a living sacrifice unto the Father - I beseech you, brethren, by the mercies of God!

26 - Heb_10:7-10

CHAPTER X X V I.

"ACCORDING TO THE GOOD PLEASURE OF HIS WILL."

Hebrews 10:7-10.

ALTHOUGH man is a finite and limited creature, yet eternity alone can satisfy his heart. We are not able to conceive of eternity, either that endless existence, which lies before us, or - to use language which, inadequate and almost self-contradictory as it is, is the only one at our command - the eternity which preceded time. And yet the human heart can only rest in the eternal love of God; in a love without beginning, which has its source not in time, and which shall endure for evermore; an ocean without shore, a fullness which cannot be exhausted. I must know, not merely that God loves me now, but that He will love me forever; and not merely that the future is boundless, but that the divine love is from all eternity, its own cause and origin. In Christ Jesus, the eternal Son of God, beheld by the Father as the Lamb slain from before the foundation of the world, God has chosen us unto eternal life and glory. In Him we behold and possess the mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting; in Him we have the assurance that God loves us with an eternal love. *(*1 Peter 1:20;Ephesians 1:4;Psalms 103:17:Jeremiah 31:3.) This eternal character of the love of God in Christ Jesus is unfolded to us, especially in the writings of the apostles John and Paul, from different points of view, the one confirming and supplementing the other. The beloved disciple, brought up in the school of John the Baptist, who led him to the Saviour, seems, without any severe struggle or abrupt transition, to have found in Jesus the promised Messiah, and drawn by the gentle yet irresistible, the calm but heart-deep attraction of the Son of man, he leaned on His bosom: nearest to Him in human friendship and affection, he beheld with most solemn awe the glory of the Only-begotten. In his writings John, like an eagle soaring in loftiest and most radiant heights, looks down on the world, and presents to us truth in its divine and eternal aspect. Hence, he dwells on the contrast between the world and the Church, the world and the men out of the world, whom the Father gives unto the Son, the people who believe not, because they are not Christ’s sheep, and the souls who, drawn by the Father, hear the Shepherd’s voice; the contrast between the world, which lieth in the wicked one, the realm of darkness, and the believers, who overcome the world, and finally reign with Christ over a subdued and renewed earth. In no other portion of Scripture is the contrast described, and traced to its ultimate reason as well as to its final issue with such stern distinctness. We have on the one hand God, Christ, they who are of God, who are born of Him, who have the divine seed remaining in them, who are not of the world, who are Christ’s sheep, for whom He prays, for whom He dies, who shall walk with Him in white, and inherit all things. On the other the world, men who are not of God, who are of their father the devil, and whose end is, that they are cast into the lake of fire. It is as if to him the history of the world, the process of development had ceased, he ascends to the ultimate manifestation of the essence of things, and to the primary origin in the counsel of God.*(*John is pre-eminently, as the ancient Church discerned, the theologian; he views all things theologically; that is, from the

divine and eternal point. It is strange how an insipid latitudinarianism has pretended to have a special congeniality with this son of thunder.) The apostle Paul, in analogy with his own mental history, begins with man and ascends upwards. While John shows how the life which was with God from all eternity was made manifest, Paul describes how a sinful, guilty, condemned, yet self-righteous man is brought by grace to find in Jehovah righteousness and life. He ascends from earth to heaven. Hence as a guide, especially for those who are seeking the way of acceptance and life, the apostle Paul is more helpful; he enters, with the sympathy and lucidity of a most intense personal experience, into the difficulties and struggles of our hearts. Now let us see how from the experimental point of view the apostle Paul arrives at the eternal character of the gospel.

Jesus appeared to him, and what the law could not give him - righteousness in which to stand before God, life wherewith to serve and enjoy God - he received as a free gift in Jesus. Old things thus passed away, and the covenant, the method, the dispensation in which he now stood, was new - new as contrasted with the law of Moses, the Levitical dispensation, the covenant of works made on mount Sinai. Yet on reflecting, it became obvious that this change, this setting aside of the old, this introduction of another and brighter light, before which the former faded; of another and substantial mediation, which caused the symbolical and typical to vanish, was no after-thought of God. It was new only in the sense that the law had come first; in reality it was the original, the primary thought, and the law came in only for a time, and to prepare, announce, and symbolize the gospel. The law is old, because it came first in point of time; the gospel is new, because it came second in point of time: but the law passes away, because its origin is in time; whereas the gospel abideth, because its origin is not in time, but in eternity. This thought is most frequently and fondly expressed by the apostle. He shows that the promise given to Abraham was before the giving of the law; the covenant of grace preceded the covenant of works. But this priority again is based upon the essential and eternal priority of the dispensation or method of grace. The original and eternal plan of God is now manifested in the preaching of the gospel. The Scripture, as Paul personifies it, never meant anything but the gospel.* It always had its eye fixed on the eternal, free, and all-comprehensive grace of God through Christ Jesus. The law was given only as a temporary and parenthetic dispensation; the new covenant is the eternal covenant - eternal in every sense of the word. It is ultimate; it can never become old or antiquated. It possesses a vitality which must endure forever. Nothing more new can supersede it. But the covenant of grace is eternal in another and more mysterious sense. (*Galatians 3:8.) The apostle naturally contrasted the old dispensation and the new method of salvation by grace in Christ Jesus. The transition from Moses to Abraham showed him at once the temporary character of the law. The unity of Scripture history, and of Scripture itself, revealed that the gospel was God’s thought even from the very beginning. But his mind and our mind cannot stop there. All prophecy points to Messiah, to God becoming our Saviour, our Righteousness. This then was God’s original and eternal thought, and thus prophecy and the fulfillment of prophecy are traced to the purpose of God, His eternal will and counsel. I remind you of such passages as these: "God hath chosen us in Christ before the foundation of the world, having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself. . . . The mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He hath purposed in Himself." "The hope of eternal life, which God, that cannot lie, promised before the world began." "Who hath saved us, and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began, but is now made manifest by the appearing of our Saviour.*(*Ephesians 1:4-9;Titus 1:2;2 Timothy 1:9-10.) As the advent and

work of Jesus Christ, salvation by grace, irrespective of works and merit, our adoption and glorification are rooted in the eternal counsel of God, so His own personal experience, both in his conversion and his subsequent life, force him in like manner into the region and atmosphere of eternity. He who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious, obtained mercy. True, he had done it ignorantly in unbelief. But not merely was his ignorance willful, and his unbelief culpable, but only the sovereign, free, and unmerited grace enlightened the ignorance and dispelled the unbelief; for, as he himself explains it, "the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus." That is, faith and love were given and implanted by the Lord Himself. By grace was he saved through faith, and that faith not of himself, it was the gift of God. While this was to him a matter of experience and consciousness, the grace which thus visited him led still further to its origin. When the Lord called him, He said that Paul was a chosen vessel unto him; and so the apostle, looking back on this momentous crisis of his life, writes: "When it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb, and called me by His grace, to reveal His Son in me." Hence he traces his conversion to the electing love of God, even as salvation is a free and perfect gift of divine righteousness and life. Thus he writes also to the Thessalonians, "Knowing, brethren beloved, your election of God. For our gospel came unto you not in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance." But look to the subsequent life of the new born soul. In the manifold trials and sufferings, in the fluctuating and distressing conditions of our spiritual life, in the fierce and subtle temptations of pride and of despondency, what is the consolation, the encouragement, the cordial of the Christian? Is it not this: "And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to His purpose"? And again, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" And again, "He who hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ." And again, "The Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto His heavenly kingdom." Is not the election of God that ocean of love which surrounds our earthly Christian life as an island, and which we can never lose out of sight for any length of time? Is it not our ultimate refuge in our weakness, in our afflictions, in our trials? Thus we ascend to the eternal counsel of God, whether we consider the character of the gospel dispensation in its relation to the law, or the divine righteousness and life through faith in the crucified Saviour, or the work of grace in conversion, or the spiritual experience of the believer. All things are of God. Infinite love from all eternity purposed to clothe us with divine and perfect righteousness, to renew us unto an incorruptible inheritance, and this through the gift and the self-devotedness of the Son. Of the eternal counsel of God, Jesus crucified is the center and manifestation. For, "Lo, I come," was the voice of the Son of God from all eternity. As the apostle had been speaking of Christ in this whole section, it cannot surprise us that he introduces (Hebrews 10:7) Christ speaking, without specially saying so; nor can we wonder that a word of David is quoted as the word and self-testimony of the Lord; for in this whole epistle the fundamental and all-comprehensive meaning of the Holy Ghost in the prophetic word is everywhere referred to, without dwelling on the mediating person and circumstances, in connection with which the passage originally occurs. Hence the mind with which the son of Jesse, anointed by God to be king, enters on his royal calling, and which finds its expression in the 40th Psalm, is viewed here as the expression of the eternal mind of David's Lord, with which He entered into the world. He came to offer unto God that which sacrifice and burnt-offering could only shadow forth. In the sin-offering, death, due to the offerer, was transferred to the sacrifice; in the burnt-offering, one already accepted expressed his will to offer

himself wholly unto the will of God. How perfectly, and above all finite conception, was this twofold sacrifice fulfilled in Christ. The obedience which He rendered unto God was perfect; for it was the obedience of the Son of God, commencing in His eternal purpose, to do the salvation-will of the Father; the atonement, which He brought, was of infinite value and delight to the Father, for He offered Himself by the eternal Spirit The contrast is between the sacrifices and a person. These typical sacrifices the Psalmist, or rather Messiah, declares that God would not have; now He offers Himself. This is the one offering which is perfect, and in which God is pleased. The Father prepared a body for Him. All creation and providence centre in Christ.* The election of the Jewish nation and their whole history may be viewed as the body, the channel prepared by God, that through it Christ should come. But the chief meaning is, that the humanity of Christ was prepared of the Father, even as it was called into existence by the Holy Ghost and assumed by Himself. The original expression of the Psalmist, " Mine ears hast Thou bored," refers to the symbolical act by which a slave, who offered himself of his own accord to belong to his master, was set apart to willing obedience of his freely-chosen lord. (*On the translation of the LXX., "A body hast Thou prepared me," for the original, "Mine ears hast Thou digged or bored for me," A. Pridham remarks: "The ancient translators, justly appreciating the expression as a metaphor of personal devotedness (compareExodus 21:1-6), unwittingly furnished, in their very free version of this passage, the exactest expression of a truth far hidden from their sight. The Holy Ghost accordingly adopts it here as a just interpretation of His own prophetic words.")

It points out the same fact, of which the prophets so frequently speak, that the Lord would come, the Divine One, sent by God, the perfect Servant of God; one whose ear the Lord had opened, who knew and loved and accomplished the will of God, though it implied sorrow, shame, agony, and death.1 When the insufficiency of all sacrifices had been proved, when the powerlessness of the law had been made manifest, in the fullness of time the Sent One came to fulfill that eternal counsel of which the volume of the book - that is, the Scripture - had written. The original reference is doubtless to the Pentateuch, the roll of the law. Of this fundamental portion of Scripture it can be said emphatically, "In the roll of the book it is written of Me." It is with peculiar significance that Jesus said unto the Jews, "If ye believe not Moses writings, how shall ye believe my words? Moses wrote of Me."2 In these books of Scripture, containing the basis on which the whole subsequent superstructure rests, we have unfolded to us the plan of salvation, beginning with the most comprehensive and far-reaching promise of the Seed of the woman. Here we read of the Seed of Abraham, in whom all nations shall be blessed; the Shiloh, unto whom shall be the gathering of the nations; the Star of Jacob, whose shall be the dominion. In the books of Moses we have many types of Christ’s sufferings and mediation. And as the books of Moses are evidently the commencement of a series of records of divine dealings with Israel, the volume of the book has a more extended meaning, and refers to the whole Scripture. The written Word of God is thus connected with God’s eternal counsel, and the authority and inspiration of Scripture inseparably linked with the most hallowed and tender associations. Jesus, in all His acts and steps, in all His struggles and sufferings, not merely fulfilled the Scriptures, but, continually pondering them in His heart as the revealed counsel of His heavenly Father, and as the infallible testimony concerning Himself, His great purpose was to fulfill them. See how, after His resurrection, Jesus connects the counsel of God, the written Word, and the actual accomplishment.3(1Isaiah 41 - 53.2John 5.3 Luke 24:44-47.)

"In the volume of the Book it is written of Christ;" because Christ was set up from everlasting in the counsel of the ever-blessed Godhead. When we think of this, we see the connection between our salvation and the eternal purpose of God, the manifestation of God's glory, the Father's good pleasure, and the Saviour's reward and crown. We then begin to feel how much is implied in the simple truth that God is well pleased with the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. From all eternity God, according to His good pleasure which He had purposed in Himself, chose us in Christ, that we should be to the praise of His glory.* Notice the expression, "good pleasure." It was God's eternal delight, this purpose of self-manifestation in grace; His counsel and election centre in the Son of His love, in the Only-begotten. When, according to this eternal counsel, and the Father's good pleasure, the Word was made flesh, the whole life of Jesus on earth was the manifestation of the eternal counsel, the expression of the Father's will, and of the Son's free concurrence, and therefore the object of Jehovah's infinite delight. "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased," said the voice from the highest glory of the man Christ Jesus, the Incarnate Word; and again, on the mount of transfiguration, " This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear Him." (*Ephesians 1:3-10, especially 5 and 9.) In this elect servant the Father had His delight, even as it was the meat of Jesus to do the will; that is, to carry out the salvation-purpose of the Father. Knowing the will of God, He delighted in it. He never hesitated, He never swerved. Perfect was His love, His gentleness, His patience, His alacrity; perfect was His manifestation of the divine purpose of love. He went on from strength to strength. His was the path which shined more and more unto the perfect day - yes, day; for that was the perfect day of light inextinguishable, of love invincible, of holiness unsullied, when the Father hid His countenance from Jesus, and He, deserted of God, continued to love the Father that sent Him.

It is a merciful arrangement of the divine benevolence that we do not see and know our sufferings before they come, and that we are distracted from the anticipation of sorrow and pain by the varied duties, cares, and joyous gleams of our lives. But our blessed Lord knew from the commencement of His earthly ministry the sufferings that awaited Him. Never for a moment did He lose sight of the cup, the sword, the cross. Every source of agony was present to His mind. The enmity of the Pharisees, the ingratitude of His nation, the weakness of His disciples, the betrayal of Judas, were foreseen by Him from the beginning. He foretold not merely His rejection, but all the detail of His last days; all the fearful features of Israel's ingratitude, hate, cruelty, and contempt. Yet He continued faithful to the Father's will; He abode in the love which had chosen sinners to be redeemed; He who was holy, harmless, and separate from sinners, was willing to lay down His life as a ransom for them; He who was higher than the heavens, and needed no sacrifice for Himself, was willing to enter through His blood into the holy of holies. Perfect is the offering, because Christ's humanity is perfect, because in perfect liberty He laid down His life for the sheep. When Jesus offered Himself unto the Father, and as our Substitute bore our sins in His own body (that same body which the Father had prepared for Him, as the channel of obedience), Jesus, although made a curse for us, was unto God a sweet-smelling savour, He who in the mysterious hour of darkness had cried, "My God," returns again to the full consciousness and enjoyment of that word "Father," which, in its eternal and infinite depth, belongs only to the Son. Knowing that the Father was pleased, and that the full love of the Father was resting on Him because He laid down His life for the sheep, Jesus gave up the Ghost. Then God raised and exalted Him, for it pleased the Father that all fullness should dwell in Christ. Now it is according to this same good pleasure, to this same eternal, free, infinite delight, that God calls and converts souls through the foolishness of

preaching; that He gives unto us the adoption of children, and the forgiveness of sins: it is the Father's good pleasure to keep the little flock, and afterwards to give them the kingdom and the glory, together with Jesus. It is all in Jesus, for Jesus sake, through Jesus; it is all a most joyous, free, loving gift, flowing out of the innermost eternal depths of the Godhead; and therefore God says so emphatically, "I, even I, am He that forgiveth thine iniquities; I, even I, am thy God." God is pleased (that is, in the Scripture sense of the word), God is infinitely delighted with Christ, as the incarnate Son and as the Saviour of believers. Here only is perfect peace. It is not merely that we are forgiven, but that for Christ's sake we are forgiven, through the God-pleasing obedience; it is not merely that we are acquitted and declared just, but that God has brought near His own righteousness, and clothed us with Christ Himself; it is not merely that we are renewed, but that we who died together with Christ, are co-risen with Him, and that the God and Father of Jesus is in Him our God and our Father.

How marvellous and heavenly is this salvation by grace through faith! Here all is gold, that is divine. We are found in Christ, and where is Christ found? Where else but in the bosom of the Father? We have nothing but what is divine, the righteousness, which is by faith in Christ and which is of God, and the life which Christ the risen Saviour has breathed into our hearts. And all this, and we in all this, are a joy to God. Lo, I come! was the voice of eternal filial love and obedience. How precious are we to the Father - the fruit of Christ's obedience, of that which forever is most precious and fragrant unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Is there any believer who has received the pardon of sin in Christ, and who yet goes doubting, mourning with a dull conscience, and with a heart that is not filled with the sweetness of God's peace? You cannot forgive yourself; you cannot forget your past; you cannot overlook your constant sins and failures, or cease to mourn over your indwelling corruption? By a strange duality there is in your soul an elder son, who does not understand why the prodigal should be arrayed with the best robe, and that now only the voice of melody and rejoicing should be heard? Do you not know that your frequent failures and falls do not hinder His love, that His peace is ever in you, though you are not always consciously in His peace? In Him as your representative and head the Father is pleased. God calls you no longer forsaken and desolate, but Hephzi-bah and Beulah. And when you behold this eternal, never-varying love of God which is in Christ Jesus; that love which was before time; that love which gave up the Son; that love which shall keep you forever; when you behold the love of Jesus, combining all that is shadowed forth in the love of friend, of brother, of mother, of husband; that love which bore your sin on the cross, which bears you now on His High-priestly heart in heaven, which looks on you with sweet faithfulness and pity after you denied Him, then, though sin appear more loath some and bitter, rest and rejoice in Christ, abide in the sanctuary, whither you have boldness to enter by the blood of Jesus. He is ever the same. There, where we doubt Him most, He is, if I may so say, strongest. "We doubt not His all-wisdom or His all-might. That He is all-love is difficult to believe when we feel our grievous sin." Yet is this His great (I had well-nigh said His only) grief with us, that we do not always run to Him with our burden, our unbelief, our many stains and falls. The only punishment Jesus imposeth upon sinning believers is, that they humble themselves to receive His love, and to be beautified with His salvation; He is not willing that they should remain in the gloomy night, but should return to the light of His countenance. Let all who mourn in Zion, turn constantly from the misery they feel, to the blessedness they trust in; from the sight of self, fragmentary and sinful, to the sight of Jesus, in whom we are holy and complete. While you say, I am vile, and abhor myself, say in meekness and

faith, God delights in Jesus; God delights in me.

27 - Heb_10:5-18

CHAPTER X X V I I. OUR PERFECTION.

Hebrews 10:5-18.

AGAIN we look to heaven, and behold Jesus seated at the right hand of God; and again with adoring joy we say, "He hath perfected forever by the one offering all that are sanctified." He who said, "Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of Me," is now seated on the throne of God. His very attitude proves that the work is finished. Fulfilled are the types, imperfect and needing constant repetition, and never bringing true purification and access unto God. The Aaronic high priest stood before the altar to repeat the same sacrifices, which could not take away sins. Christ has taken away and abolished sin, and at the right hand of God only one thing is before Him - His second advent in glory and power. He is now waiting till His enemies are made His footstool.*(*"From henceforth" might also be translated "for the rest," or "besides." Thus Kurtz views it (comparingEphesians 6:10;Php 3:1; Php 3:4; Php 3:8;1 Thessalonians 4:1;2 Thessalonians 3:1): Christ has finished the work of redemption. What is still wanting - the subjugation of all enemies - He can await quietly till God fulfills the promise. Christ is represented as sitting on the throne for ever (unless "forever" is taken in connection with the One sacrifice for sins), and yet we believe that Christ will come to establish His kingdom on earth. Kurtz remarks that in His second advent the Lord comes on and with the throne of God, in His divine glory and power.) As under the Levitical dispensation, with its constantly-repeated sacrifices, and the yearly entrance of the high priest, there was no true, real, and final remission of sin, so now, since Christ is seated in heaven, the apostle argues, it follows that there is no more remembrance of sin. The Holy Ghost Himself witnessed by the prophet Jeremiah, that the new covenant was connected with complete and eternal forgiveness of sin. If so, there can be no more offering for sin. The characteristic feature of the New Testament standing of believers is, that they are free from sin in the sight of God, and that always and forever. "No more remembrance of sin;" because Christ is seated at the right hand of God. This is our sanctification; this is our standing before God. The sacrifice of Christ is perfect; it was based upon the eternal will of the Godhead. The Son said, "Lo, I come to do Thy will;" and in the eternal Spirit He offered Himself, thus fulfilling the salvation-will of God. The sacrifice, flowing out of eternal and infinite love, possesses absolute perfection, never-ceasing efficacy. And by this one offering we are set apart unto God. "Jehovah our Righteousness" is the name by which we call the Lord. In the Lord Christ are we ever before the Father, and in the light and perfection of Christ the Father regards us. Thus, although sins constantly interrupt our communion and our enjoyment of God’s favour, nothing can interrupt our position before God, or the representative position of Christ, the Advocate with the Father. Our righteousness is unchangeable as it is perfect; it, or rather He, is always before the Father, and for us, and the Father Himself always loves us. Access to God is always open; the sin-laden and defiled child finds always the Father and the interceding Lord. Oh, it requires much humility, and it makes the heart bleed in great sorrow and contrition, to believe that while we sin and forget God, the throne remains unchanged - the throne of grace; that the love of the Father and of the Son

never varies; that our Righteousness and Perfection in the once offered Victim remain always the same; that He loves us with an everlasting love; that He hath redeemed us with an everlasting redemption; that He remembers our sins no more; and that we are always before Him in Christ Jesus. Believers in Jesus Christ rest in the eternal love of God. "It is good to be here." Let us in the light of our chapter dwell again on this high and comforting truth.

True, the Son of God came in the fullness of time; in these last times the Lamb without blemish and without spot was manifest, and was crucified; but He was verily fore-ordained before the foundation of the world.

It was in time that we heard the call of the Gospel, that we trusted in Jesus, and received the adoption of sons; but the Father called us according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began. Our salvation is of God, of the Father, who chose us before the beginning of time; and of the eternal Son, who, in the deep counsel of the ever-blessed Trinity, undertook to redeem us and to bring us unto glory; and of the Spirit, who in the same eternal love was appointed to enlighten, quicken, and renew the elect unto the blessedness of the everlasting inheritance. This eternal, absolute, free, and unchanging love is revealed and given to us in the Lord Jesus, who by one offering has perfected for ever all who believe in His name. By His death He has separated us from our guilt and death, and brought us unto God. He has sanctified Himself for us, and us in Him.* Believers have been sanctified and presented unblamable before the Father in the person of the Lord Jesus. The Father’s good pleasure or delight rests now on the people for whom Jesus died. (*John 17:19.)

Thus God is always beholding us in Christ, and with eternal love. He beholds neither iniquity in Jacob, nor doth He see perverseness in Israel; although we stand before Him in the brightness of the all-revealing light, He sees us clothed with white garments, and cleansed in the blood of Jesus Christ His Son. And although we are constantly failing and falling, yet doth He behold our faith as never failing, and ourselves as firm as Mount Zion, which cannot be moved, but standeth fast for ever. With never-changing fervency and tenderness of love God beholds us chosen, redeemed, sanctified in Christ Jesus.

Perfection is now given to all who believe. God Himself is our salvation. Jehovah Himself is our righteousness. Christ’s inheritance is our inheritance. The source is eternal love, self-moved, infinite, ocean without shore; the channel is free abounding grace, the gift is eternal life, even life by the Holy Ghost in oneness with Jesus; the foundation is the obedience of Christ, eternal in its origin, infinite in its value, and unspeakably God-pleasing in its character. How willing are we to forsake our own thoughts, to give up our own righteousness, to forget our works and feelings, and to stand still, in awe and joyous adoration beholding Jehovah bringing near His salvation and His righteousness! "Of God are we in Christ Jesus, whom God hath made for us wisdom, and righteousness, and santification, and redemption: that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord." But let me remind you, believers, and let me testify to you who are yet without the dear Lord, how this eternal love came to us. In Jesus, the Friend of sinners, the Good Shepherd, the light of eternity shone with gentle and healing rays into our hearts. The death of Jesus on the cross was the open page, in which we read the eternal love, the holy and yet gracious purpose of the Father. The voice which called the heavy-laden and weary ones attracted us, and He gave us rest, and thus the eternal counsel was revealed to us as babes. Stooping to

our lowest need, and declaring to us the forgiveness of sins, Jesus lifted us up even unto the Father's house, and assured us of mercy which is from everlasting to everlasting. Jesus is that sweet bosom of eternal love, where poor and needy sinners can rest; and in the wounds of Jesus, in His blood, we read our eternal election, and the infinite love of God to us. And of this we have assurance in the Scripture. Will not God's written Word suffice? Behold, Jesus Himself lived and died to fulfill what was written; and it was to His mind the same thing to say, that the Scriptures are fulfilled, and that the eternal will of God is accomplished. He not merely meditated on the written Word of God with constant delight, He not merely used the Scripture as His one unfailing weapon against the adversary; but He fulfilled the Scripture, because in the volume of the book God's eternal will is written. He went up to Jerusalem to be crucified in order that the Scripture might be fulfilled. He did not ask of the Father to send Him legions of angels; for how then would the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it must be? "The things that are written concerning Me must be accomplished." See then how Jesus regarded the Scripture as the perfect, most reliable, all-sufficient expression of God's eternal and secret will. What unbelief then is it on our part not to recognize in the written Word the very mind and will of God! No voice from heaven, no vision, no authority can be compared with the volume of the book which Christ came to fulfill by His death and resurrection. If we could have heard the counsel of eternity, the word of the Father to the Son, ere time began, we could have no greater certainty than now, when we listen to Scripture, the echo in time of the counsel in eternity. God Himself is here speaking; the word proceedeth out of His mouth.

Now as Christ said, "In the volume of the book it is written of Me," to come, to live, to die, to rise, so say, "In the volume of the book it is written of me: Israel, thou hast destroyed thy self; but in Me is thy help;" and again; "I, even I, am He that blotteth out thy transgressions;" and again, "Fear not: I have redeemed thee, I have called thee by name; thou art mine;" and again, "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; and again, " By one offering He hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified."

Thus between Jesus and believers there is a strong and tender tie which binds them to the Scripture. Jesus believed and fulfilled the written Word. According to that written Word, He obeyed and suffered; according to that written Word, He hoped and looked forward to His reward and exaltation. The last word uttered by the eternal Word on the cross was from the Scripture. What a sure and blessed word of prophecy is ours! It came from God; it was fulfilled by Jesus, and sealed with His own blood; it comes to us through the channel of Christ Himself; of Christ's faith, of Christ's prayers, of Christ's inmost spiritual heart-life, of Christ's broken body. We can rely on all its promises; our faith builds on the very words of the almighty and ever-blessed God; and in this also are we conformed to the image of His dear Son. And this very aspect of truth, which has occupied us of late, the eternal counsel, is revealed to us in Scripture that we may have the more abundant assurance of the divinity of this written Word. Where but in Scripture do we breathe the atmosphere of eternity? Where but here is GOD revealed? Oh, with what majesty, and yet with what condescending familiarity, does God reveal Himself, and unfold to us His thoughts and His ways! God reveals His infinite majesty, His ineffable holiness, His sovereign glory, that the creature may be filled with humility, and veiling his face, adore with fear and trembling. God reveals His truth and justice, His goodness and faithfulness, His wrath and jealousy, that the sinner may confess in contrition his guilt, and cry out of the depths. But Jehovah delights in

comforting His people, and speaking to the broken and wounded heart of Jerusalem. He desires truth in the hidden part, and therefore, after convincing us of our sin and wretchedness, He reveals His overwhelming and abounding grace, the fullness of His love, the grandeur of His salvation, that the poor and afflicted ones may go forth with perfect trust, with joyous self-surrender, to meet the Bridegroom.

How touching is the sweetness of God! Clouds and darkness are round about His throne, and He rebukes Israel, and testifies to them of their hardness and iniquity; but again and again the deepest thought of God - that is, salvation - and the never-changing method of God - that is, mercy - burst forth, and with motherly tenderness and comforting iteration, He says again and again, Fear not, I am the Saviour. And then He takes them into His confidence, He unveils to them His purpose, He speaks to them of His cherished plans, of that future glory which will be His joy and their blessedness. Behold, He says, where and how I have prepared all for you. Behold, my servant! I have made Him a leader and commander to the people. He tells us of that counsel between Himself and the Lord the Messiah, and how David’s Son is to suffer and to die, and how God is to raise and reward Him, and to make Him Israel’s everlasting glory and the light of the Gentiles. And then the soul is lifted above time, and its own thoughts, works, merit, and strength, into the eternal and infinite love, the salvation of God, the joy of God. And in Jesus, the Son of God incarnate, the message is still more perfect, more simple; He speaks with the utmost plainness, without parable; His words are with such condescension, transparency, homeliness, and sweetness, that the heart is perfectly satisfied, and all that is within us magnifies the Lord. "I came from the Father, and again I go to the Father." This is all. I came, according to eternal love, to die for you; I go again to the Father, that this eternal love may be yours for evermore. The soul responds with the disciples, "Now speakest thou plainly." The eye is opened to behold Him, ascended to His God and to our God, to His Father and to our Father. We know now that the love with which the Father loved Jesus embraces us also, and folds us with everlasting safety and infinite tenderness. And the highest mystery is unveiled: "I in them, and thou in Me. I am the Vine, my Father is the Husbandman, ye are the branches." The word "perfected" falls with a strange sound on those who are experiencing daily their sad imperfections. But the Christian is a strange paradox. We are unknown, yet well known; chastened, yet not killed; dying, and, behold, we live; poor, yet making many rich; having nothing, yet possessing all things. Let me speak to you then of this twofold aspect of the Christian. You may be caught up into the third heaven, and yet the abundance of this revelation will not burn up the dross that is within you, or kill the old man, the flesh which warreth against the Spirit. On the contrary, there is the danger imminent and great, as there was to the apostle Paul, lest you be exalted above measure, and dream of victory and enjoyment while you are still on the battle-field, and called to fight the good fight of faith, to crucify every day the old man, and to have no confidence, still less complacency, in the flesh. The Psalms of David the son of Jesse are not yet ended; the Solomon period of peace and glory has not yet come. A Christian is known by his difficulties, struggles, conflicts, tears, groans, as well as by his thanksgiving and joy. We have died once in Christ, and in Christ are accepted and perfect; but our old nature is not dead, the flesh in us is not annihilated, there is still within us that which has no pleasure in the will and ways of God. Painful this struggle will ever be, though God is with us, and our joy is greater than our pain. And thus while our soul is rooted in God, in endless and changeless love, while we dwell in God, in the secret place of the Most High, and have by Christ been taken out of our own misery and wretchedness into the home and sanctuary above; yet are

we kept in great humility, self- abasement, watching, and painfulness. We have in us the death of Adam, and we have in us the resurrection of Jesus Christ. By the one we are broken and tormented through sin, and darkness, and sluggishness, and earthliness, and gloom; by Christ we are raised, and strengthened, and comforted. We sin, we fall, we carry about with us a mind resisting God's will, criticizing it, and rebelling; and we shall experience to the very last breath we draw on earth, that there is a conflict and that we must strive and suffer in order to be faithful unto death.

Hear how at the end of his journey the apostle says of himself, not that he was, but that he is, chief of sinners. Is he a saint? He calls himself less than the least of God's saints. Is he an apostle? He adds, I am not meet to be an apostle. So we confess daily our sin and our sins, and condemn ourselves whenever we appear before God; yet are we perfect in Christ Jesus. Deeper than all our grief is the melody of the heart, and always can we rejoice in God. And in this song of praise, in this joyous melody, is our deepest humility; for the new song says nothing else but "grace, grace." His love is always resting on us, though He is grieved at our falls, and has to hide His countenance and to chasten us; yet does He love us all the time. Even while we are forgetting and forsaking Him, His motherly pity and forethought prepare our welcome, while His priestly intercession keeps our faith from failing. Nay, His love has ordered it, that even our sins and backslidings should lose us no time; for He deepens His work in us, and through the bitter experience of transgressions and of our own weakness leads us to a greater sense of His love and to greater strength of obedience. And you, dear Christian, if you can believe this will find that it will make sin very bitter to you, and yourself meek and quiet like a weaned child, and that you will wonder how such a one as you can be loved by God at any time, and at all times, without change and wavering. Then will your heart fear and be enlarged; you will be amazed how God has kept you, how Jesus has prayed for you, how the Holy Ghost has restored and comforted you for so many years, through so many days and weeks of your neglect, and coldness, and sin, and disobedience. You will be ashamed; you will not think of saying, your dross is consumed, and that you see nothing in yourself, but delight in Jesus; you will say, Thy grace, Lord Jesus, is sufficient for me! The robes are white; but it is because He loved us and washed us from our sins in His own blood.

Unto you also I lift up my voice in the love and compassion of my Lord; unto you who are still in the horrible pit and in the miry clay, who know not the royal clemency of the Sovereign God, eternal, infinite love to the sinner; nor Jesus, who became the sinner's Saviour and Brother, by taking upon Him our nature, and by dying as our Substitute, our Mother, bringing us forth by His soul-travail and agony on the cross. What a multitude of sicknesses, sorrows, fears, and evils lie upon you, and the remedy is near. There is forgiveness for sin, there is deliverance from death, there is renewal for the heart, there is the living God for the sinner in time and eternity. It is near you; the Word is in your mouth; God's Word on which you can rely. Behold Jesus! saith God, He who came to do my will, to fulfill my counsel for the sinner's salvation.

28 - Heb_10:19-25

CHAPTER X X V I I I.

FAITH, HOPE, AND LOVE Hebrews 10:19-25. THE apostle's great argument is concluded, and the result is placed before us in a very short summary. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way; and we have in the heavenly sanctuary a great Priest over the house of God. All difficulties have been removed, perfectly and forever. We have access; and He who is the way is also the end of the way; He is even now our great Priest, interceding for us, and our all-sufficient Mediator, providing us with every needful help. On this foundation rests a threefold exhortation. 1. Let us draw near with a true heart, in the full assurance of faith. 2. Let us hold fast the profession of hope without wavering. 3. Let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works, labouring and waiting together, and helping one another* in the unity of brethren. Faith, hope, and love - this is the threefold result of Christ's entrance into heaven, spiritually discerned. A believing, hoping, and loving attitude of heart corresponds to the new covenant revelation of divine grace. (*It would lead too far from the scope of the passage to enter into the connection subsisting between these three gifts of grace. Suffice it to remind the reader of their frequent conjunction in Scripture.Colossians 1:4-5;1 Thessalonians 1:3;1 Corinthians 13:13; 1 Peter 1.)

"Brethren," the apostle here significantly calls believers. He does not mean so much "his brethren;" but, including himself, he looks unto the Lord Jesus Christ, in whom we are sanctified. For, as he taught before, He who sanctified and they who are sanctified are of one; for which reason He took upon Him flesh and blood, He is not ashamed to call us brethren. Thus we who believe stand before the Father. The eternal election - love of the Father in Christ; the present and everlasting delight of the Father in the accomplished sacrifice, and in the representative position of the Saviour; the perfect High Priestly mediation of the Lord, who remembers His earthly experience, sorrow, and temptation - these are now the bright and yet peaceful heights to which we lift our eyes. And we have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus; for the Holy Ghost witnesses,* that there is no more offering for sin, for the very reason, that God, on account of the one offering of Christ, will remember our sins no more. (Hebrews 10:15-18.) [*The expressionμαρτυρ■■δ■ ■μ■ν κα■τ■πν■■μα τ■ ■γιονis very important. It is in harmony with the teaching of our blessed Lord in the Gospel of John, and with the Pauline teaching in Rom. 8 and 1 Cor. 2. It brings before us the following important and comforting truths:

1. The personality of the Holy Ghost, who searcheth the deep things of God, of the Father, and of the Son.

2. The relation subsisting between the Scripture and the Spirit. The words of Scripture are the testimony of the Spirit.

3. The Spirit witnesses to the individual believer in and by the Scripture.

4. The gracious object of the Holy Ghost is to show us our perfection in Christ Jesus.

Let us ever hold fast in a living and experimental faith the doctrine of the Divine Authority and inspiration of Scripture, and never be disturbed by high-sounding phrases of liberty and Spirit; for only where the Spirit of God is, there is liberty, and the Spirit is with and in thewrittenWord.]

There is now no barrier; we have a free and unfettered right of access.1 We are not as Israel of old; not even as the Levites, who were excluded from the Holiest; not even like Aaron, who only once a year entered, and that in darkness, and for a few moments; unto us is given boldness, right, permission, to enter into the presence of God; for the blood of Jesus Christ, by which He entered Himself, opened the door to us also. Jesus is both the way and the door, even as He is also the end of the way; and inside the door we are brought again into His gracious presence. That veil which hid the Holiest, which on the day of crucifixion "was rent in twain from the top to the bottom,"2 symbolized the flesh of Christ. It was in order to die that the Son of God took part of flesh and blood.3 The humanity in which the glory of the Only-begotten was revealed was, in its aspect of weakness and before His suffering of death, also a veil, separating Him as Son of Man and our Representative, as well as us, from the holy of holies. But when He tasted death for us, the veil was rent, and then Jesus with His own blood entered into the heavenly sanctuary, leaving an open way of access unto all believers. This is the new and living way consecrated by Christ. It is called new,4 for before the death of our Lord no believer and worshipper was able to enter thus into the presence of the Most High. This "perfection," which pertains to the conscience, this absolute confidence, this acceptance in the Beloved, this standing in Christ, belongs to the new covenant, though grace prepared and kept the ancient believers under its safe and sheltering wings. The way is called new, because the efficacy and strength of Christ's atonement is ever the same. As the poet says, not so much by the power of imagination, as of faith, "dear dying Lamb;" as Luther often said, "It seems but yesterday that Jesus died on the cross." (1It is evident that the expressionπα■■■σιαmust be understood here objectively, not subjectively, else the subsequent exhortation would be unmeaning.2Matthew 27:51.3Hebrews 2:14.4πρ■■φατο■; literally, freshly slain, means also accessible.)

It is called a living way, because all that symbolizes Christ must be represented as possessing vitality. Thus we read of Him as the living stone, and of the temple built on Him as growing. Thus He speaks of Himself as living bread, because He gives and sustains life to all His people. Christ is the living way, for He gives life and strength to walk by Him to the Father. Christ actually brings us, in repentance, trust, and soul - renewal, into the presence of God. Christ is all, and the sinner is really and truly transplanted out of the kingdom of sin, guilt, and death into the kingdom of righteousness, peace, and life. But the second privilege, on which the apostle founds the exhortation is, that Jesus is not merely the way, but the end of the way, a living Saviour within the veil; the great, the all-glorious Priest,1 continuing in the heavenly sanctuary without intermission His priestly functions, interceding for His people, and bringing each of us individually, with our various need, infirmity, and sorrow, before the Father. He is the great Priest over the house of God. By the house of God believers are meant,2 Christ, as the Son, the Only-begotten of the Father, and the First-born among many brethren, is over His own house. What a consoling and encouraging thought is this, that on the throne of God is Jesus, Head of the House, and Head as Priest - merciful, faithful, sympathizing, Guardian and Lord, Brother and Friend; nay more, One with the people, for whom He intercedes. And as Christ and the Church are viewed as the One House, Habitation, and Temple, so we know there is yet a future manifestation of the "place" which

He is preparing for us. He is gathering now a congregation in the holy of holies; He is building now a spiritual and heavenly temple; and when the building is complete, then will be made manifest the threefold meaning of the tabernacle - a heavenly locality - Christ, in whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead bodily, and Christ and the Church, the tabernacle of God.3(1Thus inHebrews 4:14Christ is called great High Priest.2 Hebrews 3:6.3CompareMatthew 16:18;Acts 4:11;1 Corinthians 3:11;Ephesians 2:19;Revelation 21:22)

Having thus received, through Christ's sacrifice and Christ's present priesthood boldness, a full right of access into the holy of holies, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith. "The term 'draw near,' in English, reads as a mere general term, but as addressed to the Hebrews it has peculiar significance. It is the term which is applied to the approach of a priest drawing near to offer sacrifice. The privilege is right of access unto God, the duty is that of approach; and no man values the right of access who does not desire to approach. There can be nothing which really satisfies the heart of any man in being told that he is at liberty to approach God, if he has no inclination to approach unto God."*(*Dr. John Duncan,Sermons, p. 395.)

We can only approach with our heart, and by faith, which has its seat in the heart; with a heart which is in earnest, true, and purposeful in this very work of approach. What is meant by a true heart? Sincerity towards God is not the natural attribute of our heart. On the contrary, the heart is exceedingly deceitful with regard to God and to divine things. It requires divine grace to give the heart sincerity and unity of purpose. Only by grace can we say, I will seek Thee with my whole heart. Only a whole heart is true.

God desireth truth in the inward part. A true heart is a heart which accepts the testimony of God, which distrusts itself, which believes God's Word, declaring our sin, guilt, and helplessness, and which responds simply, and without reservation, humbly and joyfully to the divine gospel of the gift of God, eternal life through the righteousness of our Lord Jesus Christ. A true heart is a heart purified by trust in Jesus. A true heart is a heart which desires to be with God and to live unto Him. Thus, while we desire this "truth," and say, "Oh for a heart to praise my God, A heart from sin set free!" believing in Jesus, we possess the true heart, "A heart that always feels the blood, So freely shed for me." A true heart rests in the mercy of God, and allows God to be all its righteousness and strength. It leaves itself to the heavenly Father, to the Bridegroom, and to the Spirit, to make it an abode of their glory, and to work in it of their good pleasure. A true heart is never pleased with itself, but is at peace, content that Jesus shall be all.

What is meant by full assurance of faith? Nothing else but faith in full, vigorous, healthy exercise. Faith in what? Not faith in our having faith, in our being accepted; but faith that we have a right of access, that Jesus is the living way, and that He is the High Priest in the holy of holies. The object of faith, of the weakest and smallest spark of faith, as much as of faith in plenitude or full assurance, is not ourselves, but Christ in His person and work. That which I am to be fully assured about, on which my faith is to rest clearly and firmly is Christ, and what He is, and has done for sinners. Hence when timid hearts say, I cannot draw near with full assurance of faith, because I do not know that I have truly taken hold of Christ, the answer is, You are to draw near with full assurance of faith in Christ. It is not, "Seeing therefore we have evidence that we have been truly converted and renewed, let us in full confidence of our possessing true faith draw near; but seeing that we have received right of access by the blood of Christ, and that He is High Priest over God's

house, let us exercise full trust in His glorious person and His finished work." Christ alone is the object of faith from beginning to end. Of Him we are to be perfectly sure, and then trust ourselves to this firm foundation. "We are called to exercise faith, but we are not called to look in on faith as a condition; we are called to exercise faith in looking out on the unmixed promise of God, which yet can be received only by believing." Therefore the apostle says at the end of his life, "I know whom I have believed." From his conversion to his last moment he trusted as a poor sinner in Jesus. Clearly and vividly as his conversion must have stood before his mind, indelible as must have been the impression of the heavenly vision, yet he was never tempted to substitute the reminiscence of grace received for the personal and loving Saviour, for the new and living way by which we constantly come to God. Hence when the disciples saw Jesus hands and feet they rejoiced, for all doubt was removed.*(*"In primitive times an apostle could take for granted of a whole church that they all trusted. For, in writing to the Ephesians, does Paul makea single allusion to their unbelief?or does he employ a single exhortation in the way of persuasion to believe? or, from beginning to end of his epistle, does he hint at such a thing as prevailing distrust? No; in those days Christian men no more thought of refusing to trust in the Saviour than of denying the Word of truth. But now, is it not a frequent case that a man shall go by a Christian name, and practice Christian duties, and receive Christian privileges for years together, while he is so far from trusting in Christ with the confidence of faith, that he shall not only confess himself destitute of trust, but shall often express a fear lest full trust and confidence were an unwarranted and dangerous presumption?How strange this would have sounded in the apostles' time, when to trust in Christ, and to trust fully and for all salvation,wasthe very first exerciseto which they called those who were awakened to seek in earnest for eternal life, and received the record of God concerning the way. The remarkable trust of the first Christians gave a perfection to their character we now seldom perceive.") The eye does not see itself; faith is not to stand on itself; your full assurance is to be that Christ's blood is precious, and that He has entered as the forerunner. Then you are at peace. Faith means trust, reliance, confidence, leaning. There is no other worthy of trust, none else reliable but Jesus. But if you wish to have an additional object of faith in your own progress and spirituality, you are, like Peter, looking away from Jesus unto the unstable sea. Nor have I any other proof of my faith's genuineness yesterday, but my exercising faith this moment. It is an ever-present tense, "He that believeth hath eternal life."

But, alas! some who speak of not being sure of salvation, and wish to be persuaded not so much into assurance as comfort, have most likely never had any dealings with God. They wish deliverance from sorrow and punishment. They would like not so much to be brought nigh to God, but rather to have a title-deed, promising that they are and must be unfailingly saved! This would be salvation without God. This be far from us. God is our salvation. Our souls thirst for the living God. We draw near in full assurance of faith; for Jesus died and rose again, and sitteth at the right hand of God: we trust and are safe. Nay, while we are afraid, like the Psalmist, we will put our trust in Him. The feet may tremble, but the rock on which they are set standeth firm and immovable. Be not discouraged that you need the constant exercise of faith, as if this argued that you are not already accepted. "Being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ: by whom also we have access by faith into this grace wherein we stand." The exercise of faith alone keeps the heart true. When we behold Jesus as the way and the priest, there is no guile in our spirit.1 Thus have our hearts been sprinkled from an evil conscience; we have been freed from the sense of condemnation and guilt; and we have been set apart to the service of God; for as the

priests were set apart by blood and water, so have our persons,2 body and soul, been washed by the virtue and efficacy of the Holy Ghost, who applied to us the atonement. This is signified and sealed to us in baptism; and the emphatic mention of the body (Hebrews 10:22) reminds us that the whole of our present life, with all its activities and energies, is to be a life of faith and heavenly-mindedness. The body belongs even now to Christ; and of this our personal sanctification - body, soul, and spirit - we have the emblem and seal in baptism, in which we have also the pledge of the resurrection of the body. There is "pure, clean water." Not the water which putteth away the filth of the flesh, but the Spirit of God, who alone sanctifies by the blood of Christ.3(1ComparePsalms 32:1; Psalms 2:2;Romans 12:1.3The apostle refers to the inward and to the outward purification as facts accomplished once for all. This is evident from the whole scope of these chapters, and from the participles perfect. A Jew who came to faith in Jesus, and was baptized, was transplanted into the kingdom of grace with body, soul, and spirit, separated inwardly and outwardly to the life and service of Christ.)

Thus in the exercise of full confiding faith, in sincerity of heart, and in conscious separation of our whole persons unto God, let us draw near to the Father, who loves us, and to Jesus our great Priest, faithful and compassionate.

2. We are exhorted to hold fast the profession of our hope without wavering. Before the first advent believers looked forward in faith and hope to the good things to come. Believing the promise, they expected in hope the glory of Messiah’s reign. With us this unity of faith and hope is substantially the same; but it appears now in a twofold manner. Faith rests on the past, the accomplished work of Jesus; hope looks to the future, the return of our Saviour. And the more we realize Jesus as the living Lord, the more shall we look forward, waiting for His coming, and going forth to meet Him. It we believe that He has come, we also hope that He will come. If we know the salvation - bringing grace of God which hath appeared, we shall with confiding hope look for the coming of our great God and Saviour. Thus "the hope" is the most comprehensive view of Christ’s relation to a believer. Hence, when Paul said that "he stood and was judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers,"* he spoke out of his inmost heart. A dead faith is without hope; it does not behold Christ living; it does not desire Christ’s return; it has never known Christ crucified. (*Acts 26:6.)

We have been born again unto a lively hope. We are saved by hope, and we are waiting for the adoption; that is, the redemption of the body. If in this life only we have hope in Christ, if our horizon is limited by earth, if we do not look forward unto the appearing of our great God and Saviour, ours is indeed a miserable existence. The profession of our hope is most practical and testing. Hereby we profess that we are strangers and pilgrims upon earth, that we are seeking heavenly things, labouring for heavenly rewards, laying up for ourselves heavenly treasures. We must forsake the sins, pleasures, and honours of Egypt; we must purify ourselves, as Christ is pure. If we profess hope, we must also rejoice, though we be in tribulation; we must view the sufferings and trials of this present life as not worthy to be compared with the coming glory. Then hope, resting on faith, supports faith, and fills us with courage and patience. "Till I come is the voice of the Saviour, when faith beholds His dying love; and going forth to meet Him, going forth out of the world’s sin, bondage, gloom, is the response of the bride.

Hold fast then the profession of your hope; and as God is faithful who promised, so let us be faithful to the hope. Let us remember that we can only have one hope, one purpose, one God. Far be every thought of apostasy, of faint-heartedness, of hesitancy. Let us be strong and of a good courage, and when the soul is cast down and disquieted within us, let the spirit say, "Hope thou in God."

3. But in thus drawing near unto God, and holding fast the profession of our hope, we must bear in mind that we are called to be a brotherhood, and that faith and hope are to be exercised in love. We are the body of Christ, and members one of another. We are to please not ourselves, but our brother unto edification. The congregation of believers is ordered of God for the exercise of Christian love. We are to consider one another as fellow-pilgrims; to study our brother's need and sorrow, difficulty and trial; to exercise our mind on our duty and relation to him, that thus we may be helpful to him in his course, and stimulate and encourage him to good works. To consider one another in the right spirit is to look above all at the Christian character of our brother; to regard him, not so much in the light of his natural disposition; to love him, not so much on account of qualities congenial and pleasing to us; still less to exercise criticism, and to cherish suspicion and uncharitable judgment; but to fix our thought on the one great fact of brotherhood in Christ, as the apostle Peter exhorts, "Seeing ye have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit unto unfeigned love of the brethren, see that ye love one another fervently with a pure heart, being born again." We should dwell on their excellencies, on the fruits of the Spirit which they bear, on the features of Christ which they reflect; and every good thing that we discover in them should be to us as the voice of Christ, saying, "Follow Me." We should thus be benefited by every, even the humblest, Christian, and find it both easy and delightful in lowliness of mind to esteem each other better than ourselves. And running together in a holy rivalry the same race, we should behold in our brother features of Christian character and activity in which we are deficient. And in this spirit of love we should cherish Christian communion; "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together." Christianity is eminently an individual heart-affair; but it is also eminently social. The promise of Christ's presence is to the assembly gathered in His name. As a congregation we are to show the death of the Lord. The voice of melody is heard in the assembly of saints. We are to encourage and exhort one another. "Let us remember to build our inward service upon God's blessed gospel, and to build up our outward profession upon inward heart-religion, and social communion upon a personal profession of believing."*(*Dr. Duncan.) In times of persecution or of lukewarmness, Christian fellowship is specially important; it is likewise a test of our faithfulness. Are we ashamed of the Lord, of His truth, of His followers, of His reproach? The Hebrews, it seems, needed this word of exhortation, and the apostle confirms it by the solemn addition, "Forasmuch as ye see the day approaching." The apostle refers, doubtless, to the approaching judgment on Jerusalem, connecting it, according to the law of prophetic vista, with the final crisis. Because the Lord is at hand, we are to be patient, loving, gentle, exercising forbearance towards our brother, while examining with strict care our own work. The second advent of our Lord is the most powerful, as well as the most constraining motive. Do we hope to be with Christ and all the saints in glory, and shall we not love the brethren, and minister unto them, while we are waiting together for His coming? Do we expect Christ to acknowledge us as His brethren, and shall we be ashamed of Christ's members, or treat them with cold neglect and indifference? Have we all to appear before the tribunal of Christ and to account for our stewardship, and shall we not be faithful and diligent in exercising whatever ministry is entrusted to us, as God hath bestowed unto each

one of us his own measure and gift? Called to eternal fellowship of love in joy and glory, let us fulfill the ministry of love in suffering and service, and let every day see some help and consolation given to our fellow-pilgrim.

Christians "see the day approaching;" for they love Christ’s appearing; and to them the day of light is not far off. Jesus said, "I come quickly." The long delay of centuries does not contradict this "quickly." Christ is looking forward unto His return, and unto nothing else. All events only prepare and further this great consummation. And the Christians of every period recognize that the mystery of ungodliness is already working, and that our only hope is the return of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. Let this hope separate us from the evil which is in the world, and strengthen and gladden us in all our sorrows and difficulties; let it bind us together in the fellowship and ministry of love. Let us exhort one another daily by word and by example.

29 - Heb_10:26-39

CHAPTER X X I X.

WARNING AGAINST APOSTASY.* (*Compare Lecture 13 of my first volume on Hebrews.) Hebrews 10:26-39. THE apostle now confirms the preceding exhortation, first by a severe and solemn warning against apostasy, and then by an affectionate and hope-inspiring remembrance of their past sufferings, and by the assurance of his confidence in their sincere faith. Before considering the awful words of warning which the apostle addresses here to professing believers, it may be useful to refer briefly to some misconceptions which prevent some readers of Scripture from receiving in a meek and docile spirit solemn admonitions of the Holy Ghost, such as the present.

(1.) There is an undue and one-sided haste to be happy and in the enjoyment of comfort. We are apt to forget that God's great object is to bring us and keep us nigh unto Himself, and that our true and only blessedness is in communion with the living God. In our present state, all Scripture consolation must contain exhortation. We must eat the sweet Pashcal Lamb with bitter herbs of repentance and self-abasement. The man who received the gospel immediately and with joy was right, both in at once accepting the message and in rejoicing. Thus did Saul of Tarsus, and the Ethiopian, and many others, who brought forth fruit with patience. But herein consisted the untrue and defective character of his immediate joy, that it was not out of a broken heart and in godly sorrow; and thus there is a morbid tendency, even among true believers, to take joy and calm as a "robbery," prematurely, superficially, and of their own power. It is to be feared that many who have never come truly to Jesus are resting in false security.

(2.) There is a one-sided and unscriptural forgetfulness of the actual position of the believer (or professing believer), as a man who is still on the road, in the battle; who has still the responsibility of trading with the talent entrusted, of watching for the return of the Master. Now there are many bye-paths, dangers, precipices on the road, and we must persevere to the end. Only they who overcome and are faithful unto death shall be crowned. It is not spiritual, but carnal, to take the blessed and solemn doctrines of our election in Christ and of the perseverance of the saints, given us as a cordial for fainting hours, and as the inmost and ultimate secret of the soul in its dealings with God, and place them on the common and daily road of our duties and trials, instead of the precepts and warnings of the divine Word. It is not merely that God keeps us through these warnings and commandments, but the attitude of soul which neglects and hurries over these portions of Scripture is not child-like, humble, and sincere. The attempts to explain away the fearful warnings of Scripture against apostasy are rooted in a very morbid and dangerous state of mind. A precipice is a precipice, and it is folly to deny it. "If we live after the flesh," says the apostle, "we shall die." Now, to keep people from falling over a precipice, we do not put up a slender and graceful hedge of flowers, but the strongest barrier we can; and piercing spikes or cutting pieces of glass to prevent calamities. But even this is only the surface of the matter. Our walk with God and our perseverance to the end are great and solemn realities. We are dealing with the living God,

and only life with God, and in God, and unto God, can be of any avail here. He who brought us out of Egypt is now guiding us; and if we follow Him, and follow Him to the end, we shall enter into the final rest.

(3.) We must bear in mind that God in the gospel, and in the outward Church,* deals with mankind, and not merely with the "elect," known only unto Him. The revelation of God in Christ places the whole world, unto which it is sent, in a peculiar position. It places professing Christians, whether they be genuine or not, in a position of most solemn responsibility. God alone can judge the heart. A man professing faith in Christ, and spiritual enjoyment of the truth, may be a hypocrite, or self-deceived, or in a state of temporary declension and apparent death. The Word, the message of God in Scripture, and through the ministry, places the same truth before all; the character of God; the only salvation in Christ Jesus; the necessity and evidence of the renewal of the heart; the final perdition of ungodly men. The apostle, seeing the danger in which the Hebrews were, places before them the awful position of those who, having professed the knowledge and enjoyment of the great and glorious salvation by the blood of Christ, turn away from the Saviour, and choose to live deliberately and continuously without the love and obedience of Christ. For such there is no more sacrifice for sin, and the wrath of God, which abideth on every one that believeth not on the Son of God, must fall with more fearful severity on those who, having been brought into contact with the love of God in Christ - how near a contact we cannot judge, but very near according to their own profession - have forsaken the Lord and His service. (*The doctrine of the visible Church has of late years been much overlooked by many, who are anxious to bring prominently forward the spiritual Church of the regenerate and true believer. But the position of professing Christians, of those who as children of believers or otherwise have been brought up in the Christian Church, is one of special privilege and responsibility. It is true, that if the fishes are bad, their having been in the net will not save them ultimately; but their being in the net places them in a special relationship to God and the Lord Jesus Christ, both at present and in the future judgment. The nations of Christendom, it must be admitted by all, stand in a different position from heathen nations; and what is true of the nation, is true of the individual. Whether he believes or not, the name of Father, Son, and Holy Ghost has been declared unto him and pronounced upon him.) The doctrine of the whole Word of God is, that the blood of Christ, the Son of God, cleanseth from all sin. Even in the Old Testament the expressions describing the guilt and aggravated character of the sins which Jehovah is ready to forgive are exceedingly strong and large, so that none should despair, but turn in trustful repentance unto Him who delights to pardon abundantly. But the New Testament expressions could not be more distinct and emphatic to show, that through the blood of Christ there is forgiveness for sin, sins, all sins, without distinction and limitation. If it were not so, who of us could have any peace or hope? Ours are not merely sins of ignorance and weakness, but sins against light, and against that grace which is given to us, and which is sufficient to overcome sin.

It is evident that the apostle refers here to the voluntary and determined choice of leading a sinful and God-estranged life, which choice is made by those who, having known to some extent, and having professed to have experienced the grace of Christ, turn away from the one and only Name in which we can be saved. If under the law of Moses death without mercy was the immediate recompense of the willful transgressor, how much more fearful will be the punishment of him who has treated the Son of God with contempt, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, which for awhile he esteemed precious, an unholy thing, and has turned away the gracious Spirit under

whose teaching and influence he has been? We know the holy and righteous indignation of the Almighty, who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." The Lord will judge His people.*(*The quotations are from the book ofDeuteronomy 32:35-36(comparePsalms 135:14), announcing a special judgment on the apostate. The apostle quotes the passage inRomans 12:19in the same way, from the Hebrew, and not the LXX.)

Christ's sheep shall never perish; all God's children shall be kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation. It is by these stern and solemn warnings that the elect are kept. We know both from Scripture and sad experience, that even true Christians are not exempt from the danger of serious and protracted departure from the truth and love of God. And lastly, we know that men who were thought to be living and faithful members of the Church have fallen, at first into apathy and worldliness, then into heresy and sin, lastly into most bitter and fanatical opposition of Christ's gospel and flock. The apostolic epistles themselves, especially those last written, contain most melancholy and heart-stirring descriptions of apostates. Such wretched men belonged to the visible church, to the outward great house, and as such they must be judged.*(*1 John 2:19; 2 Peter 2;Jude 1:10-16. The expression, "fall into the hands of the living God," used by humble and penitent David (2 Samuel 24:14), refers there to the divine compassion which characterizes His judgment on His people. Here it refers to the omnipotence and punitive justice of God.) The warning is necessary, for the actual condition of the Church embraces false professors. It is necessary and salutary for all, for young and weak believers as well as for the most experienced. It is above all true; for the gospel reveals to us the living and holy God, the earnestness and jealousy, as well as the tenderness of divine love.

It is the humble and true believer who marks these warnings and lays them to heart. It is he who says, "Lord, is it I?" And though sometimes he is betrayed into a despondency, in which a subtle unbelief turns away from the grace of the Lord Jesus, yet God comforts His people, and shows unto those who write bitter things against themselves, that His thoughts are thoughts of peace concerning them. Blessed are all who tremble at God's Word. The believer beholds the precipice of apostasy, and clings close to God. He sees the divine justice and the fire of God's jealousy, and he prays to be delivered from all worldly affections and idols. He sees the way before him, and instead of resting on the enchanted ground, he forgets the things that are behind, and presses on toward the mark of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. He does not boast that he has left the city of Destruction and spread out the fact of his conversion as a tent to rest in, but the pearly gates of the heavenly Jerusalem stand before the eyes of his heart, and from beyond the gates he hears the voice, "Be thou faithful unto death, and I will give thee the crown of life."

Mark now the bearing of our passage on the mere professor of Christianity.

If we follow our deceitful and sluggish hearts, we neither rejoice in God's promises, nor tremble at His threatenings. The world knows not the sweetness of divine love, nor does it stand in awe before God's wrath. And professing Christians also may forget that our God is a consuming fire, and that we must either serve Him with all our heart, or depart from Him as evildoers.

God sends now the message of peace; but this message rests on the full manifestation, and not upon a change, of His character. And hence the gospel brings to him who, in fear and trembling, and with faith, accepts it, salvation, blood-bought and wrought into us by a total and central renewal of our hearts; whereas it brings to him who rejects it a fuller disclosure of God's wrath, and

a sterner announcement of everlasting perdition.*(*It is worthy of notice, that the passages announcing the doctrine of everlasting punishment are chiefly in the New Testament.) The brighter light, the greater darkness; the greater blessing, the more fearful curse. It is written, "He that believeth shall be saved;" but it is likewise written, "He that believeth not shall be damned." It is written, "Blessed are all that trust in Jesus;" but it is also written, "If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ, let him be Anathema." It is written, "In my Father's house are many mansions;" but it is also written, that unbelievers have their portion in the burning lake. Capernaum was lifted up to heaven, because Jesus had come to them; but it shall be cast into hell, because they rejected Jesus. The wrath of God is removed from all who believe in Jesus; but does it not remain on all who reject Jesus? Is not their rejection of Jesus the crowning sin of all sin?

He who, being taught the gospel, remains impenitent, unbelieving, worldly, rejects God. First, the Father; for He sent Jesus. The Father has no other message, no other channel of grace. In not accepting Christ as the Saviour, the Father's gift is despised. But the unbeliever, or the formalist, rejects also Jesus. He counts the blood of the Son of God an unholy, common, lifeless, powerless thing. By this blood sinners are cleansed, sanctified, brought nigh to worship, love, and serve God in liberty of spirit and peace of conscience. But he who, knowing of this precious blood, is without prayer, without holiness, without peace, is he not sinning against the blood of Christ? And lastly, the unbeliever does despite to the Spirit of grace. For the Spirit is constantly witnessing of the love of the Father in Jesus, of the grace of Jesus in His blood.

Now, if under the dispensation of Moses the holiness of God's good and loving law was vindicated, how much more will they be thought guilty who neglect the eternal gospel of the divine love, the new covenant sealed with the blood of the Son of God? No sacrifice for sins is on the path of unbelief; turning away from Jesus, there remains nothing but a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries. This warning has a bearing on all who are under the gospel dispensation. God has declared His name, He has revealed Himself in Christ Jesus. And by this revelation shall all men unto whom it is sent be judged.

Now there is a very common, though unexpressed, misconception, that the gospel, instead of revealing, modifies the divine character; that in the gospel God is represented as a less holy, awful, and jealous God, than in the Old Testament Scripture. People imagine that in the gospel there is nothing but grace and forgiveness, whether they believe it or not; whether they repent and are renewed or not. Now there could not be a more radical misunderstanding of God's Word. The gospel reveals the righteousness of God from faith to faith, because the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men; and to deliver us from this wrath God has sent His Son, and through His death provides righteousness for all who turn unto God in repentance and faith. The very salvation of God, the death of Jesus, reveals to us more clearly than the law of Moses, that God is just, and that even in the person of His own beloved Son, made a substitute for sinners, divine justice must be vindicated. The gospel-revelation is therefore the revelation of God, the only true and living God, of whom we read in Moses and the prophets. There is but One, and our God is a consuming fire. In the book of Revelation, given by the Lord Jesus Himself in His heavenly glory to the beloved disciple, we can read - and blessed are they that read with reverential fear and unfeigned faith - that while believers, who have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, who have overcome, shall be united with their adorable Lord and Redeemer in everlasting joy and glory, the justice, holiness, and truth of

God shall be made manifest in fearful judgment on all who do not submit themselves to His one and blessed gospel. In preaching therefore to the world we must present both sides - life and death, glory and judgment - the marriage feast, and the wrath of the Lamb.

There is next the dangerous condition of the lukewarm Christian. Through the deceitfulness of sin, through spiritual sloth or pride, through the allurements of the world, through the subtlety of Satan, a Christian falls into a careless condition, in which his spiritual perceptions, affections, and energies are blunted. Prayer becomes a form, and Christ mourns over a lukewarm Laodicean. The most subtle and dangerous temptation for such a one is to fancy that he is safe in his present condition; that he may safely remain in his present departure from his first love; that it is not absolutely necessary for him to go out and weep bitterly; to repent and to do the first works.

What reason has such a one to believe that he is a true disciple, seeing that perseverance is the test of true discipleship? Does he not remember that many received the Word with joy, and yet did not endure, but fell away? Why does Jesus command us to remember Lot’s wife, who was lost because her whole heart had not left Sodom, and she turned back? Do we not read of Demas, who, after being first a disciple, forsook the apostle, and became enamoured again of this present world? But I will change my voice; for I am speaking to the Lord’s people, beloved even during their faithlessness. Then tell me, Was it not better with you in the days of your first love? Was it not better with you when you rested on Christ Himself, when at the throne of God you poured out your heart, and the peaceful answer of God comforted you? Or what unfaithfulness have you found in God that you have forsaken Him? Or where is the bill of divorcement that God gave you, saying that He would no longer love and cherish you, and be your daily guide and blessing?

Return unto the Lord! When the soul awakes from its slumber and returns to the Saviour, a sweet and peaceful light rises within, truthful and trusty, and he beholds the goodness and faithfulness of the Lord. The past and the future are illumined; for Jesus is with him, the light of life. Then, as the apostle proceeds here, we call to remembrance the former days, and look forward to the coming of Christ. When we are brought back into the current of life (not while on the shore of worldliness and unbelief), we remember, even as we feel again, our first faith and joy, and the afflictions and tests we were then enabled to endure. We hear a voice saying, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals." And then the soul is able to praise God, who made the outgoings of the morning to rejoice.

We remember our first confession, "Thou art the Christ;" and the first salutation of the Saviour, "Blessed art thou." Jesus says again to us, "Feed my lambs," and "Follow thou Me." And then the end also appears approaching, Jesus Himself returning with His glorified saints. The believers in Judaea, who at first found favour with the people on account of the evident presence of the Spirit of God among them, soon became the object of persecution. Their faith was tested. In the death of Stephen, the death of James, the brother of John, the imprisonment of Peter, the whole congregation suffered, and had to endure a great fight of afflictions; they were made a gazing-stock; they became companions of them that suffered for the sake of Christ. Paul himself had been pre-eminently the prisoner of the Lord; before the whole world he bore imprisonment and reproach, because of his testimony. The apostle reminds them of the grace which had been given unto them to bear their cross, and to sacrifice ease, honour, and possessions for the sake of the gospel and the hope. It is to encourage them to persevere to the end, that after the seed time in

tears they may reap the harvest of joy.

Having thus reminded them in the tone of affectionate recognition of their first zeal, he concludes with the threefold exhortation: Cast not away your confidence; be patient; live by faith.

1. God hath given you in Jesus a joyous, child like confidence, that you can call Him Abba, and rest peacefully in the love of the Saviour. You trust Him, who is able to keep that which you have committed to Him, your all, unto that day. This confidence itself is the earnest of the future inheritance. Faith is the forerunner of sight. As you trust, so you will receive.

2. You have need of patience; this is the time of waiting, of watching, of conflict, of sorrow; many difficulties and temptations surround you. But learn to be patient. Impatience is the result of ignorance, but you know why and for whom you have to wait. It is the result of pride, but you are to learn of the meek One, who was lowly in heart. Impatience arises out of an unbelieving and desponding heart; but through the Scripture you obtain patience and comfort, and hope is kept alive. Impatience arises from under valuing the importance of the present; but you know that you are now doing the will of God, and that your present exercises of faith and your present sufferings are appointed by Him, who values and rewards them. The duties of our earthly life may often appear irksome and trifling; but as a faithful sentinel knows that his monotonous work is an act of obedience to him who has appointed him, and will release him at the right time; as dutiful children and pupils persevere with tasks which seem sometimes uninteresting and unimportant, exercising thereby faith in beloved parents and teachers, so will the Christian cherish patience and cheerfulness in fulfilling the Master’s will. The necessity, importance, and blessedness of patience are brought constantly before us by the Lord Himself and by His apostles. Jesus speaks of our bringing forth fruit with patience, and of our possessing our souls in patience during great trials and painful delays. From His heavenly throne He notices and commends the patience of Ephesus and Thyatira; and to Philadelphia He says, "Thou has kept the Word of my patience." The beloved disciple, who calls himself companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, exclaims twice in the book of Revelation, "Here is the patience of the saints." The apostle Paul associates patience with hope, with comfort of the Scriptures, with the God of patience and consolation, with meekness and long-suffering, with tribulation, of which it is to be the blessed result. In the epistle of James patience is represented as the fruit of faith’s trial, as that which perfects the Christian character, as the attitude of the believer who waits for the Saviour, as the exemplary quality of Job and the prophets.*(*Romans 5:3; Romans 15:4-5; James 1 and 5)

Quiet submission and persevering continuance in well-doing under difficulties and conflict is that will of God, according to which Christ’s members are to follow the Master in His humility and suffering. When Jesus comes, they who have thus done the will of the Father will bear away triumphantly the prize of their high calling, (Hebrews 10:36.)

3. Meanwhile ours is the life of faith. Jesus will come. As it is written in the prophet: "Yet a little while" - how very, very little!1 and He, whose name is the coming One, will come. Now the just live by faith; but if anyone draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.2(1The reference is toIsaiah 26:20, andHabakkuk 2:3-4. In the former passage, the LXX. translate a small momentμικρ■ν■σον■σον. Messiah was called by the Jews the coming One. (Matthew 11:3;Luke 7:19.) ComparePsalms 40:8; Psalms 118:26;Zechariah 9:9;Malachi 3:1;Daniel 7:13.2The first part of this sentence is quoted from the prophet Habakkuk. The addition is suggested to the apostle by

the somewhat difficult and obscure rendering of the LXX., When he draws back, my soul has no pleasure in him. The words added by the apostle, correcting the current translation, give a meaning in harmony with the scope of the exhortation. Thus we have in this latter clause, not so much a quotation asan adaptation of a well-knowntranslation. A similar view is given by Calvin and Hofmann.) To the prophet Habakkuk, the first and second coming of the Lord were still coincident. He waited for the advent of Jehovah to deliver Israel from the Chaldeans, and to manifest His glory. The ungodly were lifted up with pride and self-reliance; God's people cried in great anguish, How long? but in humility, in deep sorrow, in sincere heart-dealing with Jehovah, asking Him why He contended with His people, the godly Israelite held fast the promise; he trusted, and this was his only and his true life. The prophet and all the godly ones were sorely tried. They saw nothing but violence, iniquity, strife, and contention. "O Lord, how long shall I cry, and Thou wilt not hear!" Surely they had need of patience. And the Lord answered and com forted them by renewing the promise of His coming, and calling on His people to exercise faith, as the sole and decisive mark of the godly. "For the vision has a still future goal, and speaks of the last time without deceiving. Though it tarry, wait for it; He will surely come, the coming One; He will not tarry." Unbelief and sloth see delay, worldliness and pride mock, "Where is the promise of His coming?" But the just shall live by faith; he beholds in faith the Lord's advent. The sentence in Habakkuk is very concise, and the apostolic comment in two important epistles1 brings out the fullness of the original meaning. Who is the just? We first read in Scripture of righteousness in connection with Abraham's faith.2 Abraham is the father of the godly. Believers then are the just ones; and by faith they are just. And the life which we now live is by faith, even as the full salvation shall be given at the Lord's coming to them that believe.3(1 Romans 1:17;Galatians 3:11. 2Genesis 15:6.3In theGemara Makkotit is narrated that David summed up the 613 commandments of the Mosaic law in eleven (Psalm 15); Isaiah in six (Isaiah 33:15; Micah in three (Micah 6:8); but Habakkuk in one, "The just shall live by faith." (Delitzsch on Habakkuk, 1-53.) The author of this remark was surely not far from the kingdom of God. Another ancient Jewish writer combinesPsalms 118:19;Isaiah 26:2;Jeremiah 5:3; andHabakkuk 2:4.) And is not our position essentially the same, though one of much greater privilege? We are placed between the peaceful light of the cross of Christ and the glory and reward of the returning Saviour. This is historically the God-given position of Christendom, of all who have heard and of all who profess the gospel. Be it ours to believe and to hope; to look back in faith on the atonement; to look forward in hope to the glory. God's people do not look and turn back. He who draws back may appear to the eye of sense to be saving his life; but, as the Saviour often teaches us, whosoever will hate and lose his life for Christ's sake shall find and save it1 When Peter turns to look at John, the Master says emphatically, "Thou follow Me."2 Let us follow the Lord, for "God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ."3(1 Matthew 16:25;Luke 17:33; Luke 10:39;Mark 8:35; Mark 9:24;John 12:25. This was evidently a saying which the Lord repeated frequently.2John 21:20-23.31 Thessalonians 5:9.)

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CHAPTER X X X.

FAITH AND THINGS HOPED FOR AND UNSEEN.

Hebrews 11:1 THE pre-eminence of faith is kept in view throughout this whole epistle, which the writer himself describes as a word of exhortation. For this purpose the apostle unfolds the glory of the Lord Jesus as the great Mediator in the heavenly sanctuary, that the Hebrews may continue in the faith, considering the great Apostle and High Priest of our profession, drawing near in full confidence to the throne of grace, realizing the true, substantial blessings of the new covenant, and waiting for the promised return of their Lord. Unbelief was the reason why the Jews, with whom God was grieved, could not enter into rest: if we believe not, as Isaiah had testified, we cannot be established. The apostle warned the Hebrews by the most solemn and awful arguments from their own Scriptures against unbelief. But as he exhorts them most earnestly, so he hopes also in the exercise of deep affection that they belong not to them who draw back unto perdition, but that they are of the true disciples who believe to the saving of the soul.

Live then by faith; for only by faith is it possible for the just to live. The things hoped for and the things not seen, which are now made manifest in full perfection by the gospel of Christ, can only be realized by faith, even as it was by faith that all the godly, since the beginning of the world, lived and suffered, obeyed and conquered. In order to encourage, stimulate, and comfort them in the midst of trial and temptation, he brings before them in rapid but most vivid and comprehensive sketches the history of the fathers, whom they regarded with the profoundest reverence and affection, showing them that theirs also was the life of faith. What was their greatness, but that they were men of God? and what made them men of God, but that they believed God, and waited for the fulfillment of His promise? Faith was the characteristic feature of all the saints. It is the attitude of heart, without which there is no communion with God, and without which we cannot please Him. The apostle gives therefore the most comprehensive definition of faith, de scribing the radical and essential disposition of heart Godwards, in whatever dispensation men lived, both before the first advent and in the Church period. It consists at all times in a firm confidence of unseen and future realities.

There are things hoped for in the future, in eternity; there are things not seen, both past and present. The latter expression is more comprehensive than the former. The second advent, our resurrection and glory, are future things hoped for; God, as the creator and upholder of all things, and all spiritual truths and heavenly realities, belong to the unseen, of which faith alone can have assurance. The heart of man, although since the fall gravitating towards the things which are seen and which are present, is never satisfied with the visible and temporary, but cannot rest except in the spiritual and eternal. God of His great mercy hath revealed unto us the things of God; eternal and spiritual realities have been manifested by God’s Spirit. There is a divine revelation; the things which man’s reason cannot discern or his imagination and intuition discover, have been unveiled. God revealed Himself, He spoke unto the fathers, and His revelation contained always a promise

of future and never-ending blessings, as well as a manifestation of present spiritual and heavenly realities. The victory of the seed of the woman over the serpent was a future thing, the object of hope; the manifestation of Jehovah's holy love, combining mercy with judgment, was the manifestation of a present, though unseen, spiritual reality. The promise of the seed, in whom all nations are to be blessed, was a future thing; the assurance, "I am thy God, walk before Me," revealed a present unseen but much real blessedness. Now all communion with God was based upon the divine revelation of things hoped for, and things not seen.

How is this revelation received? What is the eye that sees, the organ that beholds and appropriates this gift? Faith is the eye that beholds the King in His beauty, and that sees the land that is afar off. Not man's intellect, not man's imagination, not man's conscience; all these become indeed most deeply, radically, and thoroughly the servants of faith; but that which discerns and beholds spiritual realities and appropriates them, that which beholds future blessings, and so grasps and cherishes them as to prefer them to things visible, and to make them the object and joy of life, is what Scripture calls faith.

Now faith appears at first sight a very simple thing; it is nothing else but receiving the Word of God. We know what it is to receive the word of a man, to believe statements, though strange and surpassing our experience, because we regard the character of him who makes them with respect and confidence. Faith in God's Word is receiving God's testimony. But then, remember, as God is greater than man, as God's Word is heaven-high above any human word, so the reception of this Word, the believing of this Word, is necessarily something quite different from the reception of any human word or testimony. As is the voice, so is the echo; as is the seal, so is the impression; as is the word, or revelation, so is the faith. The divine Word produces in the heart of man faith, which is divine in its nature and power. When God speaks, when God discloses to the soul the world of spiritual realities and of future blessings, this very word of His creates within the soul a new world of fear, shame, contrition, desire, reverence, longing, hope, trust, which no other word could call forth, perfectly unique in its character, as God's word is unique in its character. To assent to the Word of God is therefore to enter into a perfectly new life, a perfectly new mode and power of existence. Nothing but God's word could ever have called forth that which we call faith, and God's word, Spirit-given as it is, only when vitalized by the same Holy Ghost. Where then is the seat of faith? Not in the intellect, which sees the logical connection or the historic evidence; not in the imagination, which recognizes the beauty and organic symmetry, and reproduces the picture; not in the conscience, which testifies to the righteousness and truth of the revelation; but in a something which lies deeper than these, in which all these centre, and to which all these return. With the heart, as the Scripture teacheth, man believeth. There, whence are the issues of life, emotional, intellectual, moral, spiritual, in that secret place, to which God alone has access, God's word, as a seed, begets faith; God's word, as a light, kindles light, and the man becomes a believer. Believer describes the whole man. This is the characteristic and the power of the new life - we believe in God.

See then how mistaken those are who fancy faith to consist in the mere assent of the understanding to doctrines and facts, seen to be true on sufficiently evidenced authority. See how no man can give faith to another; how the mere reception by reason, or sentiment, or fancy, of clear and pathetic statements of gospel truth is not faith. Without desiring the things future, without turning in sorrow and self-condemnation to the unseen God - revealed without the heart clinging in

trust fullness to God the Saviour - there is no faith. God speaks to the heart of Jerusalem, and faith is the heart hearing and responding. In this faith, called forth by the Word of God, and brought forth by the influence of the Holy Ghost, there is from its very birth and commencement an element of certainty, conviction, light, which transcends the certainty of the senses or of the intellect. Human argumentations deal gene rally with words, abstractions, vessels of mere formal conceptions. God's Spirit reveals to us the things of God, and the things of God which are given to us; so that from the river which flows into our heart and lives, according to the promise of Jesus, we know with perfect certainty the eternal fountain of divine love, and the infinite ocean of endless blessedness, towards which we hasten. Where in the whole realm of thought and feeling is there anything to compare with the Christian's "I am persuaded that nothing can separate me from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus"? Hence he who believes says, I know; or he says, I believe, and am sure, that thou art the Christ. When God speaks to the soul, and the soul, giving up its own judgment and thoughts, receives in humility the testimony of God, faith stands in the power of God. The Spirit demonstrates, that is, shows as realities the things of God. Faith is the evidence, the clear and all-sufficient demonstration,1 of things not seen; and it is an assured confidence in the fulfillment of things hoped for; so much so that the power and comfort of the future is even now realized, though it doth not yet appear what we shall be: faith stedfastly anticipates the fulfillment and possesses the substance.2 Do not look upon assurance of faith, as it is called, as a subsequent addition to the original faith which first grasps the promise; all faith, and be it but as a grain of mustard seed, possesses the God-given certainty, trust, conviction, light. "O God, Thou art my God; I will put my trust in Thee." (1The apostle uses here a term which occurred in his day often in philosophy; the more so as the thing itself is wanting in all human metaphysics, proof, evidence, or demonstration which meets all objections and admits no doubt. Philosophy has no such demonstration of things invisible and unknown; it cannot give such certainty; the divine testimony brings with it such inward conviction; faith resting on divine testimony possesses such certainty. MENKEN,Homilien überHeb. 11.

Human reasoning loves to give itself the appearance of perfect originality, and every new metaphysical system appears with some degree of assumption of having arisen out of the depths of a human mind and of being built up by necessary laws of thought. Perhaps nothing so fascinates and entangles young minds as this promise, "Ye shall be as God, knowing good and evil." Hamann refers to this when he asks: Is your whole human reasoning anything else but tradition? and does it require much to trace the succession of your bare and twice-dead opinions to the root of your genealogical tree?)

(2The expression■π■στασι■, substance, is used (1) in the sense of essence (Hebrews 1:3), and (2) in the sense of confidence. (Hebrews 3:14; also2 Corinthians 9:4; 2 Corinthians 11:17.) Taken in the latter sense, the meaning of the passage would be, that faith is a standing, confiding expectation of future things, which as future are objects of hope. But the expression seems also to suggest the other aspect of faith, as realizing and possessing, even in the present, the blessings and powers of the future. The expression■λ■γχο■teaches that faith itself is to the believer a sure argument of the reality of those things which cannot be seen, or which cannot otherwise be discerned. An interesting passage is quoted by Delitzsch from Dante,Paradise, 24: on faith, a paraphrase ofHebrews 11:1. His words, in reply to the question how he obtained faith, are also memorable: "The flood, I answered, from the Spirit of God rained down upon the ancient bond and

new. Here is the reasoning that convinceth me so feelingly; each argument beside seems blunt and forceless in comparison.")

Thus all the children of God lived by faith. They knew God's character; they believed His mighty works in creation; they rejoiced in His presence; they realized the future blessings He promised. Israel beheld God, the invisible, and they waited for the Messiah. This was their whole life. This is the explanation of their self-denial, courage, patience. Though the present and actual condition was full of reproach and suffering, yet they knew God was theirs, and the future glory and inheritance remained secure. What shall we say of our father Abraham, and of his children? What else but that they were believers, receiving the promises by faith, even as by faith they realized the ever-present Jehovah? And just as the first mention of priesthood in Scripture is not in connection with the Levitical successional priesthood, but with Melchisedec, type of the Son of God, the true, real, personal Priest, so the word "righteousness," it occurs for the first time in the book of Genesis, as the apostle Paul notices exultingly, not in connection with law and works, but with grace and faith. Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness, and this golden sentence shines forth again in the pregnant declaration of the prophet Habakkuk, "The just shall live by faith;" and again in the fullness of the Pentecostal light Habakkuk's word is illumined in the epistles to the Romans and to the Galatians, and in our chapter, where the whole Old Testament history is described as the history of men who lived by faith, confidently expecting things hoped for, and fully assured of the reality of things unseen. But if the glory of the old covenant was great, much greater is the glory of the new dispensation. Greater and better things were reserved for us. Israel's future was the advent of Messiah, the descent of Jehovah - the coming of their king David, to give glory to Israel and light to the Gentiles; and Israel's unseen things were the salvation truths manifested in type and prophecy, in God's words and dealings. But contrast with this our position. Our future, though comprehending Israel's, contains new and peculiar elements. Messiah's first advent is past. Accomplished is His exodus at Jerusalem,* finished His work in Golgotha; as Son of man He is now enthroned at the Father's right hand; and we expect Him now to return to receive His bride, that we may be glorified together with Him. To us it is said, "Go ye forth to meet the Bride groom;" to us it is announced, "This same Jesus shall so come again in the clouds of heaven." Now that the incarnation and the death and ascension of the Son of God have been accomplished, how much brighter is our hope! how much clearer and more blessed are the things hoped for, and the things not seen! For if, like Stephen, dead to the world and filled with the love of Christ, we look stedfastly towards heaven, we see the glory of God, and Jesus at the right hand of the Father. This was the great object of our epistle, to reveal the things not seen, the glory and grace of the heavenly sanctuary. The throne of grace, the blood of Christ, the intercession of the Saviour, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, are the things unseen; Christ's coming again, and we manifest with Him in glory, things hoped for. (*Luke 9:31.)

It is clear why in this epistle the apostle gives such a general and comprehensive view of faith. The question of justification and sanctification is not before him. Christ the Priest, heaven the holy of holies, believers for ever perfected in Jesus, this is the all-important point towards which all his arguments tend; hence faith, and faith in its most general or root-sense, as beholding unseen and future things, is the great and constant theme of his exhortation.

We also need the faith explained in the epistles to the Romans and Galatians, to be deepened and quickened as well as tested by the faith explained in this epistle. The sinner, first brought to a

knowledge of his guilt and misery, beholds the Lamb of God; through faith in His blood he is justified and filled with joy and peace, and this by the power of the Holy Ghost. This is indeed the very centre of faith, and that to our very last breath. But if we are really to continue in communion with God, to obey and to suffer, to work and to conquer, we must learn also the circumference of faith, beholding the things which are unseen and eternal: through Jesus we believe in God, we have our citizenship in heaven.

Faith is what Jesus sought in Israel; and when the Son of man cometh again He asks, Shall He find faith on the earth? How often did Jesus says, "Go in peace, thy faith hath saved thee!" Only believe! is His word of consolation as well as rebuke. And how harmonious is the testimony of the apostles. Peter cannot leave Jesus, because he believes and is sure that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God; faith in the name of Jesus was what he preached in Jerusalem. "Whosoever believeth in Him shall receive re mission of sins," is his message when he opens the door to the Gentiles in the house of Cornelius. Faith was also the result of his preaching, as he writes, "Whom having not seen, ye love; in whom, though now ye see Him not, yet believing, ye rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory." In like manner John, the beloved disciple. Not even the apostle Paul gave a fuller and deeper testimony to the pre-eminence of faith. True, he was called to point out the relation between faith and works, law and gospel, the dispensation of Moses, and the dispensation of the Spirit, and hence for teaching and convincing men, the Jews, the self-righteous, the natural man in general, we must always go to the Pauline epistles. But the nature, essence, power, and victory of faith are nowhere described with such clearness and energy as in the writings of John. Let me remind you of a few of his golden words: "To as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God." "Whosoever believeth that Jesus is the Christ is born of God." Faith is here represented as the gift of God, inseparably connected with the new birth and divine Sonship. Think again of the many declarations in his gospel in which the Lord connects faith with the (present and immediate) possession of eternal life.1 Then again the indwelling of God in us and our indwelling in God, and the witness of the Spirit, are connected with faith,2 Again, if we believe in Jesus, the Lord says, rivers of living water shall flow out of us, or the Spirit of God shall be given to us abundantly, so that, filled with the Holy Ghost, our words, influence, and works will be like fertilizing streams. And in like manner, if we believe, we shall do the same works which Christ did, and greater works, because the glorified Son of man is now with the Father.3 Again, faith is described as the victory which overcometh the world. (1John 3:16; John 5:24; John 11:25.21 John 4:15; 1 John 5:10.3John 7:38; John 14:12.)

We see that Scripture speaks thus of faith in a very deep and comprehensive manner, and that it is indeed a wonderful, mysterious, powerful grace given of God. Inseparably connected with eternal life, the indwelling of God, the witness of the Spirit, the victory over the world, and the imitation of Christ. Such a view may at first discourage anxious and seeking souls. Let them remember that it is their need and guilt, and nothing else, to which the words of the Lord Jesus and His call are addressed. Have we faith? We say, we need a stronger degree of faith. Yet Jesus says, when the disciples ask Him to increase their faith, "If ye had faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye should say to this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea, and it should be done."1 We say that we have weak faith, because we are yet babes in knowledge, and have

discovered yet little of the treasures of divine revelation; but Jesus says, "Have faith in God."2 The most elementary truth is sufficient. Realize God’s power and love. We need not so much deeper knowledge, as faith in the simplest truths. We say that we have not the faith of some of God’s eminent servants, yet Jesus says, "Whosoever" (not merely an apostle or prophet) "shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; and shall not doubt in his heart, but shall believe that those things which he saith shall come to pass; he shall have whatsoever he saith.3 But let us remember for our comfort the great distinction between a dead or vain faith, and weak or little faith. The Lord rebukes the fearfulness and doubting of sincere disciples, yet He rebukes also the storm, and delivers His people from all their fears.4 True faith takes hold of the divine Word; it is weak or strong, great or small, as it receives, keeps, and uses the Word of God. Abraham staggered not at the word of promise through unbelief, though it was a word most difficult, nay, impossible, for reason to receive, and thus Abraham was strong in faith. The source of weak faith is in the ignorance and slowness of the heart in reference to the divine testimony. The strength of faith is the humility of a helpless and broken heart cleaving to the promise. Worm Jacob becomes Israel; and a poor Syrophenician woman is transplanted "from the utmost corner of the land" to the foremost place by the Master’s word, "O woman, great is thy faith!" (1 Luke 17:6.2 Mark 11:22.3 Mark 11:23.4Matthew 8:24; Matthew 14:31.)

There was one who, next to the apostles, was perhaps the greatest gift of God to the Church, whom we all admire for his faith. And yet Martin Luther was wont to say, "Oh, if I had faith! If I could only believe that God is the Creator! If I could only say in faith, Our Father! "And often he confessed, that unless every day he read the Scriptures, and meditated on Christ, and repeated the Creed, and prayed the Psalms, his heart became dead and cold, full of dark and hard thoughts of God, and of dreary and tormenting doubts and fears. Let us dwell then on Christ; let us consider Him in stedfast, diligent, frequent meditation; let the Word of Christ dwell richly in our hearts, minds, and homes. Let us connect the world of unseen and future realities with our walk and conduct, with our daily duties and trials. Let the life which we now live in the flesh - our present earthly life, with its work and trouble - be a life of faith. Things hoped for, Jerusalem the golden, and the constant presence of the Prince; things not seen, the throne of God and the great High Priest, the spiritual blessings in heavenly places - think of these things in your hearts, and with full purpose of will, all ye who sit by Babel’s streams, with your harps on the willows; and though strangers and pilgrims, you will be able to sing the song of faith, you will go on from strength to strength.

31 - Heb_11:3

CHAPTER X X X I.

FAITH IN GOD THE CREATOR.

Hebrews 11:3.

"NOW abideth faith, hope, love, these three." The apostle Paul has described the nature and power of these three fundamental, abiding, and inseparable gifts of grace in three chapters, which shine forth as bright stars in the firmament of Scripture.

Writing to the Corinthians, who were enriched in all utterance and in all knowledge, but who stood in danger of departing from the simplicity which is in Christ Jesus, and of falling into discord and lukewarmness, he showed the more excellent way by describing the pre-eminence, characteristics, and eternity of love in a hymn which proceeded from his inmost experience,1 and which contains a portraiture of his own individuality.2(1Notice the form of this chapter in the first person.21 Cor. 13.)

Again in the epistle to the Romans (chap. 8), after having shown the position of the believer justified before God, and separated from sin by the death of Christ, he shows how, in the midst of afflictions, and in the conflict with sin and the flesh, the believer is upheld by hope; from the high tower of hope, resting upon the sure foundation of faith, he beholds the manifestation of the sons of God, the redemption of our body, the regeneration of the whole creation, and he is persuaded that nothing shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus. And in our chapter the same apostle brings before us the power of faith in a series of examples, which comprise the whole history of revelation from the beginning to the first advent. This wonderful exposition of the most fundamental of the fundamental graces stands before our eyes and hearts like a triumphal arch commemorating the beauty and the victory of faith. Faith, hope, love; these three inseparable gifts of the grace of God are brought before us continually in Scripture, and the simplest experience of the Christian recognizes their connection, as well as their relative position.

Faith comes first; for only when we believe the love of God, wherewith He loved us, we love Him and the brethren in Him. Only when we trust in Jesus we hope to see Him again. God speaks, God gives, the grace of God brings to us salvation. Since God begins, faith must needs be our beginning. "Salvation is of the Lord;" this itself implies the pre-eminence of faith. Jesus is the Christ; this itself implies that only by trusting in Him can we be brought nigh to God. We have seen how the apostle John, who dwells so fully on the love of God towards us and the God-given love of believers towards God, points out the root-nature of faith. For this purpose was his gospel written, that we may believe, and believing, have eternal life, and know that we have life. For this purpose were his epistles written, that we who believe may live and walk in love; for God is love. And for this purpose was the book of Revelation given by the Lord Jesus to the apostle, that believing and loving we may hope for the Bridegroom’s advent, to receive us unto Himself. Blessed is he who, believing in Jesus, can say, "Father;" who, loving the Father and the brethren, can say, "Our

Father;" who, hoping for the inheritance above, can say, "Our Father, which art in heaven."

Things unseen are not doubtful to faith; but faith is the evidence, the clear and sure beholding of the things of God, shown or demonstrated by the Holy Ghost. Things future are not vague and shadowy, for faith gives them substance; so that they influence, gladden, and uphold us in our earthly life. Not as the world giveth gives God unto us. Our faith is not a pale and uncertain light; it is not inferior to the knowledge of reason, or memory, or the senses; it is light, conviction, substance. We have the things we believe, and which God has freely given to us.

Now in illustrating the power of faith, the apostle begins with Abel and ends with the Maccabees. Israel's history commences, strictly speaking, with Abraham; but as Israel was chosen in Christ, and for the salvation of all nations, so the beginning of Israel's history is, more strictly speaking, from the very first believer in the Messiah. Jesus says, "Before Abraham was, I am;" and thus we may say, Before Abraham was, were Abraham's children, the seed of faith; so that the father of the faithful will rejoice, not merely over all the Gentiles who believe in the promised and now manifested Redeemer, but shall behold Abel and Enoch and Noah, and all the saints of the pre-Abrahamic period, numbered among his children. Yet the distinctness, and the peculiar position of Israel in the kingdom, remains an undoubted fact revealed in Scripture.

We may wonder why the list of believers does not commence with Adam. But the reason is obvious. Scripture is inspired, both in its narrative and in its silence. Moses does not mention Adam's faith in the promise, and his return to the favour and love of God. He implies it; and the reason of his not stating it fully is, because throughout the whole Scripture Adam is brought before us, not as an individual, but as the representative, the federal head of humanity, in whom we stood, in whom we fell, through whose disobedience sin and death came upon all. This is the sad but fundamental truth which we are to remember in connection with Adam. From him we are to look to Christ, the incarnate Son of God, as to the second Adam, our Righteousness and our Life. We have no doubt that Adam and Eve believed to the saving of their souls. But Adam's typical and federal character is so important that all other aspects are thrown into the shade. But the apostle may have another reason. We inherit from Adam unbelief, distrust of God's Word, suspicion of His kind and loving purposes, the tendency to ask, Is it so? when God says it is so; and to say, I will not go, when God commands to go. The Father, the author of faith, is not Adam, but the Lord Jesus. Hence is it more appropriate and instructive to begin the series of believers not with Adam. And yet, as faith in God the Creator is mentioned before Abel's faith, there seems an allusion to Adam before the fall. As the Creator, God revealed Himself to our first parents. All knowledge possessed by creatures of creation is necessarily by faith in God's revelation. The very angels, who rejoiced when they beheld the six days work, were not witnesses of the first creation of heaven and earth, since they themselves were called out of non-existence into being. They also by faith understand that God created all things. And this declaration of the apostle, as it remains true in every period of history, is more especially important in our day.

Reason cannot ascend from nature to nature's God. The most comprehensive observation of things seen (that is phenomena), of which we can take cognizance, and the most minute analysis of things to the most remote and simple elements, leave the question of creation or the origin of things perfectly untouched and unapproached. The step from matter to mind, from things which appear to that which is the cause, spring, origin of all, is one which reason cannot take. God

reveals it; we believe.

Ancient mythologies and philosophy, as well as modern science and speculation, cannot rise to the conception of the original, free and infinite cause of all things. It cannot get beyond some primeval material substratum of elementary atoms, and by tracing developments from a lower to a higher form of existence, only removes by millions and billions of years the question which lies dormant in every child’s mind: Who made all things?

Scripture announces in sublime simplicity: "In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth."1 Every house is built by someone; but He that built all things is God.2 By faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the Word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear; that the visible world did not arise out of phenomenal matter. God created by His Word (as we read ten times, "And God said") all things, from the highest to the lowest. He created in the beginning, and all things which have a beginning form the world or creature. To conceive of the world as without beginning is to deify it; for in and before the beginning is only God, the Father, the Word, or the Son, or the Eternal Wisdom,3 and the Holy Ghost.4 God created all things for His glory; the self-manifestation of God in the redeemed Church, of which Christ is Head, is the purpose which He purposed in Himself. (1 Genesis 1:1.2Hebrews 3:4.3 John 1:1;Colossians 1:18;Revelation 3:14;Proverbs 8:14.4Genesis 1:2.) The fundamental truth of creation is unfolded in Scripture with increasing light and fullness, and as our insight into the counsel of God is enlarged, our faith takes firmer and deeper hold of this primary revelation of God’s sovereignty, life, goodness, wisdom, power, and love. The doctrines of the Trinity, of man’s relation to God, to angels, to the world, of redemption, of the first and second advent, of the future glory, are all most intimately connected with the doctrine of creation; so that here is not only the first lesson which we teach our children, but the ultimate and highest theme of adoration.1 The apostle declares in our passage that the very first statement of Scripture history can only be grasped by faith. By faith we understand,2 not merely that God created the world, but that He created the world by His word;3 for as we read in Genesis, every new species was called into existence by the creative Word of God. And this view, which faith receives, it receives in order to exclude4 the hypothesis into which all attempts of reason to account for the origin of the world resolve themselves; viz., the things visible developed out of things phenomenal. (1Revelation 4:11;2νοο■μ■ν(compareMatthew 15:17) to understand the reason and method.3The apostle uses the expression■■ματι, which of course is a different expression from the personalλ■γο■. But what else can be the meaning of him who, in this same epistle (1:3), declared that God made the worlds by His Son? Though the apostle Paul does not use the wordλ■γο■, he teaches the same truth as John (John 1:3) in his epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians.4■■■τ■μ■) By faith, through revelation, we understand this. It is not by our own reason or observation that we ascend to this knowledge. It is one of those "things not seen," for the perception of which faith only is the organ, and the evidence of which is only the testimony of God apprehended by a believing mind.

Even Christians take erroneous and superficial views of this fact. They say, only a fool can deny that the world must have had a Creator. They think that the beautiful design - argument must occur to every rational mind, and have force with every rational mind. If we look at a watch and its ingenious mechanism, we never doubt that an intelligent mind contrived and a skilful hand executed the design. Can this universe, in its marvellous and stupendous structure, and with its complicated and harmonious laws, be the result of chance, or its own cause?

Now this argument is very forcible to those whom Scripture has taught that God created. No heathen mind ascends thus from things seen to the infinite, self-existent Creator. We, whom revelation has lifted to the height of faith, are able to reach down arguments like ladders to those in the valley; but not by such ladders did we ourselves ascend. By faith, and through God's word, God is known as Creator.

God did not leave man to find Him from creation, to infer His existence from His works.* He revealed Himself, and men, knowing God, did not glorify Him as God, neither were thankful. Thus from their original knowledge of God, they by their own sin fell into idolatry; and one of the great results of this apostasy is the ignorance of man, of the most refined and gifted nations, of the most subtle and powerful intellects, of God as the Creator of the world. (*Compare my remarks on the necessity of the Spirit's revelation in "Christ Crucified. Lectures on 1 Cor. 2." As Pascal observed: "Scripture assures us, that in every instance, when the beauty of creation manifests its Author, it is not from the simple contemplation of natural objects, but owing to a divine illumination, which disposes the heart aright." We speak of man's unassisted reason, but it never was unassisted. The expression is correct only in a relative and limited sense. There is not merely the action of the Holy Ghost on the heart and conscience, there are not merely the traces of our original condition, but there was the primeval revelation, which left distinct marks in the traditions of antiquity, (p. 105.)

Hamann says: "To my mind, 'natural religion' is a perfect nonentity, the same as natural (self-originated) language. Unbelief is the oldest and strongest, and, next to superstition, the only 'natural religion.'")

Now it may be said there are many people who do not believe in the Scriptures or in Jesus, and who yet believe that God created the world. To this my answer is twofold. First, Where did they obtain this knowledge? Reason often adopts the teachings of Scripture, and then, like a conjuror, pretends to have brought them out without assistance, and out of an empty receptacle. All the philosophy of man could never have written the first verse of Genesis. But reason and science will ultimately acknowledge the first chapter of Genesis to be a perfect revelation of truth. But my second answer is more important, though sad. What is this belief worth, this rational, intellectual belief, that God is the Creator - a belief independent of Scripture, and independent of the God of salvation revealed in Christ Jesus? Soon - thus the history of human thought shows us - this belief vanishes, either before the lofty and alluring speculations of Pantheism, or the powerful and fascinating science of materialism.

We find it difficult to look from earth, from things visible, from second causes, to heaven, to spiritual and eternal realities, to the Lord, from whom cometh every good and perfect gift. And as civilization advances, as men who have not the love of God in their hearts become more fully acquainted with the laws of nature, the tendency to materialism becomes stronger; and, resting satisfied with the phenomenal and the secondary causes and powers, men fail to rise above the inanimate and visible unto the Fatherly heart in heaven, whose omnipotent love and wisdom day by day, hour by hour, cherishes, rules, and sustains all things.

Let me remind you of Israel's, of the Christian's or Church-faith. For as the Israelite believed in God, and waited for the advent of Messiah, so the Christian believes in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We believe that God is; for He has spoken to us, He has loved us, He has redeemed us. He was Abraham’s guest and guide, his sure portion, and exceeding great reward. He brought Israel out of Egypt. He spoke unto the fathers as unto His chosen friends. Jehovah reveals to us, that He is the Lord, the Creator of heaven and of earth; that He made all things by the word of His power. He shows us His works; He points out their vastness, their grandeur, their beauty, their joyousness. He bids us lift up our eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things. When we murmur against Him, and question the wisdom of His impenetrable dealings, He asks us, like Job, "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth, when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?" We adore in humility, we behold God’s sovereignty, and we say, It is the Lord; let Him do what seemeth good in His sight. He shows us His wisdom, His power, His goodness in creation. When we are tempted to trust in the creature, to swerve from obedience to God’s command, and to be anxious about the future, He explains to us creation - the heavens above; the sun, with its genial and joyous light; the mountains and rocks in their strength; the beneficent rain and snow which come down to earth; the mysterious seed, which brings forth fruit, as symbols of His own grace, love, faithfulness, of spiritual realities given to His people. He reveals to us that all things were made by His Son, and for Him, who is appointed Heir of all things; that not atoms, or an original matter, but Christ, is the beginning of creation, in whom all His counsel stood before Him from all eternity. And He assures us that He will make "new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness." And Israel responds: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth." And the Church responds: "I believe in God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, maker of heaven and earth." Israel responds: "By the word of the Lord were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of His mouth." And the Church confesses: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. . . . All things were made by Him."

Israel replies: "What have I to do any more with idols?" "Cursed is he who trusteth in the arm of flesh." And the Church replies, "Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. . . . The world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever." Israel says: "Let the whole earth be filled with His glory;" "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. The Church says: "He shall come to be glorified in His saints, and to be admired in all them that believe, and to take to Himself the kingdom, and we shall reign with Him." Israel knows the Creator of heaven and earth as the giver of the new life, of repentance, and faith. "Turn me, and I shall be turned;" "Create in me a pure heart;" "Breathe, O Spirit, upon these slain." The Church says: "God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." "Of His own will begat He us by the word of truth, that we might be the first-fruits of His creatures."

God is the Creator; this is the first note struck on the lyre of Revelation, with which all other strains are in harmony. It sounds throughout the whole anthem. In Christ we hear the full melody. In Him we behold both the eternal counsel of redemption, and the final consummation in glory.

He who made all things by His word has by the self-same word created us anew unto eternal glory. His promises, His sayings, are creative words, spirit and life. That same Almighty Father, by Christ and through the Spirit, will make new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. God is the Creator; with Him all things are possible. He calleth unto non-existent things, and they are; He doeth all in Christ, and for His glory.

Such are the apparently simple but inexhaustible and ever-blessed revelation-truths for the sinner seeking salvation, for the Christian in affliction, in temptation; for the day of warfare, the night of sorrow, the hour of death.

God is the Creator. We say to every human being: You are not your own; Christ is the Head of every man; return unto the Lord. Glorify God with your body and spirit, which are His. And if he says, "I cannot," we answer: God is the Creator. With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible. He can create a new heart, and put His Spirit within you. If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature. And to the doubting, afflicted, perplexed believer we say: God is the Creator. "Thus saith the Lord that created thee, O Jacob, and He that formed thee, O Israel, Fear not. Why sayest thou, O Jacob, and speakest, O Israel, My way is hid from the Lord, and my judgment is passed over from my God? Hast thou not known? hast thou not heard, that the everlasting God, the Lord, the Creator of the ends of the earth, fainteth not, neither is weary? there is no searching of His understanding." And again: "Behold the fowls of the air. Consider the lilies of the field. Are ye not much better than they?" "Shall not God much more feed and clothe you, O ye of little faith?" And again, God has made and upheld all things great and small. The very hairs of your head are numbered. He that made the heart, shall He not knew all its fears and its sorrows! Commit the keeping of your souls to Him in well-doing, as unto a faithful Creator. And to the backslider, the lukewarm and world- loving, we say: Hast thou forgotten God, the Creator? and trustest and lovest and seekest thou the creature more than the Lord, putting thy trust and delight in uncertain riches? To the Laodicean, Christ speaks, as the beginning of the creation of God. And to the dying, in his faintness, we say: God is the Creator; and we know that if this our earthly tent be taken to pieces, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

Now may the eternal and the omnipotent, the faithful and all-wise Creator, who by the precious blood of Christ His Son has redeemed us, and by the power of the Holy Ghost through the Word has renewed us and grafted us into the living Vine, keep us through faith unto the glory and reward of the inheritance at the appearing of our blessed Lord Jesus Christ. "Of Him, and through Him, and to Him, are all things: to whom be glory forever. Amen."

32 - Heb_11:4-7

CHAPTER X X X I I.

ABEL, ENOCH, NOAH.

Hebrews 11:4-7.

ISRAEL was pre-eminently to be an historical people.1 They were always exhorted to remember and to consider their history. It was their solemn duty to cherish the memory of the past. The remembrance of the wonderful dealings of God was to be perpetuated from generation to generation. The Jewish nation lived in the remembrance of its early history. The annual festivals, the constantly-recurring sabbath-days, the very names of God, kept the fundamental facts of their marvellous history before their minds, and impressed them on their hearts. The children were encouraged to ask questions both in reference to memorial services and to memorial stones and institutions.2 "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations: ask thy father, and he will shew thee; thy elders, and they will tell thee."3 The whole book of Deuteronomy is a review of the past. Many psalms contain a synopsis of Jewish history from the days of Abraham to the election of David, whom the Lord took from the sheep-folds, and made king over Israel. Such psalms are either didactic in form, and inscribed Maschil, or lyrical songs of praise, extolling the ever-enduring mercy of the Lord. All the prophets were filled with a vivid and constant consciousness of Israel's past history. In their addresses to the people, and in their communion with God, the memory of Jehovah's past dealings with Israel is ever with them.4 Take for instance the sublime prayer of Daniel.5 He refers to the books of Moses and the prophecy of Jeremiah; but how full of life and concrete reality is the Scripture to him! He is himself in the current of divine history. Here all is of God, and supernatural; and yet here all is perfect liberty, and out of the inmost depths of the heart gush forth the confessions and ardent, importunate petitions of the loving patriot. (1The difference in this respect between Israel and the other nations of antiquity is very marked. Bunsen says, "Historical writing was born in Israel." Niebuhr remarks that "the Old Testament is the only exception to the general patriotic untruthfulness of the other nations. It never disguises or passes over the reverses of the people of which it treats. Its truthfulness is the highest in historical literature. . . . The Old Testament is also the most accurate of all historical sources." It should be added that the Old Testament not merely records faithfully all calamities and defeats which Israel had to suffer, but where is there a national record which narrates and censures the national sins with such unsparing severity, which is thoroughly free from national conceit and self-righteousness, which lays the axe at the root of all pride and self-exaltation? I do not know any history except this one which announces on every page, We are a stiff-necked and rebellious people; and it is only owing to divine mercy and long-suffering that we are preserved.2 Exodus 12:26;Genesis 18:19;Joshua 4:6-7; 3 Deuteronomy 32:7.4Jos. 23, 24;1 Samuel 12:6.5Dan. 9.) To remember the past, and to wait for the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord, was the attitude of God's children; thus Malachi concludes by pointing back to God's servant Moses on mount Horeb, and by pointing forwards to Elijah preparing the advent of Jehovah. For this is

Israel’s peculiarity, that the past is connected with a great and glorious future; that memory and hope dwell together in unity; that the older days are viewed not with regret but with the joyous anticipation of a coming era, fulfilling all the promise given in the morning of their history.

It is natural that this historical character of the Jewish mind should manifest itself most fully during a period of transition and crisis. The advent of the Lord was the turning-point in Israel’s history. Hence the gospel of Matthew begins with a genealogical summary of Jewish history from Abraham to David, from David to the Babylonish captivity, and from the exile to Mary, the mother of our Lord. Hence the historical character of the songs of Zechariah, of Mary, and of aged Simeon. After the death and resurrection of the Lord, the Jewish nation was still further tested by having the gospel preached unto them. And as the future development of Israel depended upon their acceptance or rejection of the divine message, we notice in the apostolic preaching always a reference to their past history and a solemn declaration that Israel had now arrived at the most important and awful crisis. The apostles recapitulated the past history of Israel, and showed the coming, the death, and resurrection of Jesus to be the culminating events of the dealings of God with the chosen nation. All the addresses of the apostles Peter and Paul, recorded in the book of Acts, are historical and not doctrinal. The living God, who had brought Israel up to this point, was now sending the gospel of His Son Jesus to bless them, in turning away every one of them from his iniquities."*(*It is difficult for us fully to realize the historical and national character of the apostolic preaching to Israel. In the new covenant dispensation our thoughts are directed chiefly to truth in its eternal aspect. We meditate on the love of God, the grace of the Saviour, the indwelling of the Spirit, on the soul’s relation to Christ, and on our union with Him in the coming glory. This is right, and yet there is a danger of substituting an abstract and doctrinal method for the concrete and historical method of Scripture, according to which the remembrance of Jesus, and the expectation of His return and kingdom, form the main elements of Christian teaching and life.) The apostles called upon the nation to believe in Him of whom all their prophets had testified, in whom the covenant was made with Abraham, and who was now in heaven waiting for the restitution of all things. It was the burning question of the day; the turning-point in Israel’s history. Hence we can understand the speech of Stephen. In the face of death, and beholding by faith the glory of God, so that even to his enemies his countenance appeared irradiated by a heavenly beauty, Stephen addresses the rulers of the nation; and in this most solemn moment, and in the plenitude of the spirit, what is his address? He surveys the Jewish history. Calmly, deliberately, and with great fullness, he narrates the story of Abraham’s call, and of Joseph’s sufferings and exaltation, and of the youth of Moses, his flight into Midian, and of Israel’s exodus and wanderings in the wilderness, and of David and Solomon. This is not the place to explain his selection of events and characters and the scope of his address; the only point of importance is the fact that Stephen at such a time dwelt on the past history of Israel; he speaks not of doctrines, but of history, facts, and the past dealings of God with the nation. How strong, how vivid, how ever-present must that past have been to the believers of the apostolic age! In our chapter the past history of Israel is brought before us in a similar manner. The universal character of God’s chosen people, and of the Scripture which records their history, is seen in many ways; and perhaps the most obvious is the fact, that as its prophecy comprehends all nations, so its history begins not with Abraham, but with Noah and with Adam; thus showing from the outset that it is a revelation for mankind, and of the dealings of God with man, and concerning the whole race. It is on account of this connection of Israel with the whole race that Jesus charges Jerusalem with all the righteous bloodshed upon the earth, from

the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias.1 And as the genealogy of our blessed Lord is traced not merely to Abraham, but to Adam, so is the history of Abraham's seed traced to the pre-Abrahamic believers.2(1Matthew 23:35.2This portion of the book of Genesis must have appeared in a new light to the Jews, as the gospel in its universal character and world-wide application became dear to them. The references of our Lord to this section of the Word are very numerous; to the institution of marriage in Paradise, to Cain and Abel, to Noah, to the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, to Lot's wife. Again the patriarchal history appeared in a new light to the apostle Paul, as the history of our fathers, before the law came as a parenthesis and schoolmaster.) In this remarkable history, extending over so many centuries, there is a wonderful unity. It records God's dealings with man; and as God is unchangeable, and the human heart the same in every age, this history speaks to all times and nations; it is the most human history, as well as the most divine. This peculiarity of Scripture has been acknowledged by poets and philosophers; it has been felt by all nations and ages. There is no history, there are no characters with which the world has become so familiar, which have so wrought themselves into the very consciousness and heart of mankind. But the Christian regards this characteristic from a higher point. "To the spiritually-minded, time and place are not. The Word of God is therefore, when spiritually apprehended, no history of successive generations having reference to various countries and divers persons. It becomes a living whole - a picture of the dealings of God with man; of the great contest between good and evil; of the victory over evil by men in whom Christ dwells, and who hold communion with God."

Before the flood and the Abrahamic covenant God had a people on earth who lived by faith. Abel the first martyr, Enoch the seventh from Adam, and Noah the preacher of righteousness, are the three witnesses of this period whose lives are recorded. In Abel we behold faith's accepted sacrifice and worship; in Enoch faith's walk and triumphant ascension; in Noah faith's reverent, persevering obedience, and testimony. It is only with reference to this central grace of faith that we have here to consider these three characters. The first believer who is brought before us in this gallery of God's saints is Abel, the shepherd, beloved of God; but hated without cause for righteousness sake by his brother. He is a type of the Lord Jesus, the great Shepherd of the sheep, whom His brethren hated, because - and not merely, although - there was no guile in Him. Jesus calls him "righteous Abel," and speaks of him as the first martyr, whose blood was shed in witness of God's truth. There is no figure in sacred Scripture so vividly impressed on our imagination from childhood. On the thresh old of history we behold this silent, believing martyr. There is scarcely any incident here of man's doing, and yet it is full of instruction, full of testimony glorifying God. He brought a sacrifice, he worshipped, he was accepted, he died, and this by faith.

He was the first of the human family who tasted death. Fallen in Adam, he died; through Cain's sin he suffered death; but through faith in the sin-offering he overcame death. The first man, who had to descend into the grave, was carried through it on the arms of redeeming-love. The first son of Adam, who had to experience the divine sentence pronounced against sin, was to angels, and, may I say, to the Son of God Himself, a type of the great sacrifice of divine love to be fulfilled in the appointed time. Faith from the first rested in the Lamb of God. Between the revelation of God, the Creator, to Adam, and the first witness and example of faith, Abel, lies a catastrophe, a change, important, mysterious, and awful, which we can never understand, though in the sweet light of revelation, we can now think of it without despair. It is the fall of man, the entrance of sin and death

into the world of man. Hence man cannot approach, worship, love and serve God without sacrifice. The Creator, the paternal and bountiful Lord, is also the Governor and Lawgiver; in holiness is His reign, and in justice and truth stands His kingdom. God Himself provided the remedy, and revealed the mediation. The eternal thought of the Three-One, love manifested in mercy through a Substitute, was declared to man before he was banished from Paradise. God gave the promise. God also gave the type of righteousness through the Substitute's death, when He clothed our fallen and guilty parents. The Lord covered them with the robe of righteousness. Abel, believing the word, approached God through the better sacrifice. In the book of Genesis we are simply told the facts, that "Abel brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering." Here we have the explanation of the fact. What caused Abel to bring his offering? what else but faith? He believed that God is the Creator, the Lord, the source of all life and blessing; and how could he believe it without desiring to be in communion with Him? He believed that God is holy, that man is sinful and guilty; how then could he dare to come before God, or to appear with his sins, and with his imperfect and sin-stained gifts and works? He believed that God is love, gracious, and merciful, and that through sacrifice, through the suffering of a Redeemer yet to come, through the substitution of an innocent and pure life for his own forfeited one, God the just would justify and accept the guilty. Because he believed he brought the appointed sacrifice. Behold, the sacrifice is accepted, and Abel is declared righteous - righteous according to God's estimate, according to the perfection of that Sacrifice, of which Abel beheld only the symbol.*(*When it is so frequently asserted that the reason why Abel's sacrifice was accepted was solely because it was offered in faith, it seems to be forgotten that faith consisted in the very fact that Abel offeredthe God-appointed sacrifice, and thereby showed his humility as a sinner, and his trust in divine mercy as a believer. The object of the apostle here is, however, not to teach the doctrine of expiation, but the character of faith.)

Everyone who believes in Jesus Christ, is an accepted worshipper. There is no other true and spiritual worship but the worship of a believer in Jesus, and this worship is always accepted. Let us therefore not speak doubtfully, whether God will accept our "poor prayers." We believe that God cannot accept us as we are in ourselves, for He cannot acquit the guilty and accept anything except perfection; but if we believe in Jesus, God accepts us in Him. His blood was shed for the remission of our sins. By His offering He has perfected us forever. Of this, the only worship, Abel though dead yet speaketh. And of this also, that though God loves us dearly in His own Son, yet sufferings and affliction may be our portion. We who accept the sacrifice must be willing to become a sacrifice, and to know the fellowship of His sufferings. The sinner, who through faith in the sacrifice is righteous before God, belongs now to God, and is an heir of eternal life. Sin and death have no more dominion over him. Thus Enoch, the seventh from Adam, walks with God. In this simple familiar expression, we have the description of the new life. It brings before us communion with God, dependence on His guidance, submission to His authority, confidence in His love and favour, continuous, habitual fellowship, and a mind conformed to God's mind, and delighting itself in the Lord. How can two walk together except they be agreed? God was Enoch's constant and loving companion, Lord, and strength. Enoch pleased God, and why? Because he trusted Him. He trusted Him as a reality, believing that He is, and as a faithful and loving God, the rewarder of all who diligently seek Him. Enoch walked with God only; for as his own prophecy, preserved to us by the Spirit in the epistle of Jude, shows, ungodliness was the characteristic of his age, "Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of His saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all

that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed." Living in an age of ungodliness, of violent and defiant unbelief, Enoch not merely kept himself unspotted from the world, and communed with the Most High, but he was a bold and intrepid confessor, and declared the future things which he apprehended by faith. The contemplative and spiritually-minded believer is also a witness. The life which is hid in God must manifest itself also in conflict with the world. The disciple who rests on the bosom of Jesus is afterwards banished for his testimony. No doubt Enoch had to experience the opposition and hatred of an unbelieving age. As a lily among thorns, so was Enoch among the children of men; God regarded him with delight, because he lived by faith. The constant repetition of the words, "and he died," in the fifth chapter of Genesis, is very striking. Although the duration of human life was still exceedingly long, as if the forfeited blessing of immortality was reluctantly leaving mankind, yet it is evident that, through the disobedience of one, death passed upon all men. But to show that the believer is not under the dominion of death, God took Enoch away and translated him into the eternal, peaceful region. "He was not; for God took Him." His life was short compared with those of his contemporaries, and this must have rendered his translation the more remarkable. Without seeing death he passed to the immortal state. Enoch and Elijah are types of the ascension of our Lord, an illustration of the truth, "We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed." Thus shall it be when Christ comes; they who are living by faith at a time of which Christ says, "When the Son of Man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" they shall be caught up to meet the Lord in the air, transfigured in their bodies, glorified and beatified in a "moment, in the twinkling of an eye." And we all, who believe, belong no more to death. Christ has destroyed, that is, rendered powerless to us-ward, him who had the power of death, that is, Satan; Christ has taken away the sting of death; dying we do not see or taste death, but we see and taste Jesus, the life of our life, our eternal life.

Abel testifies of faith’s sacrifice and worship, always accepted. Enoch of faith’s walk and triumph, lifted above sin and death into fellow ship with the holy God, the Lord of life. Noah’s faith has again another testimony. He found grace - first time the word is used in Scripture - in the eyes of the Lord. The judgment of the flood was announced to him. Moved with fear - not the fear of terror, but the fear of reverence, of humility, and of trembling astonishment, both at the impending judgment and con descending mercy of God, he obeyed and built the ark. The element of true repentance was in that fear, as it must always be in faith; for Noah was a sinner, and in believing the judgment of God he acknowledged also his own unworthiness and guilt. Only a deep sense of sin could have acknowledged the justice and believed the approach of judgment. His faith, rooted in the contrite heart, and evidenced in his daily work and obedience, was tested by the opposition and mockery of the world, to whom he testified of sin, of judgment, of saving grace; declaring what he possessed himself, righteousness by faith. And by his faith he not merely saved himself, but also his household.

Abel, Enoch, Noah, are a threefold type both of Christ and of the believer. Jesus is the righteous One, Shepherd and Lamb, the Martyr, true and faithful Witness. He is put to death because He was holy, and His brethren were wicked. But Jesus, who died, is like Enoch, who after his walk with God is taken up to heavenly regions. He liveth now to God. Aid Jesus is like Noah, who saves the household, so that the punitive judgment on sinners does not reach them; but they dwell safely in the secret place of the Most High, under the shadow of the Almighty.

If we possess Abel's faith in the Lamb of God, then the history of our life and death can be summed up as Abel's - a sinner, who worshipped, who was accepted, who entered heaven through faith in the blood of the atonement. If God permits us to continue our life on earth, we walk with God - our light, our strength, our law, our consolation, and our joy. Walking with Him, we please Him, notwithstanding all our sinfulness and errors; our citizenship is in heaven; we belong to the realm of light, and when Christ comes we shall be taken by divine power, and delivered in a moment from earth's trials and the bondage of mortality. And, like Noah, looking forward to the fulfillment of the prophetic word, and possessing ourselves the righteousness which is by faith, we testify and call to the world: Flee from the wrath to come.

33 - Heb_11:8-22

CHAPTER X X X I I I. THE PATRIARCHS.

Hebrews 11:8-22. WITH the election of Abraham commences a new period in the history of revelation. Hitherto God's dealings had been with mankind as one family; but after the destruction of the tower of Babel, mankind was divided into languages and nations. That tower was the expression of a deep-seated apostasy, a type of the God-defying infidelity which in the last days shall rise against the Lord and His anointed. Judgment was sent, and, as we notice in all God's dealings, judgment according to His infinite wisdom pre paring greater manifestations of redeeming love. The origin of nations, apparently coincident with the beginning of idolatry, is the occasion of the election of Abraham, to be the father of a divinely-given nation, which was to be the witness of God and the channel of His revelation. And the other nations, though for a season left in ignorance, are reserved, to be brought by the Son of Abraham unto the knowledge of God, and the unity of peace.

Since mankind is now divided into nations, salvation is ultimately to be brought to mankind by a nation. Hence the restoration of humanity, which we yet await, shall be through the medium of Israel. The promises shall be fulfilled, when all nations of the earth, with Israel, and round Israel as a center, fear the Lord, and confess Him with one accord in unity of spirit.*(*Compare my Lecture on Heathenism in "Christ and the Church: the Apostolic Commission.") This chosen nation must needs have a peculiar origin and character. It is to show forth God's praise; it is to bring to fallen, helpless, guilty humanity God's salvation. Now, as Christ the Saviour, though true man, must come from above, as He is God-given and conceived by the Holy Ghost, though born of the Virgin Mary, so Israel, the nation, must likewise have a supernatural character. As Jesus among men, so Israel among nations - He a real and true man, yet God's Son; they a real nation, with a true human history and development, but different from all other nations in the manner in which God by direct interference originates them, forms them, and gives them His guidance. The election of Abraham and the birth of Isaac show at once the supernatural character of Israel's history. Their history throughout is an embodiment of the principle, "Salvation is of God." It illustrates the contrasts of divine omnipotence, and the utter weakness of nature; the promise of grace, and the utter inadequacy of the present actual condition; heavenly treasure in earthen vessels, worm Jacob, God-conquering Israel. Abraham, nearly a hundred years old, and childless, is to be the father of a multitude like the stars of heaven; the dwellers in tents, who have to purchase a burial-place for Sara, the inheritors of the land; nay, heirs of the world. Such from the beginning was the contrast, stamped upon, and infused into the God-chosen people.

Now, what else but faith could bridge over these contrasts? How could Israel have any other life than the life of faith? What was their history but a continuous declaration: With man it is impossible, but with God all things are possible? From the song of Hannah to the song of Mary, Israel was in the low estate of the hand maiden, and God, who is mighty, did great things to her. The same principle is declared by the gospel. The life of the apostle Paul eminently illustrates the

kindred truth, that Christians have been crucified with Christ, and die daily; but, raised by Divine power, walk in newness of life before God.

Why does God call Himself so frequently and with such peculiar emphasis the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob? It was not on account of their excellence, because there are many other saints of the old covenant who are equal to them in faith and devotedness. God never calls Himself the God of Moses, of David, or of Daniel. He calls Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, because they are the fathers, unto whom He revealed Himself as the Covenant-God, and unto whom He gave the threefold promise of the nation, the Seed, or Messiah, and the land of inheritance. God's promise to the fathers, the relation in which He stood to them, was the foundation on which the confidence and hope of Israel rested; with the invocation of this Name they drew near. And since this covenant is for all ages, and centers in the salvation which is by Jesus Christ, God, in calling Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, is revealing a name which can never lose its importance and significance. Jesus the Son of Abraham has come, and Israel, fallen through unbelief, is still reserved for the ultimate fulfillment of the promise at His second advent. Then shall the promise be fulfilled to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and that which they never saw during their life, but realized by faith, shall then be revealed. The thoughts and ways of God are indeed very different from our thoughts and ways; and even after they are revealed in Scripture, man is slow to receive divine teaching. The history of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is received as a very instructive record of the past, and as illustrating- spiritual truths; but few recognize the covenant with Abraham as the basis of history, and look forward to the fulfillment when, according to God's promise, all nations shall be blessed with God's chosen nation Israel. Hence the apostle calls it a mystery; that is, something which man could not discover without divine revelation, but which he is anxious the Gentile Christians should understand. The unbelief of Israel, rejecting the Lord of glory, has made no change in the divine counsel. For a season Israel as a nation is rejected and scattered; they are dead - cut off. But the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. What He promised to Abraham, what He announced by all the prophets, can never be revoked. Messiah, the land, and the glory, are theirs. Jehovah-Shammah must yet be the name of Jerusalem. From Zion shall go forth the law of light and love and peace to all the nations. Israel's resurrection shall be the regeneration of the earth. As was typified by all deliverances from captivities, the ultimate deliverance shall be wrought by Jehovah Himself, and Israel shall be glorified, and the Gentiles shall come to her light, and kings to the brightness of His rising. As the angel, descending from the heavenly heights, and declaring the divine counsel, announced unto Mary, "The Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob forever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end."

See then what significance this name has, and shall have as long as sun, moon, and stars endure; for as God said through Jeremiah, "If those ordinances depart from before me, then the seed of Israel also shall cease from being a nation before me forever." Thus through the millennial ages Israel shall praise God as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; and all Gentile nations shall thus praise God, and rejoice in the world-wide covenant made with these fathers; and the patriarchs themselves shall behold with joy the fulfillment of the promise - the land of blessing, the whole earth of blessing, until finally the city descends from heaven, and the tabernacle of God is forever with man.

Jesus is of the seed of David, of the seed of Abraham.* Israel is chosen in Him for all ages. Israel's history has scarcely yet begun. The faithful Israelites, the kernel of the nation, though a minority, waited, believed, hoped. At the first coming of the Messiah the nation rejected Him, yet a remnant according to the election of grace believed. Throughout the period of Israel's national unbelief and dispersion, there are at all times some who as representatives of the true seed believe; but the real history of Israel, according to the eternal counsel and the prediction of prophets, and the announcement of the angel Gabriel, has not commenced yet. The land is Palestine, the King is Jesus, the Son of David; the beginning of the reign is the return of Jesus, when His feet shall stand upon the mount of Olives, and when He shall pour out the Holy Ghost upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judah. After this Israel shall never turn back. Their true David shall reign over them, and all nations shall rejoice with the Lord's people. (*Matt. 1.)

Thus the history recorded in the book of Genesis contains the outlines of the world's history. It is not an ancient or antiquated narrative of events which have served their end, but it is the foundation upon which rests the yet future history of earth. The next direct interference of God, the next personal and visible manifestation of Jesus, will introduce a new period of national and earthly history. It will not be the end of the world's history, and commencement of a heavenly and endless eternity; we are waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus from heaven to fulfill the promises given to the fathers, and by the prophets, concerning Israel and the nations.

How clear and striking is the reply which our Saviour gave to the Sadducees, who did not believe in the resurrection from among the dead! "Ye do err greatly," the Lord, the heavenly wisdom, said unto them, "because you know not the Scriptures, the written Word and revelation, nor the power of God, by the inward experience of the Holy Ghost." But how does Jesus prove from Scripture the resurrection? There are many pas sages which we should have deemed much more appropriate, such as Joseph giving commandment concerning his bones; or such passages in the prophet Isaiah "Thy dead men shall live;" or the prediction in Daniel: "And many of them that sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt." The Lord goes, however, to the very root of the question. God called Himself the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob long after they had died; and God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.

They to whom God vouchsafed to reveal His name, whom He drew into communion with Himself, with whom He established His covenant, must needs possess a life which death cannot terminate or extinguish. Knowing and loving God, known and loved of Him, they possessed even in time life eternal; and since the everlasting God called Himself their God, immortality was theirs. And not merely immortality, but resurrection; for redemption must be connected with resurrection, as sin is connected with death, and moreover the promise of the covenant referred to the land; and as the psalmist and prophets, so the patriarchs looked beyond the grave to the time when the meek shall inherit the earth. The period of the patriarchs has a very peaceful and lovely character. God appeared and spoke to them. There was as yet no law. God revealed Himself, and simply said: "Walk before Me, and be thou perfect." The word "patriarchal" has in all languages of Christianized nations the meaning of simple, childlike, transparent, peaceful. But this character attaches more or less to all nations in the early stage of their history. What is the real peculiarity of the patriarchal life? What else but faith; that they lived before and with God, waiting for the promise, the heavenly country? They were not worldly, they were other-worldly. God was a very present God to them;

while the future, the tabernacle of God on earth with man, was their constant hope.

Abraham is the father of the faithful; and he is also the model of a believer. His faith is recorded that we also may learn from it the nature, energy, trial, and victory of faith. How great is this man, called the friend of God, the father of all them that believe, the father of us all (Jews and Gentiles) who trust in the living God. How great is the honour of Abraham when the apostle says: "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise."* God, who chose him to this eminent position, appointed him also to be to us an example of faith. First, in obeying the call of God, to leave his kindred and to go whither he knew not; secondly, in believing impossibilities, looking away from facts simply to the promise of God; thirdly, in cherishing the God-given promise of the land though as yet only a stranger and pilgrim; fourthly, in sacrificing the visible fulfillment of the promise, believing that God would bring Isaac from the dead. (*James 2:23;Romans 4:11-16;Galatians 3:26-29. Sara's faith is also mentioned. At first she doubted, but then she "also" received the promise. As Eve is the mother of all living, Sara is the mother of the faithful, (1 Peter 3:5-6.) She symbolizes "Jerusalem which is above and free, and the mother of us all." (Galatians 4:26-27.) God spoke of her: "I will bless her: yea, I will bless her." (Genesis 17:16-19; Genesis 18:10.) And she received the word by faith. She is the only woman in Scripture whose age is recorded. A whole chapter is devoted to the narration of her burial.)

Abraham's faith was the substance of future things hoped for, and a conviction of things not seen. It triumphed over reason; it laughed at impossibilities; it looked beyond death and the long night of the intermediate state; and in all this it gave glory to God; for this is the only glory we can give to God, believing that He can and will do what He promised. To leave home and kindred, and to go forth into a new land, was at that time common enough among Shemitic tribes; but to do this in obedience to the call of God, and in sole reliance on His guidance and help, was the obedience of faith. Abraham was called to become a servant of God, and to found a society of men, whose center was to be God. They were gathered round the name of the Lord, and His worship and service. The reward which was promised him was, that God would make him the father of a great nation, and that God's blessing would come through that nation to all the earth. Only faith could even understand this reward; for only faith knows what it is to be blessed of God. Only faith could grasp the promise; for reason could only reject it. Reason, considering the circumstances, could only stagger at the promise. But this was the excellence and strength of Abraham's faith, that he did not consider his own body now dead; that he did not reason; that he did not look at difficulties and impossibilities; but that he honoured God by "being fully persuaded that, what He had promised, He was able also to perform." "If you would believe," says Luther, "you must crucify the question, How?" To believe God when reason says it may be so, and when sight says it is possible and likely, is not to honour God; for under these conditions you would believe any one. But if you cannot look away entirely from difficulties to God's promise, then look first at God's promise; and in the light of God's Word consider your difficulties, and see them vanquished.

How sorely was Abraham's faith tried! How long had he to wait for the fulfillment of the promise! Meanwhile, though living in tents, and though not possessing any portion of the land, and knowing that in this life he would not see it, yet he believed the inheritance was his; and that God Himself had prepared a city, a permanent, substantial, organized dwelling-place for him and his seed, and all the nations to whom the blessing was to come. He and his sons after him waited for that country, which would be heavenly in its character, given and established by divine power. It is not

necessary here to enter into a distinction between the heavenly and the earthly Jerusalem;* the expectation of the patriarchs and the prophets is the renewed earth in which Israel and all nations dwell in righteousness - the prospect stretches forth into the boundless ages when ultimately the tabernacle of God shall be with men. The patriarch's hope reached beyond death, and it had reference to themselves and their children and all the righteous, they expected that God would give to them and their seed the earth, that they would live then before and with God in their inheritance, and that from this centre blessings would flow to all lands. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit"- because chosen of God unto adoption - the earth." (*As is remarked by Delitzsch, the promise given unto the fathers never goes beyond Canaan as their future home and inheritance; not even when Jacob calls the place where God appeared unto him the gate of heaven, does the divine promise go beyond the land "upon which thou sleepest." The apostle applies New Testament language to the faith of the fathers, because in substance their desire was after the promised permanent inheritance, in which God in His glory and love will be their everlasting portion. Compare the concluding remarks of Lecture 18.) In this hope of Messiah and Messiah's inheritance, Isaac and Jacob and Joseph lived and died. As illustrations of their faith, the apostle refers to their last acts of blessing. It is only by faith that we can bless; for God alone is the fountain of blessing, and it is only in communion with Him, and in reliance on His promise, that men are able to pronounce benediction. The fathers, realizing the fulfillment of the promise, treated the future possession as if it was theirs already, and disposed of it, as the Spirit directed them, by their last will and blessing. It is this firm and assured conviction of the future things, the things hoped for, that is so strikingly illustrated in the last words of the patriarchs. Isaac looked to God alone, and to His will and promise. The weakness and sin of Jacob in obtaining the blessing did not disturb Isaac's conviction that he had declared the will of God, which man's unfaithfulness and unworthiness cannot frustrate.

Jacob also, at the end of his long and weary pilgrimage, during which the Angel, the Redeemer, had been his guide and shepherd, blessed the sons of Joseph; and here again faith, and not sight or reason, caused him to give the greater blessing to the younger. "I have waited for thy salvation" was Jacob's exclamation; and worshipping,* adoring the Lord, who had redeemed him from all evil, he died. (*Genesis 49:18.) The apostle does not speak of Joseph's varied life, but his faith shone forth brightly in his last injunction. Future things hoped for were present and certain to him. He knew God would re member His people in their affliction, and fulfill the promise given to Abraham; and he was anxious to show that his heart was with the children of Jacob, and that the blessing of the God of Abraham was his joy and hope.*(*CompareGenesis 1:25;Joshua 24:32.) To return to Abraham. His faith was tested still more severely. He was called to offer up Isaac his son, his only son, the son in whom all his affections centered. But the natural affection of a father to his child was in this case inseparably connected with Abraham's whole spiritual life. In Isaac was the promise. All the hopes and expectations of faith centered in him. To offer up Isaac was to sacrifice the very object of faith. Here God seemed to contradict Himself - to take away His own gift, to revoke His promise. And here faith saw what reason could not see. Faith perceived the hidden meaning of the command. It was to try faith. Before Isaac's birth Abraham simply believed God's Word. Faith had no out ward help; it rested solely on God's promise. Now Isaac was given, faith's object had become visible, and hence there was not the same exclusive leaning on God. The Lord tested Abraham when He commanded him to offer up Isaac. It was faith's wisdom which recognized the command as a temptation from God. Now this is the believer's experience. God

takes from us that which by faith was first obtained, because we make a Christ of it, because we rest in our faith, in our peace, in our conversion, in our experience. God teaches us that we must believe in Him always, as we believed in Him at our conversion, when we had nothing else to trust in but His Word. All gifts obtained by faith have to be given up unto death, and that by faith. But Abraham believed again, as at first. Isaac's non-existence was no difficulty to him when the promise first came; and now Isaac's death is no difficulty. God can bring him again from the dead. This Abraham believed as the only solution of the difficulty; for God's word must be fulfilled; and since Isaac is to be offered up, the Lord God Almighty will surely raise him from the dead.

What depth of self-searching, what agony, what crucifixion this trial involved, who can describe? Here was indeed a summing-up of all his previous life and conflict of faith. But faith conquered, and in faith, love and hope. For when we believe God, and only then, and only in that proportion, we love God, and do not withhold from Him the most cherished heart-object, and when we believe God, we hope even against hope; as Luther says, "I could run into Christ's arms though He had a sharp sword in each hand." Abraham received back Isaac in a figure - a figure of the resurrection of Jesus, the consummation of Israel's history; resurrection-life after death and burial; the pledge and source of our incorruptible, undefined, and unfading inheritance.

Children of God, on whom the blessing of Abraham has come through Jesus Christ, live by faith! Crucify reason, consider not the things which are visible; confess, manifest it by your character and walk, that you are strangers on earth; wait for the heavenly country, living even now in the spirit of the golden millennial age. Learn from Abraham to believe in God that raised up Jesus from the dead. Reason sees your guilt; faith sees your acquittal, for Christ is risen; reason sees your sinfulness and infirmity; faith sees your power and strength in newness of life, for Christ is risen; reason sees your affliction, sickness, sorrow, old age, and death; but faith sees your glory, renewal of youth, joy, and strength everlasting, for Christ is risen. Live in tents; set not your affections on things below. Live in the tents the patriarchal life of prayer, and a reverent filial walk with God. When the soul is cast down and disquieted within you, when the heart is heavy, when Isaac, in whom you delight, faith's child, is to be sacrificed, then believe, hope in God, and know that you shall yet praise Him. Thus we give glory to God.

34 - Heb_11:23-29

CHAPTER X X X I V.

MOSES.

Hebrews 11:23-29. OF all the great men whom God raised up in Israel, there is none whom the nation regarded with a more profound veneration than Moses. By him they were brought out of Egypt; through him they received the law. During forty years he ruled in Jeshurun, combining prophetic, priestly, and royal dignity. They owed to him, under God, all that was precious to them as a nation. There arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face; who had assigned to him the position of mediator, of a servant in all God's house. And as his position was wonderful, his character also was marvellous. In him we see the majesty of a solemn, God-fearing, and chastened man, whose soul was constantly dwelling apart in the adoration of the Most High, combined with a most singular meekness, and a most fervent and self-denying affection. His love to God shines forth in his love to Israel, which forgave, hoped, endured all things; which ingratitude never weakened, and disappointment never blunted. We see in this man of God courage and gentleness, fortitude and patience - zeal for God's glory and motherly meekness towards the people. He bore the image of Him who afterwards came to Israel the perfect manifestation of divine love. His words also seem to surpass all other prophetic words in grandeur, lucid simplicity, and power. And the five books which bear his name, as they are unequalled in all literature in their beauty and majesty, became the most cherished treasure of his nation.

It is most interesting that Scripture gives us a picture of Moses, from his infancy to his departure. The Scripture biography of some great men begins with their manhood. We do not know anything of the early course of their lives. Thus we read abruptly of Elijah the Tishbite, appearing with a prophetic announcement. But in the case of Samuel, of David, of our blessed Lord Himself, we are told the history of their childhood and youth. Now the apostle, in reviewing the .life of Moses, wishes to show us that it was the life of faith. And thus the history of Moses is to testify of righteousness by faith, though he is the lawgiver. In like manner Paul often proved, that the law was only given to point out the righteousness which is by faith.

Faith in the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, faith in the divine promise, enabled the parents of Moses to look away from the king's commandment, and to confide in the unseen God, and to realize the promised future. Thus was his life preserved by an act of faith in the power and mercy of the covenant God.

Brought up by the daughter of Pharaoh as her son, instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, the faith which was in his father and mother, and of which they doubtless constantly testified to him, seemed to be in an uncongenial atmosphere, and exposed to most adverse influences. But when he was come to years, when he reached the age in which the world with its attractive beauty is fully appreciated by the youthful heart, it was then that his faith was not eclipsed, but

manifested, not shipwrecked, but, as it were, consummated; it was then that the good seed which for years had quietly been cherished by the divine Spirit in his soul sprung up in most lovely flower; the riches and honours of the world had not choked it. The only free man of his nation, the only son of Abraham, who need not have called him a Hebrew, he voluntarily made the choice; here fused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter. His heart was with God, and with God's people he would take his position. Abraham was called to leave his kindred, Moses was called to join his kindred. In both cases the choice was the same - equally free, equally difficult.

Moses gave up the world; ambition had the prospect of honour and greatness; the culture of the most civilized state was fascinating to the mind; treasure and wealth held out potent allurement. All this - and does it not comprise "all that is in the world," and in its most attractive and elevated manner? - Moses gave up. And, on the other side, what awaited him? To join a down-trodden nation of slaves, whose only riches was the promise of the invisible God. As the choice of Moses was perfectly free, so we enquire with greater interest. What was it which determined the choice? And here we might at first fancy it was the impulse of a generous and patriotic heart, which espoused the cause of the suffering and despised race. Such a feeling is indeed noble, but we may doubt whether it would have been strong enough to make the sacrifices which Moses made; and whether it would not have preferred the path of worldly wisdom and policy, and sought to ameliorate the people's condition by securing first a position of power and influence. The Scripture and the subsequent history prove that it was faith which made the choice. Not reason, not sentiment but the mysterious clinging of the heart to the promise of God, the realizing of things not seen, and the confident expectation of the future reward. Moses chose to suffer affliction with Israel, not because they were his people, but because they were God's people. The object of his choice was God; the God who chose his fathers, who revealed to them His truth and grace, and commanded them to walk before Him without fear; the God who was not ashamed to be called their God, and to whom he had been dedicated in his infancy.

We call this choice free, because Moses was in the anomalous position of an Israelite at the court of Pharaoh severed from the bondage and the reproach of his nation. But it was free in a yet higher sense. For in choosing God as the object of our love and service, the heart for the first time becomes free. Mysterious as this act is, this turning-point in the history of the soul, we know that it is the birth of our liberty; that it is really the first act of perfect liberty, of conscious liberty, the first act in which the soul, looking down into its depths as into a transparent lake, does what it wills to do. "I will arise and go to my Father." I will love and serve God. I will confess Christ. I will be the Lord's. And so God makes us "willing," and sets us free; and here is the great triumph of divine power in its wisdom and love. We cannot but obey God, yet we freely turn to God. Necessity and liberty are blended. The choice was made by faith; and that which was attractive to faith was the very thing which to reason and nature is repulsive - the reproach of Christ. It is the cross, which is a magnet, drawing the heart.

There seems an anachronism in the expression "the reproach of Christ." But the expression is chosen purposely. We know that the outgoings of Messiah were from of old. In the sacrifice of Isaac, in the humiliation of Joseph, in the sufferings of Israel, we see foreshadows of the perfect Servant, who was to be both the Sufferer and the Redeemer of His people. "Out of Egypt have I called my Son." Israel is a type of Christ. The ancient Jewish teachers spoke of the pangs and sorrows of Messiah, and divided them into three - those which He would suffer Himself, those

which would be endured by His people before and by His people after the advent. Thus as the apostle speaks of filling up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in his body for his body's sake, Moses by faith beheld in Israel's sufferings, and those that awaited him, the reproach of the true Israel, Israel's glory and hope, the Messiah.*(*Compare1 Corinthians 10:4;1 Peter 1:10. Christ, as the Word, the Messenger of the covenant, was with Israel. The coming Christ was also typified by Israel; hence the typical meaning of Israel's sufferings, of Joseph's, of David's. The expression "esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches" is therefore one which comprises many aspects. The New Testament counterpart may be seen in1 Peter 4:13;Php 3:10;Colossians 2:23;2 Timothy 3:12, etc.)

Moses thus believed in the Redeemer-God that was to come, and by faith he became a partaker of the sufferings, even as he expected to be a partaker of the inheritance. He had regard to the recompense of the reward. His faith was the confidence of things hoped for. And through the most painful trials, during forty years of incessant care, toil, sorrow, grief of heart, amidst the greatest difficulties and struggles, he held fast this hope; he bore the burden of the nation patiently and lovingly, in the constant exercise of priestly intercession, relying on the Lord, rejoicing in the Christ, the Rock, that followed them. As he himself expressed it in his Psalm, the everlasting God was his dwelling-place; he knew the sin of man, and the righteous anger of God, but Jehovah's mercy made him rejoice, and the beauty of the Lord was upon him. (Ps. 90.) On mount Nebo his earthly pilgrimage was ended. Mysterious, unwitnessed by mortal eye, was his exodus from this troubled life. Only angels were present, who had guarded the little ark of bulrushes in which a hundred and twenty years before the beautiful babe lay helpless, except for the omnipotence and faithfulness of the covenant-God, to whom the faith of loving parental hearts had commended him. While the peace of God filled his soul, the archangel Michael guarded his body. Centuries after, we behold him and Elijah descend from the celestial realms, and on the mount of transfiguration they conversed with the Son of God about the exodus which He should accomplish at Jerusalem. How bright is the light, how exceeding great is the glory, how abundant the recompense of the reward! How blessed was the choice of faith, which preferred the affliction of God's people and the reproach of Messiah to all the pleasures of sin and treasures of Egypt! The forty years which Moses lived as a shepherd in the wilderness of Midian seem a long period of inactivity and obscure leisure. For what purpose, we feel inclined to ask, this waste of years? God watches over the days and hours of His chosen people. He who has numbered the very hairs of our head, will He not watch also over our years? Moses had made the great choice; he had forsaken Egypt's grandeur and felicity; he had embraced the reproach of Christ. He learned now in the solitude of Midian to crucify self; to wait quietly on God; to give up his own will and strength; to be a stranger and pilgrim, even as his fathers were.

God's servants are often sent into the desert. So was John the Baptist, ere he began his short but brilliant witness-life, a bright torch; thus did Saul, after his conversion, go into Arabia. And was not the ministry of Jesus, in whom was no earth-born impure element of false zeal or strength, preceded by the thirty years stillness of Nazareth?

After forty years the Lord appeared unto Moses. Scripture does not conceal from us the timidity, the unbelief, the resistance of Moses, when the great command was given to him to deliver Israel out of Egypt. Formerly he was too ready and swift to unsheath the sword, and to rescue the oppressed. Now he is conscious of man's weakness, of his own utter inability for so great a task.

But God’s word and promise over came all his difficulties. Moses asked, Who am I that I should go unto Pharaoh? The Lord answered by reminding him who He was, He revealed His name, and promised His presence and all-sufficient help. By faith Moses went to Egypt and to Pharaoh, and neither the wrath of the king nor the murmuring, the bitter reproaches and the unbelief of his own nation, moved him. He endured, because before the eyes of his heart stood the mighty God, who is invisible. Moses is the first of whom Scripture tells us that performed miracles; believing the Word of God, he showed great and mighty signs. By faith he ordained the passover and the sprinkling of blood. He believed the mercy of God, who had chosen Israel, and was their Redeemer, passing over their iniquity, transgression, and sin, delivering them through the blood of the Lamb. Here was the centre and heart of his faith. As the representative and leader of the nation, he had firs: to receive himself the salvation of God by faith. Notice this passover is his first ordinance to Israel: before the giving of law was the gospel. "Believe, and thou shalt be saved." The first command given by Moses was, "Believe and live." Afterwards the law was given by him, and the law speaks not of faith, but says, "Do this and live." But salvation is of God through faith, redemption is by the blood of the Lamb. Moses himself preaches here salvation without works, by grace, through faith in the Substitute. By faith he led them through the Red Sea. Israel murmured. They reproached him for bringing them out of Egypt to die in the wilderness. On the faith of Moses rested the burden of the whole nation. He said unto the people, "Fear ye not, stand still, and see the salvation of the Lord, which He will shew to you to-day." But while he spake these courageous words in the name and for the honour of Jehovah, his heart was crying to the Lord, "Deliver us." And to this silent prayer was the answer, "Why criest thou unto Me? speak unto the children of Israel, that they go forward." God’s miracles pass through some believers hearts. They are not merely the children of divine omnipotence and mercy, but the travail and anguish of believing and praying hearts. Elijah prayed, and it rained not; he prayed again, and it rained. Thus we are told in the epistle of James; but in the book of Kings we read only the miraculous facts. This faith of Moses will be remembered for ever; and the song of Moses, the servant of God, forever associated with the song of the Lamb; for Israel’s deliverance out of the Red Sea is a type of the true and final deliverance from all evil, from sin and death, from the world and Satan. And it is by faith only that we can pass through the sea as by dry land. We grasp the promise: "When thou passeth through the waters, I will be with thee; and they shall not overflow thee." The Lord is our salvation, and in Him is our trust.

Israel is a typical nation. The things which happened unto them are recorded for our instruction and comfort. The things which happened unto them, happen unto us also. Hence all Scripture is to us truth, reality, experience; it is not a record of the past merely, but it is an ever-new description of the experience of all God’s children.

We also were in Egypt, and had to learn that we could not bring about our deliverance by our own strength and zeal. Like Moses, we had to flee from such attempts of self-wrought emancipation into the wilderness, and wait quietly upon the Lord. When we were still, and knew that it was not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, God showed mercy. We also have kept by faith the passover and the sprinkling of blood; when, acknowledging our guilt and helplessness, we believed in the Lamb of God, when in faith we repented, eating bitter herbs, and began to gird our loins and to prepare for the walk and fight through the wilderness. We also went through the Red Sea, and then sang the song of praise to God; when we were taught the power of Christ’s

resurrection, and when the Holy Ghost, separating us by the cross from Egypt, brought us through resurrection unto the new life, and raised our affections to the things above. This history of the spiritual Israel, described in Scripture and by the saints of God, is so clear and so full of great thoughts, that many know and appreciate it intellectually; it is so beautiful and ideal that many grasp it admiringly with their imagination. But do we know it by faith? Have we by faith kept the passover, left Egypt, and passed through the Red Sea? In the intellectual and imaginative belief there is no pain, no contrition of heart, no repentance, no godly sorrow; there is no travailing in birth. But faith is the trust of a guilty, sin-convinced, and helpless soul in a crucified Saviour.

Israel in Egypt. Look at another aspect of this history: "I have chosen thee in the furnace of affliction." The saints who are precious in His sight, whom He purchased with the blood of His own Son, and for whom He has prepared an everlasting inheritance, God’s elect must through much tribulation enter into the kingdom of God. Who would recognize them in their earthly sufferings as the favourites of God? Despised of the world, they are a royal priesthood, and the joint-heirs of Christ; and oppressed with manifold trials and sufferings, they are yet the possessors of all things.

God chasteneth whom He loveth; and it becomes the future kings to have the experience of the Master, and to take their cross upon them. Yet even while they are thus bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, they are upheld by God. The measure of their trial is fixed by infinite wisdom and tenderness. The angel of the covenant is afflicted in all their afflictions; God regards them as the apple of His eye. The suffering and tried believer has the most consoling experience of God’s goodness and faithfulness; nay, of God Himself as their portion. Joseph in his prison, David in the mountain solitude, Jonah in the belly of the whale, Daniel in the lions den, the three men in the fiery furnace, Peter chained to Roman soldiers, Paul and Silas in their fetters at Philippi, John in the isle of Patmos, were they not all able to praise the Lord, and to rejoice in His love?

Weak and despised believers are the pillars of the world. The intercession of Moses prevails to avert judgment from a whole nation; Samuel prays, and it thunders, and the enemies are defeated; Elijah’s faith brings down rain on the parched ground; for the sake of Paul, and through him, the ship’s crew were saved, and not one of them perished. God will do all things to secure His people’s good. Sun and moon stand still in their course; the dial’s hand goes back more than an hour; iron swims on the river; the barrel of meal and cruse of oil fail not; five loaves and two fishes feed a multitude.

It is the will of God to do great things for us. All things are ours; all things work together for good to them that love God who are the called according to His purpose; all things are freely given unto us with Christ, the Son, whom God spared not, but gave up for our everlasting salvation. But it is the will of God that we should learn faith. By faith a poor and guilty sinner looks to Jesus Christ crucified, and says, By grace I have been saved; by faith, continuing his gaze on Jesus, he adds, The Father Himself loveth me; by faith he beholds in the wounds of Jesus the election of God, free, spontaneous, never-changing - the choice which in the still eternity counted him one of the jewels, and set him apart for the glory of the ages to come. Resting in this boundless and amazing love of God, as it shines through the Saviour Jesus Christ, the believer lives a life of constant difficulty, trial, conflict, and yet of continual victory and thanksgiving. Faith says, Who can lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? Faith asks triumphantly, Who can separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus? Triumphantly it is true; but. with deep humility, and in the painful

conflict with sin, with troubles and temptations of the present life, a wretched man is the believer, and yet a man giving thanks to God.* Saving faith humbles. No mark is more certain and more universal. Suspect all faith that does not clothe the soul with humility. Suspect all faith in which there is not pain, sorrow, conflict. (* Romans 8:23; Romans 7:24-25.) But if we die daily, let us also rejoice in Christ Jesus.

True faith hath a "yet not I."* There is a threefold "yet not I." One that relates to sin, one that relates to spiritual life, and one that relates to duties. "I sin; yet not I." Delighting in the law of God after the inward man, I still do that I would not; it is no more I that do it, but sin that dwelleth in me. (*From Bridge'sSermons on Faith.(Edited by the Countess of Huntingdon.)

"I live; yet not I." Christ liveth in me, and that because I believe in the Saviour, that He loved me, and that by His own gift of Himself He is mine.

I work, yet not I, as the apostle Paul writes: "I have laboured more abundantly than they all, yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me."

Christ dwells in the heart byfaith. Hence the wonderful paradox: I, yet not I. He that by grace gives up himself shall find his soul - his life; his name, his individuality shall endure for ever; he shall abide and dwell in God for evermore. He has found himself, he has been found of the Great Shepherd. And he, who belongs to the Christ of God, shall inherit all things; for all things are ours if we be Christ's, who is the Son and the glory of God.

35 - Heb_11:30-40

CHAPTER X X X V. FROM THE JUDGES TO THE MACCABEES: THE BETTER THING FORESEEN FOR US.

Hebrews 11:30-40. DO we think enough of faith, chosen by divine omnipotent love to be its channel? God alone doeth great marvels, but it is through the faith of His saints.

All the victories of Israel were wrought by faith. Divine power and grace redeemed them on that memorable night; but it was the faith of Moses which kept the passover and the sprinkling of blood. It was God who divided the Red Sea, but in answer to the silent prayer of faith which ascended from the heart of His servant. All miracles of healing recorded in the Gospels were wrought by faith. Jesus prayed to the Father, and then fed the multitude with five loaves and two fishes. Jesus lifted up His eyes to heaven, and then said, "Ephphatha. Be thou loosed." Jesus by faith thanked God that He heard Him alway and then uttered His mighty "Lazarus, come forth." And faith was wrought also in the recipient of divine favour. "Thy faith hath healed thee;" "Be it unto thee as thou hast believed." Such were frequently Christ’s words. The people who perished in the wilderness entered not into God’s rest because of unbelief; and because of their unbelief, Jesus could not show many miracles in some places. "Believe only, and thou shalt see the glory of God."

Israel’s history is the history of God’s omnipotent saving grace, and of man’s faith. From heaven descends miracle; from earth ascends faith. From the election of Abraham to the birth of Moses, from the passover and the Red Sea to the dividing of the river Jordan, all is miracle, and all has to go through the faith of some chosen saint. Israel is before Jericho, a walled and fenced city; it is not by power and might, but by faith, that they are to take it. How utterly foolish it must have seemed to the Canaanites, to see that procession day after day: the men of war went round the city, and seven priests before them, bearing the ark of the Lord and blowing trumpets. But Israel believed. To give up their own strength, and to put no confidence in their number or valour, and to trust in God, who commanded them - to do what to reason appeared so utterly useless - was indeed faith. The walls of Jericho fell; and, according to God’s command, the city was burnt with fire, and all that was therein; for the iniquity of the Amorites was full. Is this not written for our learning? The walls of unbelief, superstition, and ungodliness, yield to no earthly armour and power. It is not by compulsion, nor by reasoning; it is not by the weapons which this world supplies, that these walls can be destroyed. It is by the Word of God, and by the Word declared in faith. Ministers and people, they who blow the trumpet, and also the people who are with them, are to be united believing in the power of God. Congregations are only too apt to let the ministers go forth by themselves with the message; they forget that they are all called to strive with the minister in the gospel, to pray, to labour with him. The inhabitants of Jericho all perished except one. We ask, what virtue, what excellence, distinguished this chosen one among so many thousands, and commended her to the divine clemency? God hath chosen things base in this world. Sin red as scarlet He can forgive, and make whiter than snow. Rahab believed. She heard the message, that God was with Israel, and that He was about to give them Canaan, because the measure of

Canaan’s sin was full. All Jericho had heard it. The fame of Israel had gone forth while they were yet in the wilderness. Their victories over Amalek, over Og king of Bashan, over Sihon, king of the Amorites, had been noised abroad. Jericho had heard that Jehovah was leading forth His people, and coming to judge Canaan. The message was clear, the evidence proving its truth strong and patent; but only Rahab believed. Man’s unbelief has its source, not in the want of evidence or proof, with which the divine message is accompanied, but in the self-righteous, sinful heart, which does not acknowledge the justice of God’s anger, and does not thirst after His mercy. But Rahab, though a great sinner, believed both that Canaan was to be judged, and that Israel was God’s chosen people. God had granted her conviction of sin and true repentance.

We measure things by an earthly and false standard. We make a great distinction between vice and sin; between crime and the inward transgression of God’s law; between outward degradation and the pollution of the heart. But how solemn and touching is the fact, so emphatically brought before us in the Gospels, that moral Pharisees rejected, hated, and crucified the blessed Jesus; and that publicans, and sinners, and harlots received Him in repentance, in faith, in love, and life-long self-sacrifice. Rahab believed with that true and genuine faith which, looking away from the things seen, grasps the promise and trusts all to the unseen God. Her faith manifested itself in action, in obedience. And she was saved; though her house was most exposed to danger, yet she was at peace and in safety; she was separated from judgment and destruction. The line of scarlet thread was to her the sign and seal of the covenant of pardon and salvation. Thus is the chief of sinners safe, if he trusts in the Saviour. Who more exposed than he to the righteous judgment of God? Who safer in the cleft of the smitten Rock? By grace through faith. This is the explanation of the history of Rahab the sinner. She was pardoned and rescued, numbered now among Israel, a daughter of Abraham, father of the believing. We see her name enrolled in the imperishable annals of the sacred history. The evangelist Matthew records her name among the ancestors of Jesus. She is one of the mothers of Jesus, and teaches us the wondrous love of our Saviour God. And in that earnest, severe, and most searching epistle of James, the only two examples given of true, genuine, living faith are Abraham, the friend of God, and Rahab.

"And what shall I say more?" Time would fail to go through the whole history of Israel, the period of the judges and kings, and to show all the golden links of faith in the wonderful chain. Let us learn from this the eternal and spiritual character of these Scriptures. The history of the judges, Gideon, Barak, Jephthae, and Samson;1 the history of the kings from David downward; the history of the prophets beginning with Samuel, last of the judges and first of the prophets, is a history of faith, grasping the promises, obeying the divine voice, overcoming the world, suffering and dying in the Lord.2(1"Fides nobilitat omnes: it is faith that raiseth a man. They did great things; but those things are upon record only as they were wrought by faith; yet their faith was weak, and laboured under many infirmities. Look into the 11th of the Hebrews; there is no mention made of Samson’s infirmities, nor of Rahab’s. Mention is made of their faith, but their infirmities passed by, and not one mentioned; and all the great things which they did were mentioned only upon the account of faith. God honours His own work, faith."

2Hebrews 11:32-38. It is evident that the apostle feels quite over with the numerous illustrations of the power of faith in the acts and sufferings of Israel’s great men. This accounts for the absence of strict chronological order in these verses. Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthae, and David are enumerated first (without conjunctive particle) as warriors, then (joined byτ■καιas introducing

something different) the group of prophets.Hebrews 11:33: "Subdued kingdoms" refers to period of judges, "obtained promises" to 2 Sam. 7, "stopped the mouths of lions,"Daniel 6:22.Hebrews 11:34: "Quenched the violence of fire," Dan. 3, "escaped the edge of the sword "(Elijah, Elisha, David, also Macc. 2), "out of weakness were made strong," like Samson, after his declension (some think of Hezekiah, 2 Kings 20; Isa. 38), "waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens,"1 Macc., where the same expressions are often used.Hebrews 11:35: "Women received their dead raised to life again," 1 Kings 17;2 Kings 4:17. "Tortured," etc., refers to the touching story of Eleazer, and of the seven brothers and their heroic mother. (2 Macc. 5:1; 7)Hebrews 11:37: "Stoned," Zechariah (2 Chronicles 24:20;Matthew 23:35), "sawn asunder," according to old tradition, Isaiah the prophet; "slain with the sword,"1 Kings 9:20. The saints had to endure poverty and every kind of destitution. Notice how all the opposition of the world and rage of Satan cannot pluck Christ’s sheep out of His hand, or prevail against the congregation of the Lord. There will always be a testimony for God. How cheerfully ought we to bear our comparatively light burden. And if any brother reading these lines has been counted worthy by the Lord to "suffer great things for Christ’s name sake" (Acts 9:16), may the voice of the Saviour uphold him: "Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.") By faith they wrought great things. They subdued kingdoms and wrought righteousness. You remember the victories over Philistines and Moabites, Syrians and Edomites, which judges and kings obtained by faith in the living God. You remember the justice and equity with which Joshua, Samuel, and David ruled in Israel. They executed justice and judgment unto all the people. They were able to appeal to the whole nation, that in faithful and disinterested love they had ruled over them. And what was the secret spring of this righteousness? It was what Joshua expressed, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord;"* what David said, "I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me?" They believed in God. By faith they obtained promises; for David and the prophets were still and lowly before the Lord, and received His message with meekness and a trembling heart. Thus were they the children of Abraham, who by faith subdued kings, judged righteously, and received the promises and the confidential disclosures of the divine counsel. They had Abraham’s faith, and did the works of Abraham. (*Josh. 23, 24;1 Samuel 12:3-4;2 Samuel 8:15.)

Faith accomplishes marvellous deliverances. The mouths of lions can do no injury to believing Daniel, for his God sent His angel to shut the lions mouths. The violence of fire, heated seven-times furiously, is quenched not by water, but by faith; the fourth man - fourth, where there are three believers; third, where there are two Emmaus disciples - was with them because they believed. They escaped the edge of the sword, as David escaped Saul’s wrath, and Elijah that of Jezebel. But faith has not merely great works and great victories, it has also great trials, sufferings, and painful deaths. Now the apostle enumerates not the persons who suffered, but the evils which faith endured. Hoping for a better resurrection, faithful Israelites in the times of the Maccabees endured agonizing tortures; others in faith endured stripes, imprisonments, protracted hardship, destitution, hunger and nakedness, constant suffering and dying. Some, like Zechariah, were stoned; others, as tradition says of Isaiah, were sawn asunder; others, like the prophets in the days of Jezebel, were put to death by the sword. And ill lived and suffered by faith, looking forward unto the self-same golden time which we are awaiting, the coming of the Lord, to establish His kingdom and manifest His glory. God has so united the children of the old dispensation and the disciples of Jesus, that the fathers are not to receive the fulfillment of their hopes until we also

receive the full adoption.

Let us learn from these bright examples. We may make use of extraordinary examples to encourage our ordinary faith in ordinary times. These models are on a very grand and large scale, and so we can plainly see them.

Faith works and suffers; faith is busy and energetic. It is our only strength and victory. In suffering we glorify God as well as in action; and in suffering it is only faith which grasps the promises, and rests on the bosom of God in quiet and loving humility. Suffering is an honour God puts on His saints. To them it is given to suffer for Christ's sake. A life without affliction and self-denial, a life without the cross, is not likely to precede the life with the crown. When the Church becomes lukewarm, there is little hardship endured, and little cross-bearing. Let tried believers not doubt that they are precious in God's sight. They whom the world despises are generally the God-chosen nobility, of whom the world is not worthy.

See to your faith, listening to God's Word, hearing His call, relying on His promise. "What is sanctification but faith incarnate?"* And as a true believer is very sensible of his unbelief, dwell much on Christ as the Alpha, the ever-new and sweet beginning. Christ rebukes, but acknowledges, honours, and helps little faith, though He commends strong faith. (*Bridge.)

Look also at Christ, the Omega. The saints of old looked forward to the better resurrection that first resurrection of the just spoken of by Daniel, by our Lord, by the apostle Paul, and in the book of Revelation.*(*Daniel 12:2;Luke 20:35;Php 3:11;Revelation 20:6.)

These all, having the grace of God in their hearts, so manifested it in their lives, sufferings, and death, that they obtained a good report. They are now waiting in the realm of peace for the final consummation.

Meanwhile new covenant believers have received some "better thing." What is the better thing foreseen by God for us? The first and most obvious difference between the old saints and the Church is, that the promised salvation was to them entirely in the future; while we have lived to see the first advent, we also are looking forward to the fulfillment of God's promises at the second coming. But to Israel the Messianic advent, with its salvation and glory, was altogether in the future. It is a wonderful privilege that we can say, "Messiah has come! The sacrifice has been offered!" But does this difference imply anything real, or is it merely a difference in clearness of vision and degree of enjoyment? While we must never forget the unity of all God's saints in the one faith and one hope, yet we must not overlook the clearly-taught difference between the position of the Church of Christ and that of believers before the advent. The promise of the Father, which is contained according to Christ's teaching in all the prophets, was fulfilled on the day of Pentecost. This great culminating and comprehensive promise, the in dwelling of the Holy Ghost, presupposes the incarnation, death, and ascension of the Son of God. Thus John the Baptist perceived that the first link of the chain had appeared, and declared that Jesus "shall baptize with the Holy Ghost." This baptism had never taken place yet in Israel. Nor could it take place during Christ's life. John spoke of it as something future. John himself, though in the old dispensation there was none greater than he, is declared by our Saviour to be less than the privileged saints of the new covenant. This gift of the Holy Ghost is connected by our Lord with His death and His going to the Father; and the evangelist John explains to us that it is connected with the glorified

humanity of Jesus.* Hence, in a very real and important sense, the Comforter has come, since the ascension of the Lord, in a manner in which He never did and could come before. (*John 7:38-39; John 14:16; John 15:26; John 16:7, etc.) The day of Pentecost is the beginning of days. Here is not an isolated and exceptional manifestation, but the commencement of a new period. Believers henceforth are spoken of as sealed with the Spirit, as having received the Spirit of God's Son in their hearts, as having an unction from above. They were exhorted, not to seek "a fresh baptism of the Spirit," but not to grieve the Spirit, whom they had received - not to forget that they were the temple of the Holy, Ghost; and as they had received the Spirit, so to walk in the Spirit. The reasons why this gift is now bestowed are manifold and obvious.

1. The Spirit's advent is connected with the finished work of redemption. Because the blood has been shed, the Spirit descends.

2. The Spirit comes through the preaching of faith, and not by the law. It is when the forgiveness of sin is declared that God puts His Spirit within our hearts. Now it is true that Old Testament believers looked forward to the atonement, and were comforted by the assurance of God's grace. But, as we have seen, the way of access into the holiest was not yet made manifest; the conscience was not brought perfectly into liberty. Hence the influence of the Holy Ghost during their period must have been different from His indwelling now, when we have been actually brought nigh by the blood of Christ But,

3. The Spirit, as an indwelling Spirit, descends from the incarnate, crucified, and glorified Son of God - the Christ or anointed Head of the Church. Now as before the advent there was not the humanity on the throne, the relation of believers to the coming Lord and Jehovah was indeed mediated by the Spirit; but it must have been different from the mystical union as it now subsists between the Head and the members.

Wonderful is our position; and nothing does so humble and abase the believer as the contrast between the high position given to him of God, and his actual state, life, and conduct. How glorious is the Head! how weak, wayward, and sinful are the members! Are we indeed one with Christ, called to live in the perpetual sunshine of God's love, in the blessed and lively hope of glory; called to represent Jesus in our daily life, to speak and act, to suffer and overcome, as He gave us an ensample, and in the strength of the life, which descends from Him into our souls, have we received the Spirit, who dwells in us constantly, who bears witness with our spirits that we are God's sons, who intercedes in us, so identifying Himself with our sorrow and need as to become a suppliant with us? Are we thus identified and united with the Lord Jesus, He the Christ, and we the Christians, anointed with the Spirit, as His? Oh, what manner of men ought we to be! And when we compare ourselves with the fathers, who were not chosen to see and hear on earth the things which were reserved for us, how gigantic does the faith of Abraham and the patriarchs appear, how stupendous the sacrifice, the patience, the love, the unworldliness of Moses and the prophets! Do we believe, love, suffer, and endure as the fathers did?

Here is no cause for elation, but for humility; let none of us be puffed up by a merely intellectual head knowledge of the "glorious position of the Church, as distinguished from the Old Testament saints;" but let us glorify God in these men of faith, whose lives are recorded for our learning; let us imitate their example; let us always cherish their memory with veneration and affection. And as for their future position, let us rest satisfied with what Scripture reveals. God is not ashamed to be

called their God. Jesus shall bring them with Him at His coming. At present the spirits of just men are perfect, and in the heavenly Jerusalem. It seems that in the future kingdom they shall stand in a special relation to the earthly Jerusalem and Israel; that they shall be more immediately connected with the earthly inheritance which was promised them of old. The twelve apostles also, though they belong to the Pentecostal Church, we are told, shall sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel. At the coming of the Lord, the hope of the ancient Israel (including also the saints before Abraham) and the hope of the Pentecostal Church will be fulfilled. The union of all believers will be manifested. This union will be to the glory of God, and part of the blessedness of His people. And in this union we think there will be variety; differences of glory. Different positions and relationships may be maintained during the millennial age, while there is perfect union and communion, Christ Himself being the all-glorious center. And as we believe that there will be differences of glory among individuals, why may there not be differences of glory and position for the saints of the various dispensations? These things are partly hidden, that we may dwell all the more on that which is clear, and hasten to the coming of our God and Saviour.

36 - Heb_12:1-2

CHAPTER X X X V I. THE EXEMPLAR OF FAITH.

Hebrews 12:1-2. TO continue stedfast in faith, patient and enduring to the end, looking unto the appearing of the Lord this was the exhortation with which the apostle concluded the tenth chapter. This exhortation was not so much interrupted as confirmed and illustrated by the review of the past history of God’s children, who exemplify in a most striking manner the nature, trial, and victory of faith. Appealing to their sense of the union of the family of God, and reminding them that God had provided some better thing for them, he repeats the exhortation to steady perseverance in the ways of faith and patience. If all the saints of God lived, suffered, endured, and conquered by faith, shall not we also? If the saints who lived before the incarnation, before the redemption, was accomplished, before the High Priest had entered for us into the heavenly sanctuary, trusted in the midst of all discouragements and trials, how much more ought we who know the name of Jesus, who have received the beginning, the installment of the great Messianic promise.

We who have still to walk in the narrow path which alone leads to glory are encouraged and instructed by the cloud of witnesses, the innumerable company of saints, who testified amid the most varied circumstances of suffering and temptation, that the just live by faith, and that faith is the victory which overcometh the world. The memory of those children of God, whose lives are recorded for our learning and consolation, animates us, and we feel upheld as it were by their sympathy and by the consciousness, that although few and weak, strangers and pilgrims on earth, we belong to a great and mighty, nay, a victorious army, part of which has already entered into the land of peace. But the cloud of witnesses* is not the object on which our heart is fixed. They testify of faith, and we cherish their memory with gratitude, and walk with a firmer step, because of the music of their lives. Our eye, however, is fixed, not on many, but on One; not on the army, but the Leader; not on the servants, but the Lord. We see Jesus only, and from Him we derive our true strength, even as He is our light of life. (*"So great a cloud" denoting the exceeding great number of saints, a multitude which no man can number. The most remarkable instances of faith had been singled out by the apostle; but soon he felt that time would fail him to enumerate all, while he implied that these eminent saints whom he singled out were only representatives of the thousands of faithful ones who in every age served God. "Witness" may either refer to the saints as beholding us, and our walk of faith or unbelief; or it may mean their testimony to the necessity, the nature and power of faith. In favour of the first view may be adduced - (α) The nature of the illustration itself. In a race there are spectators who judge, and by their presence encourage. (β) The similar use of the word witness in1 Timothy 6:12;2 Timothy 2:2. But the second view seems more in accordance with the whole scope of the passage, and is both simpler and more comprehensive. The saints witness, which is recorded in Scripture, and which we are always to remember, is to the faithfulness of God the transitory character of suffering and persecution, the power and comfort of faith, etc.)

There are many witnesses, and yet Jesus only is the true and faithful witness. His witness is also of faith. He is the root, the source, out of which proceeded all the faith of which the eleventh

chapter speaks. He is the true Israel, the servant of the Lord, who trusted in God, and by faith glorified the Father who sent Him. As the great Exemplar of faith, Jesus is set before us; as the Captain of salvation, who is the author and finisher of faith; who is not merely the new and living way, by whom we have access to the Father, but who is the way, that we may walk in Him.

Let us first consider the example of Jesus as the great motive of our obedience of faith, and then look at the nature and method of our Christian race. By faith Jesus lived, suffered, and died; on account of His obedience of faith He entered into glory. Here is not merely our righteousness and peace, but this is also the model and strength of our life. Jesus is the way to the Father. By Him we first come; like Him, and in Him, we who have come must walk; tor Jesus is the first-born among many brethren, and to His image we are to be conformed. Jesus suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. We who know Him as our Saviour know also the fellowship of His sufferings, and the power of His resurrection; we know Him as the author and finisher of faith. The Lamb who was slain for us is also the Lamb whom we follow; the cross is both the source and method of our new life.

You who trust in Jesus learn to trust also like Jesus. You who believe in the blood of Christ, and who rejoice in His resurrection, learn as the sons of God to live the life and to be possessed of the spirit of your Head and Lord, your elder Brother. For this purpose has the Father quickened you together with Him, that you should walk as the Son of God also walked - by faith.

Jesus walked by faith. "I will put my trust in God." This was the description given of Messiah in the prophets. He, who in the eternal counsel undertook our salvation in obedience to the Father’s will, entered by His incarnation on the path of faith. In the eternal counsel of the ever-blessed Triune God, we see not merely the equality of the Son with the Father, but also the voluntary subordination of the Son, undertaking our salvation, and becoming according to the divine purpose the Christ, the Head of the Body, entering thus on the relation of the servant: and this mind was in Him, the Son of God, from all eternity, even obedience unto death. Who can comprehend this mystery of divine love! But herein is the very power and efficacy of the obedience of Jesus, that it is the voluntary condescension and obedience of the Son of God; and that it is a true and real obedience, submission, dependence, struggle, suffering - that it is the obedience of faith. By faith He walked, looking always unto the Father, and speaking and acting in filial dependence on the Father, and in filial reception out of the Father’s fullness. By faith He looked away from all discouragements, difficulties, and Oppositions, committing His cause to the Lord, who had sent Him, to the Father, whose will He had come to fulfill. By faith He resisted and overcame all temptation, whether it came from Satan, or from the false Messianic expectations of Israel, or from His own disciples. By faith He performed the signs and wonders, in which the power and love of God’s salvation were symbolized. Before He raised Lazarus from the grave, He, in the energy of faith, thanked God, who heard Him alway. And here we are taught the nature of all His miracles. He trusted in God; He gave the command, "Have faith in God," out of the fullness of His own experience.1 As the apostle Peter says, "Jesus went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of devils; for God was with Him."2(1It is equally true and important that Jesus performed miracles, not as Moses and the other servants of God, but asthe Lord, the Son of God. "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work." The Jews rightly inferred that Jesus made Himself equal with God. Again: "The Father that dwelleth in Me, He doeth the works." Again: Jesus, unlike any mere human prophet, did miracles to manifest forthHis glory. (John 2:11.) We must seek the

solution of these apparent contradictions in theSonship. Jesus is Son; Jesus is God’s bon filial faith and equality.2Acts 10:38.) The incarnation of the Son of God, His condescension in emptying Himself, was most real and true! He who was rich did really become poor. He who was God’s own Son in glory did really empty Himself, and take upon Him the form of a servant. Born of a woman, and made under the law, the Messiah came to do the will of the Father that sent Him. Real were His prayers, the expression of dependence and trust; real was that lifting up of the eyes to the Father above, before Jesus blessed and healed, before He fed the multitude, before He uttered the word of power; real the supplications in the still night before Jesus appointed His apostles; real the petition, "Glorify Thy Son." Not His own divine omnipotence, but the Father’s protection, was His strength; not His own power, but the Scripture promises echoing the eternal promise, were His hope and consolation. The Lord Jesus believed. By faith He rested in the Word of God which was written concerning Him: "He shall see of the travail of His soul, and be satisfied." He pierced by faith the dense, dark cloud of suffering, ignominy, agony, death, and He beheld the joy set before Him. He knew that Israel would reject Him; the cross, with all its shame, the scourging, and spitting, and the mockery, all stood before Him; and yet by faith He added: "And on the third day the Son of man shall rise again from the dead." He who knew that the first part of the 22nd Psalm yet awaited its fulfillment, even His own suffering, believed that the conclusion was also concerning Him. "Thou hast heard me. I will declare Thy name unto my brethren" (faith’s family): "in the midst of the congregation will I sing praise to Thee." His faith appropriated the words of the 1 6th Psalm: "I have set the Lord always before me: because He is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. For Thou wilt not leave my soul in hell; neither suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; at Thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore." Was it not by faith that on that night, and after having by a glorious and majestic anticipation instituted the memorial of His expiatory death, He sang a hymn of praise? "The Stone which the builders rejected has become the head corner-stone. This is the Lord’s doing, and wondrous in our eyes." In His sufferings, as the apostle Peter writes, "Jesus committed Himself to Him that judgeth righteously;" and His last word was the act of faith: "Father, into Thy hands I commend my Spirit."

Jesus believed. He is the author and finisher of faith - the only perfect, all-sided embodiment of faith. Since without faith it is impossible to please God, and since Jesus always and perfectly pleased the Father; since faith is the very root and spirit of obedience, and Jesus was the servant of the Lord, who finished the God -given work, Jesus was perfect in faith. In the cloud of witnesses we see faith manifested in scattered fragments, each saint illustrating some aspect, overcoming some difficulty, enduring some test; but Jesus had all faith. The whole realm of faith was traversed by Him; He ascended the whole scale, from the lowest to the highest step; He endured, and He conquered all things. To the end, even unto the death of the cross, He trusted in God. The joy set before Him was not His motive, but His encouragement. His motive was God’s glory, and His love to the Father and to man. Hence we may also say, that the joy set before Him was His motive. For what else is that joy but that the Father is glorified, that His name is declared, that sinners are saved; that the Church, the body, is gathered; the Church one with Jesus by the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, who came after His ascension; that the kingdom is established at His appearing, when the Church, the bride, is associated with Him; that throughout the ages God is all in all? This joy, anticipated by faith, sustained Him here below; upon this joy He entered at His resurrection; this joy is fulfilling itself even now, and is yet awaiting its perfect manifestation and consummation.

Thus by faith He endured the cross, despising the shame. "The cross," the only time in which the word occurs in our epistle as the symbol of the obedience, the expiatory sacrifice, the offering up of Himself unto the Father. Who can fathom the depth of His suffering on Golgotha? The more we think of His divinity, and the more we think of Him as the Son of man, of His infinite and eternal love to the Father, of His most sensitive and perfectly holy humanity, the more we wonder with deep sorrow and contrition, yet with adoring gratitude, that He endured the cross, despising the shame. Pain and shame were most real to Him - to Jesus, Son of God and Son of man, one person.

Jesus is now at the right hand of the throne of God. You know how the apostle, in harmony with all Scripture, delights in presenting the glory and exaltation of the Saviour as the result and reward of His obedience unto death.*(*So in Phil. 3, and in the epistles to the Colossians and Ephesians.) Who is this glorious One, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come? It is Christ, whom He raised from the dead, the man Jesus, who suffered, was crucified, dead and buried.1 Who is it that ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things? Who but He that also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?2 Thus Jesus Himself, before His ascension, declared unto His disciples that all power was given unto Him in heaven and on earth; that is, given by the Father unto Him as the incarnate Son, who obeyed the salvation-will of God. It is unto His God and our God, unto His Father and our Father, that Jesus ascends; and when in the heavenly glory He appears unto the beloved disciple, He reveals Himself as the First-begotten of the dead: "I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore." (1 Colossians 1:2; Eph. 4.)

Jesus, the Messiah, is represented to us in Scripture both as Lord and as servant; both as the Kin^, whom we honour even as we honour the Father, and as the first of worshippers, who in the heavenly glory continually maketh intercession for us. In the book of Revelation, which is the revelation of Jesus Christ in this sense also, that it manifests unto us the glorified Christ, the Saviour speaks emphatically of God as His God. Blessed truth, that He who is the First and the Last, the Only-begotten of the Father, has become the Servant, the Anointed, the Head of the Church; that the Father has given Him unto us forever; that on His throne of glory He identifies Himself with the brethren, praying with them as well as for them; that even now He is waiting for His return to us and for His reign with us, even as we are longing for His appearing. In the light of His infinite, eternal divine glory, we behold His marvellous condescension and love. And as the fruit and reward of His obedience we behold His majesty, power, and kingdom. This truth is full of consolation - full of the most searching and animating consolation. Jesus is our Example; He is our Forerunner; He is the Prototype of all God’s saints; the first-born among many brethren. We also are through suffering to enter into glory. Who would venture to rise to such a conception, had not the Lord Himself, from His throne of exaltation, addressed these words to His churches: "To him that over-cometh will I grant to sit with Me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in His throne."

Learn then that as we are saved by faith in Christ crucified, so we are saved in the faith of Jesus, knowing the fellowship of His sufferings. Jesus suffered and died to deliver us from wrath and to give us glory. But Jesus suffered and died, that we should arm ourselves likewise with the same mind; that choosing to suffer in the flesh, we should cease from sin; that being chastened of the Lord, we should not be judged; that by dying daily, we should rejoice in the resurrection power

through the Spirit that raised Jesus from the dead. Jesus did indeed suffer, in order that we should not suffer the wrath of God, separation from His presence and the eternal death. But Jesus suffered that we should suffer all the pain and struggle, all the loneliness and opposition, all the self-denial and crucifixion, which the flesh must experience when the Spirit of Christ rules and guides. Jesus died to send a sword, to send death to self, sin, the love of the world, nay, to our whole life, as it is of the first Adam. Oh, how sad is it to notice these two inseparable aspects of Christ separated! Some speaking of Christ as our model, who know not Christ as our Sacrifice and High Priest; others again speaking much of Christ's blood and perfect peace, and not remembering that Christ suffered for us, leaving us an example that we should follow His steps. Let us hold fast the simplicity of God's method. In the obedience, sufferings, and death of Jesus we have righteousness and peace, and that first and always; and in them also we have the source, the example, and the strength of our life of faith. And since the words death and crucifixion, suffering and self-denial, have a gloomy and discouraging sound, let us remember that here is nothing legal, hard, impossible, or even uncertain. All real bitterness was tasted in our stead by Jesus. The light of resurrection shines into our hearts, even while we mortify the members which are upon earth. The peace of God and the sympathy of Jesus uphold us, even while we offer up Isaac, our only son. The assurance of the Father's unchanging love, and the indwelling of the Holy Ghost bring us joy, even while we groan in this our tabernacle, being burdened, and while we feel the presence and power of sin and temptation. Our blessedness is not in that we mourn, but in that even now Christ is our consolation. We are indeed sorrowful, yet alway rejoicing. We show the death of the Lord; but it is in a feast, the banquet of love and joy. For He died that we should henceforth truly live, and we hear the words, "Till I come."

(II.) There is a race set before us. Every human life may be viewed as a race, even as every human life may be compared with a fight. There is, however, a good fight of faith, and there is a bad fight against and without faith. So there is the race which the world sets before us, which our own ambition chooses, and which we run in our own unrenewed energy - and there is the race set before us of God, on which we enter when we give our hearts to Jesus, and hear from His lips the words of majesty and love - "Follow Me." The one race appeals to us in our natural state; animated by merely human, if not sinful motives, and pursuing earthly methods, we may reach the goal - a crown of fading leaves; but in the God-appointed race all is of God - heavenly, spiritual, and eternal. The prize of the high calling in Christ Jesus is the crown, immortal and unfading, the inheritance of light and blessedness, the throne of Jesus Himself, who will associate with Himself the disciples, who have overcome and finished their course. The method and laws of the race are the words of Jesus abiding in the heart, the mind of Christ implanted by the Holy Ghost. The strength and energy of the race is the influence, faith-renewing, which the Lord sends unto all that wait upon Him. The race is set before us of God, and God renews our strength to run the race.

It is a race; hence constancy, stedfastness, perseverance are absolutely necessary. He that endureth to the end shall be saved. Many, like the Galatians, run well at first, rejoicing in the liberty of the gospel, and with enthusiastic love receiving the messenger of peace; but they are soon hindered and turned aside. Many who at first and immediately rejoice, and perhaps owing to the very absence of sorrow, contrition, and self-distrust, soon fall away, because they have no root.

It is a race, and therefore requires concentration of purpose, singleness of aim, and self-restraint: they who have determined to gain the prize lay aside every burden, and free themselves from

every entanglement. They need no exhortation to do so. Of their own accord they lay aside everything that hinders. This points out the necessity (must I say also the difficulty?) of sincerity and singleness of heart. Jesus says, "One thing is needful." May the heart respond, "One thing I ask of the Lord;" and the life, "One thing I do." Every weight, the burden of cares and difficulties, of earthly plans and self-chosen toil, must be laid aside; and that sin of unbelief, which is always within and about us, always obstructing our progress, clouding our view, paralyzing our energy, and above all lessening our love. Is not faith victory? Is not unbelief defeat?*(*Whereas weight designates everything that hinders, though in itself not wrong, the apostle proceeds to mention sin, designating it by a word which occurs nowhere else (■ξπ■ρ■στατον), and which seems to mean, coming in our way, standing round us, obstructing us in our progress. To refer the word to unbelief is in harmony with the whole argument and with the whole epistle, (Hebrews 3:12.) The words of Owen appear to me to express it most concisely: "It is the nature of indwelling sin, at such seasons, to work by unbelief towards a departure from the living God or the relinquishment of the gospel.") The apostle asks us to lay aside every weight, and the besetting sin, as if we could do it, and could do it easily. "Lay aside," he says, "these useless and hurtful things; leave them behind." It is easy, when we look unto Jesus; but impossible unless our thoughts and affections are centered in Christ - unless we behold Him as our Lord and Bridegroom, our strength and joy. This is the only method of the new covenant. We are not under the law, but under grace. It is not by introspection, by self-discipline, by attempting first to lay aside our weight and our sin, that we gain the victory. These things do not precede the look unto Jesus. It is the light which dispels the darkness; it is the love of Jesus which separates us from the world; it is the grace of Christ that delivers us from all fear and doubt.

Thus the apostle describes his own experience.* His only object is to win Christ, and to be found in Him. His constant desire is to know Christ in His fullness, and the fellowship of His sufferings and the power of His resurrection, being made conformable unto His death. Starting with Jesus, he entered the race; looking unto Him, walking with Him, he desired to finish his course. Christ is the end of the way, and the way itself. (*Phil. 3.)

"Look away" unto Jesus: averting our eyes from the difficulties before us. The difficulties of our path are great; we know and feel them; we must look at them, but we must then look away from them unto Jesus. Like Abraham, we must not consider the obstacles and even impossibilities; we must not stagger at the promise of God through unbelief. We are not to be insensible in sorrow and trial; we are not to forget our cares; but feeling the weight of our cares, cast them upon the Lord: rejoicing in Him, we may be delivered from all painful anxiety. Stoicism enables men to endure, but the heart is hardened, and still more estranged from God. Looking off unto Jesus, the difficulties and trials of our path only accelerate our progress and deepen our peace.

What is the secret of holiness, peacefulness, and strength, but to have no will, separate from and prior to the will of God? To run the race God sets before us, to walk in the good works foreordained by divine wisdom and love. It is one thing to ask, What good thing should I like to do for God? Here self is still choosing, and we please and serve after all ourselves. But to ask, like Saul, beholding the divine Master, "Lord, what wilt Thou have me to do?" is the beginning of true separation to God. If we run the race set before us, engaging in duties God-appointed and not self-chosen, and bestowing all our energies, and that cheerfully, on the God-appointed tasks and sorrows, then may we rest in full assurance that our strength shall never fail, that our fruit shall

remain,* that our life shall, though apparently fragmentary, be complete, that we shall reach the end, and be counted faithful in that day. (*John 15:16.)

"Run with patience." Always remembering that it is not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy; that he that believeth shall not make haste, that the race is not to the swift;1 but learning the divine paradox, that they who wait on the Lord run, and are not weary. We have the example of the prophets2 in patience or endurance, and above all of our blessed Lord. This endurance (in which faith shows its meekness as well as strength) is the great characteristic of the saints, the followers of the Lamb. Here also is wisdom. He who gives up self rejoices in God, and he who has died to this present world anticipates the joy of the heavenly kingdom. Experience teaches us that there is an unreal and unfruitful way of speaking of heaven and the future glory, when we forget that Jesus Himself is the heaven we expect; and that we have received even now the earnest pledge and foretaste of our inheritance. Oh, how much of heaven may we not have even now! for are we not even at present the sons of God? and beholding Jesus, are we not even now to be like Him? It is not so much our sufferings, our infirmities, or our trials which separate us from the joy to come, as sin, and above all unbelief. For if a man love Jesus, will not the Father and the Son come and take up their abode in him? (1Ecclesiastes 9:11.2James 5.)

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CHAPTER X X X V I I.

"WHOM THE LORD LOVETH HE CHASTENETH."

Hebrews 12:3-13.

LOOKING unto Jesus, we behold both the way and the end of the way. We walk in Him, with Him, to Him. We are to be glorified together with Christ, if so be that we suffer with Him And therefore we are constantly to consider Jesus; not the sufferings of Jesus, but Jesus, who suffered and entered into glory; not the work of Christ, as bringing to us salvation, but Himself, our Saviour, our life, the strength and the model of our walk.

Look at Jesus glorified, and you will behold His wounds; you will see Him, the Lamb as it was slain. Look at Jesus on the cross, and you will behold His glory, and the Father glorified. The sufferings of Christ are remembered in heaven, and in the Church. The image of the suffering Jesus is engraved on the hearts of all believers. To remember Jesus is to remember Jesus crucified. When we are inclined to become weary and faint in our minds, when our courage fails and our patience wavers, let us consider Jesus, and His experience on earth. To live on earth among sinners, this in itself was trial and sorrow to the Holy One. Not even His own disciples could understand Him; for they savoured the things that are of man. Even they called forth constantly the exercise of patience and forbearance. Jesus was always alone. His soul dwelt apart, with thoughts, desires, sorrows, and hopes, which none could fathom and share. And what contradictions did He suffer from sinners! Jesus was by reason of His purity so clear-sighted and sensitive that from the beginning He knew that He was hated and rejected. He did not commit Himself even to those who admired and followed Him, or who seemed to believe in Him;* for He knew what was in man - contradiction to divine love. Sinners, whom He came to bless and save, opposed Him, the Holy One. He knew and felt their contradiction. It was deep-seated, strong, and bitter; and at last it manifested itself in the cruel hands which nailed Him to the cross. Jesus only loved, blessed, prayed, wept, and died. Let us consider Him as our example! Let us learn of Him to be meek and lowly in heart; always willing to submit to God’s will and commandment. (*John 2.)

It is in the heart that the burnt- offering is brought. We have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin. This refers not so much to the death of martyrdom. We ought to be willing to lay down our lives both for Jesus and for the brethren. But in the conflict with sin, we ought to dread no pain, no wounds, no crucifixion, even when asked to pluck out the right eye, or to cut off the right hand, to sacrifice the thing most cherished.

"Take the heart from out my heart, Though it cost me bitter smart."*(*Silesius.)

Chastisement,* which is the true character of all painful and trying experiences of the saint, is spoken of throughout Scripture; but we are apt to forget this most important teaching of the word. We remember the verses well enough - they have become proverbs and commonplaces - but we

forget to apply them to ourselves; and when the afflictions and difficulties come, we often fail to recognize in them the fulfillment of the Scripture word. In the world you shall have tribulation. Through much tribulation we must enter into the kingdom of God. Many are the afflictions of the righteous. They that sow with tears shall reap with joy. [*The sufferings of God's children are sent either to chasten and correct, to bring them to the knowledge of and victory over hidden sin or transgressions, or to prove, test, and thus strengthen and raise to a higher level of experience and usefulness, or they are a privilege and honour as a testimony for Christ, for His name's sake, and to show forth His praise. But they may all be summed up underπαιδ■ια, parental discipline, and are contrasted with the judgments of divine displeasure and anger. The apostle uses here (Hebrews 12:5) a personification of the divine voice of exhortation speaking to us in love. (Proverbs 3:11.) In Proverbs the eternal wisdom addresses warning, counsel, and encouragement to "her children." (Matthew 11:19.)]

Scripture is a book for life; and as life is full of affliction, so the Word of God abounds with counsel and comfort for the afflicted. For to view and to bear affliction aright is not easy; it is impossible without God's Word and Spirit. We are inclined either to despise the chastening of the Lord, or to faint under it. Either we try to bear trials in pride, in our own strength, without recognizing that they are sent by God to humble us, to lead us to self-examination and repentance, to deepen our sense of dependence on God, to fix our thoughts and desires more on heavenly things. The world generally endeavours, in time of sorrow, bereavement, or trial, to get over it; that is, to feel it as little as possible. God does not mean us to get over it, but to feel chastisement, and in and through it to be drawn nearer to Himself. The spirit of Stoicism is far removed from the spirit of God's children. They are sensitive; they feel the displeasure of God; they stand upon the watch-tower and ask, "Shew me wherefore Thou contendest with me?" The Christian does no harden his heart against sorrow and bereavement; he does not look upon suffering as an iron necessity, to be borne with an iron and impassive calmness; it is sent of God.

There is the other danger of sinking into despondency; we think we cannot endure it; darkness seems to swallow us up; hard thoughts rise within us; our hearts fail us; and the voice of thanksgiving and hope seems hushed forever.

Now knowing from the Word of God and our own experience that such is the tendency of our hearts, either in undue elation to despise God's chastening, or in undue depression to faint, let us pray for ourselves, and for all the afflicted, that we may not lose the benefit of the precious, though sad, gift of chastisement, that we may humble ourselves under the mighty hand of God, so that He may exalt us in due time.

Chastisement is sent by fatherly love. In heaven no chastisement is needed; in hell no chastisement is possible; earth is the scene, and the children of God the subjects of chastisement.

God is our Father, and therefore He chastens us. Jesus is our loving and faithful Saviour, and therefore He rebukes us. And the Holy Ghost, although it is His to comfort and sustain the believer, reveals unto us first, with piercing conviction, the sins and failings which are to be judged and given up. Chastisement has reference not merely to sins, but God's object is to conform us to the image of Christ. God had one Son, without sin, but not without sorrow. But we are sinful, and our hearts cleave to the world and our souls to the dust. To love God truly, and to find our joy and delight in Him and in heavenly things, to give up trust and complacency in self, and to ascribe glory

to God only, how far are we from this! and sometimes when we or others least think so. Was not Job upright and devoted to the fear of God? Why is David a man of sorrows, and Jeremiah a man of tears? Paul, caught up to the third heaven, and beholding the glory of the Lord, has to bear the thorn in the flesh. John the beloved is in Patmos. God knows why. He has chosen the saints and appointed the sufferings of the saints, that they may win Christ; that they may be made like unto Him; that they may hereafter be glorified together with Him. We see the gentlest, the most heavenly- minded Christians tried; they themselves are the first to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and to acknowledge that God is trying and refining them, to condemn sin in the flesh, to vivify the Spirit. And this chastisement is severe. He scourgeth every son. Even an apostle beseeches the Lord three times to remove it. There, where we are most sensitive, God touches us. The thorn in the flesh is something which we fancy we cannot bear if it were to remain life-long. We have emerged as it were out of a dark tunnel, and fancy that the rest of our journey will be amid sunlit fields. We have achieved steep and rugged ascents, and imagine the period of great and exhausting exertions is over. But Abraham was above a hundred years old when his faith was severely tested. The trial, deepest and sorest, seems to leave us for awhile, yet it returns again. For God’s love remains, and He scourgeth every son whom He receiveth. If the apostle Paul stood in danger of spiritual pride and self-trust, and needed this perpetual scourging to cling to Jesus grace, which is all-sufficient, oh let us remember that in each one of us there is the same flesh which needs painful crucifixion. And what shall I say of daily trials, losses, wounded affection, sickness, loneliness?

One of the platitudes of the present day is, that religion is not a gloomy, but a cheerful thing. Although it is easy to see what was meant by him who first opposed this assertion, either to morbid and self-assumed gloom, or to the ignorant representation of the world; yet, as it is generally understood, nothing can be less true. Blessed are they that mourn. Woe unto you that laugh. Narrow is the way. If any man will serve Me, let him take up his cross, and follow Me. He that seeketh his life shall lose it. Although the Christian anoints his head and washes his face, he is always fasting; the will has been broken by God, by wounding or bereaving us in our most tender point; the flesh is being constantly crucified. We are not born to be happy either in this world or in our present condition, but the reverse - to be unhappy; nay, to try constantly to be dead to self and the world, that the spirit may possess God, and rejoice in Him.*(*As there is a false and morbid asceticism, so there is also a false and pernicious tendency to cover a worldly and shallow method of life under the phrase of "religion being joyous, and no enemy to cheerfulness." To take a very simple and obvious instance. What is meant by a "cheerful, pleasant Sunday"? No doubt men may have erred on the side of strictness and legalism; but is a "cheerful" Sunday one in which there is much communion with God in prayer and meditation on God’s Word, much anticipation of the joys of heaven in praise and fellowship with the brethren? Alas! too many understand by a cheerful Sunday a day in which the spiritual element is reduced to a minimum.)

God is our Father; this present life is only a school, a period of childhood and minority, discipline and chastisement are the tokens of God’s unchanging love and constant watchfulness. Child hood is both solemn and peaceful. We look back on it with reverence and affection. For in child hood everything has the character of education; it is spiritual, and for the sake of the real inner man and his future. Parents and teachers are constantly directing, and rebuking; the whole life is under rule, restraint, and guidance; but the only and constant object is the child himself, his good, his

character, his future; the only motive is love. There is more reality in a child's life than in our subsequent life; the whole day, with its lessons and recreations, is devoted to the true and real interests of the child. Hence, when we look back on it, we say, How happy we were! Not that we forget the constant troubles l sorrows, cares, and fears which children have; but we feel that then everyone connected with us loved us, and sought our welfare; that we were the object, not means to an end, but the end itself.*(*The contrast between the discipline of earthly fathers and of God. (1) The one is father of our flesh; God is the Father of spirits, the Creator and source of life, spiritual and everlasting, as well as physical and temporal. (2) The one for a brief period; God during our whole lifetime. (3) The one with imperfect knowledge, in much infirmity "after their own pleasure;" God with unerring wisdom, and in pure love. (4) The aim of the one, our earthly future; the aim of God, to make us partakers of His holiness. Yet imperfect as is the earthly father's discipline, we gave it reverence, "as was right" and according to God's will, and for our safety. How much more ought we to be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, of whom is our true life.)

Now, as childhood is to the rest of our earthly life, so is the whole of our earthly life to the future heavenly one. Let us cultivate then the spirit of childhood. Let us think it natural that we are daily rebuked and chastened, that our thoughts, words, and actions need constant correction and alteration; let us receive this with the docility and meekness of children, and with the trustful and sweet assurance that love breathes in all our chastening, that we are in the most tender and fatherly hands. God's only object is our blessedness, and this is our blessedness, to be like Jesus, the only-begotten of the. Father, the first-born among many brethren. No chastisement while it lasts is joyous, but grievous; but afterwards it yieldeth the peace able fruits of righteousness unto them that are exercised thereby. Even on earth we reap the fruit, and enter into the harvest. "Afterwards." Does not this word search and try us? Have we not all had chastisement? Have we not all passed through sorrow? Can we look back on the past without recalling seasons of deep and heartfelt affliction? Has no sword pierced our soul, has no painful sacrifice been exacted of us? Do these things belong to the past? Have they gone and disappeared without leaving behind them peaceable fruits unto righteousness? After such experiences, tears, conflicts; after such solemn, silent, chastened seasons in the wilderness; after such views of Jesus at the grave of Lazarus, of the fourth Man in the fiery furnace, are we still worldly, proud, impatient, volatile? do we still seek our rest and joy in the broken cisterns instead of the living Fountain? God forbid that we should forget the chastening of the Lord, that we should "get over" sorrow, or be comforted like the world. Now is our 'afterwards,' peace and godliness to-day - by reason of yesterday's sorrow and trial.

Especially in the new covenant dispensation God's people are called to suffer. The saying of the great philosopher is well known: "Prosperity was the characteristic of the Old Testament; adversity is the characteristic of the New."* The full meaning of this remark does not lie on the surface. The Israelites had the promise of earthly prosperity. God promised to reward His people with temporal blessings, if they obeyed His commandment. He Himself was to be their portion, and their exceeding great reward; and such was the spirituality of the law, that the saints under the old covenant dispensation knew that in God, and in Him alone, was their life and joy. In connecting thus obedience and earthly prosperity, God not merely wished to help and attract the people in their spiritual weakness and infancy, but also to teach them that every good gift cometh from above; that Jehovah is Lord of all, and that even on this sin-defiled and Satan-enslaved earth the

divine laws of holy love contain the true and permanent sources of physical and social happiness. And this will be seen when Israel, converted by the Holy Ghost and restored to their own land, shall walk in God's precepts. Then, as the psalms and prophets describe, on the basis of the original promises in the law, all earthly lands will be prosperous. No war, no oppression, no abject poverty, no famine shall then bring misery and suffering to mankind; but the original purpose of the loving and generous Creator shall then be realized, and hitherto unknown resources of health, wealth, and social well-being be developed. (*Bacon.)

Israel was chosen for this purpose also - to reveal on earth the blessedness of a God-fearing commonwealth. But only in the future Messianic kingdom will this be realized. When Israel had these promises of earthly blessing, the sufferings and afflictions of the godly must have been a most perplexing problem. We can understand the difficulties propounded in the book of Job, and in such psalms as the 37th and 73rd: "Fret not thyself because of evildoers. Let not thy footsteps slip, doubting God's truth and faithfulness, when thou seest the righteous in trouble and anguish, and the wicked without care and sorrow." This exercise of faith was very great. How intense and ardent was then their soul-cleaving unto Jehovah! "Whom have I in the heavens but Thee?" "Though He slay me, yet will I stay with Him." How firm was their hope, that ultimately Jehovah would come and establish the kingdom, when the poor will have bread and be satisfied, when justice and equity would reign. The Old Testament is indeed the religion of prosperity; but only in idea and in the hope of Messiah's reign. In actual reality, it was the religion of suffering, of tears, of self-denial, of faith in the Unseen. Hence the Psalms of David and the prayers of the prophets.*(*Wo kämen. David's Psalmen her, Wenn nicht die liebe Träbsal wär.)

Gradually the divine method of glory through suffering was made known to God's people. From righteous Abel onward, the servants of God suffered for righteousness. From the days of Abraham, the true yet imperfect believers suffered while they were tested, and led into a higher region of light. From the days of Joseph, the faithful ones had to be bound in fetters, and the word of the Lord tried them, by a divine chemistry separating in them the carnal from the spiritual. Moses preferred Jehovah's reproach to Egypt's honour and treasure. Chosen of God, and nearest to Him, Moses was the most plagued of all men; the burden of a sinful and disobedient, yet tenderly-beloved, nation rested on him. But in David a new manifestation of suffering was given to Israel. See the shepherd-youth, in the simplicity and beauty of childlike faith, performing heroic acts, unseen by man, on the silent field; no feverish ambition or youthful self-confidence, but trust in the God of his fathers steeling his arm against the lion and bear; see this true Israelite without guile, strong in faith and with a tender and loving heart overflowing with song and melody, chosen of God, anointed by Samuel the prophet, champion and deliverer of Israel's armies, beloved of the nation; yet meek and lowly, without pride and elation of impatience. How noble his bearing to Saul! how quiet and humble towards the people! True king, by the grace of God; lover of God, and companion of all them that fear Him; yet who ever suffered like him persecution, reproach, famine, or nakedness? He was hunted like a partridge on the mountains, surrounded by foes, despised, forsaken; tears were his meat day after day, while the enemy continually said, "Where is thy God?" The reign of David was full of trouble and most heart-searching sorrow. What prayers of anguish and desolate mourning ascended from his soul! Yet was he God's chosen and anointed; the Beloved was his name; in and through him God's blessing rested upon Israel. Since that time the prediction of Messiah as the suffering servant of Jehovah assumes increasing distinctness, the

picture of the One, the only One, of whom David, of whom the true righteous Israel, were only imperfect types. To us, the New Testament Church, a clearer light has come, a brighter blessing is given. What is it? One word expresses it - the cross. Jesus is our Lord; if the world hated Him, it will hate us also. If Jesus came into the world to suffer and to die, can we call ourselves followers of Jesus, or brothers resembling Him, unless we suffer with Him, and are made conformable unto His death? We have to suffer for righteousness sake; we have to suffer because of our sin and of the corruption of our flesh. But in both these kinds of suffering it is our blessed privilege to have fellow ship with Christ crucified. When we suffer as Christians, we say, This is because I belong to Jesus; I fill up what is behind of His sufferings. If God sends affliction and sorrow, we say, God made the Captain of salvation perfect through sufferings; He treats me now as one of the children. If we find it painful to overcome impatience, self-love, and the various manifestations of sin, we say, I have been crucified together with Christ, then God condemned sin in the flesh; and by virtue of my union with Jesus I must now mortify the members that are on earth. Christ's cross separates us from sin and the world. Here is our station. Here is the nexus of justification and sanctification. Here we learn to become a burnt-offering. Here we spend truly sweet moments, yet full of sorrow and pain, while we behold not merely our sins forgiven, but crucified; while we behold ourselves not merely acquitted, but cast into the fiery mould, to be made like Jesus. Every child of Adam has trouble, sickness, suffering; only Christ's people have the cross. The cross of Christ is despised and hated, not merely by self-righteous Jews and wise and worldly Greeks; but within the professing Church the apostle weeps over many who are enemies of the cross of Christ. Not of the doctrine, that Christ died instead of sinners, but of the teaching, that we have been crucified with Him, and have been planted in the likeness of His death; that we have been saved, and are being saved, not from death, but out of death; that dying daily the painful death by crucifixion, we live the spiritual, resurrection-life together with and in Christ. We are to be partakers of God's holiness.* When God commands us to be holy, He knows that, there is only one holiness, even His own. Man trying to be holy - that is, separate from sin and the world - can only fail; he is only going to a greater distance from God, from the only position in which God can have communion with us as poor and helpless sinners. But God gives us His holiness. In Christ Jesus, who is both the Temple and the High Priest, we are brought nigh, a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy people. As Jesus covers, shelters, and beautifies us with His righteousness and peace, so He separates also by His holiness from sin and worldliness. Chastisement is one of the instruments by which the Father prunes the fruit-bearing branches. By affliction and the inward crucifixion we learn to seek our true life, treasure, strength, and joy, not in earthly affections, possessions, pursuits, and attainments, however good and noble, but in Him who is at the right hand of God; and the end will be glory. Christ's people, who have passed through much tribulation, shall stand before the throne and the Lamb, arrayed in white robes, and palm branches in their hands. (*Compare next Lecture.)

Let us therefore not faint, but lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees; let us run with patience the race set before us,* making straight paths for our feet, that thus even the weak and lame may not stumble, but gain strength and skill in the divine and peaceful path. (*Verse 13 returns to verse 1 [Hebrews 12:1;Hebrews 12:13.])

38 - Heb_12:14-18

CHAPTER X X X V I I I.

PEACE AND HOLINESS.

Hebrews 12:14-18. THE two exhortations,* to follow peace with all men, and that holiness without which none can see the Lord, comprise the whole Christian life. They refer to our relation to God and to our neighbour. They embrace both tables of the law. Love to God is the first and supreme commandment. But, as Jesus so beautifully expressed it, the second is like unto it: "Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (*The preceding exhortation, "Lift up the hands," etc.; "Making straight paths for your feet," etc., alludes toIsaiah 35:3, andProverbs 4:26. As Delitzsch remarks, the total apostasy of weak and hesitating members was to be prevented by the whole congregation rousing itself to decision and faithfulness. This would exert a salutary and helpful influence, as a smooth and even path encourages weak and lame feet to the effort of walking.) The intimate connection between these two exhortations is always pointed out in Scripture. In loving our brother we abide in God. If there is a cloud between me and my brother, there is also a cloud between me and the Lord. Our growth in grace is according to God’s will and Christ’s institution within the Church, and in and by the communion of saints. Hence we are exhorted to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace; for there is one body and one Spirit, even as we are called in one hope.

Christ has indeed promised to each individual, "If a man love Me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him." And we can scarcely lay too much stress on the necessity of secret prayer, of solitary meditation, of each one working out his own salvation with fear and trembling. But neither can we lay too much stress on the institution of the congregation, on the communion of saints, on the special blessing, on the special presence promised to the meeting of believers in Jesus name, on the necessity of continuing stedfast in doctrine - that is, in the apostolic teaching as continued by God-given teachers and pastors - in fellowship, in breaking of bread, and in united prayer. The individual spiritual life is to be nourished in the Church, and is again to nourish and enrich the congregation; and as no general and comprehensive philanthropy can be genuine without love to parents and children, neighbours and friends, or can be a substitute for the affection, claimed first by divine and natural law, so as a rule no Christian is in his right place, or in a healthy condition, who does not live and work in a congregation, and give his energies, beginning with his prayer and intercession, to a community of believers, united together for worship and work in one special place. When the Hebrews became cold in love and wavering in the faith, they began neglecting to assemble themselves together, and cultivate Christian fellowship. Edification in Scripture always refers to the building up of believers as a community. Fellowship and co-operation are inseparably connected with the development of many aspects of Christian life.

Now the characteristic feature of the Church ought to be the spirit of peace. "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!" "The multitude of them that believed

were of one heart and of one soul." And this concord proceeds from that peace with God, which the individual Christian possesses, even as the absence of concord must be traced to the absence of peace in the heart with the Lord. The peace the world cannot give, which passeth all understanding, comes from the God of peace, the Father who loved us. It comes through Jesus Christ, by His death on the cross; it enters the heart by the Holy Ghost, who assures us of our acceptance. But this is only the first experience of peace. Our peace is the very peace of Jesus. "My peace I give unto you." How then can they who have Christ's peace, as well as the peace purchased by Christ, be without love to the brethren, without patience and meekness? How can clamour and bitterness and malice, uncharitableness and envy, enter into the heart which rejoices in God, and which is one with that Saviour who washed the disciples feet; who prayed for Peter, while he denied his Master; who shed His blood, inter ceding for His enemies, and loving His own to the end?

"Follow peace with all men." "Blessed are the peace-makers; for they shall be called the sons of God." Why has this beatitude the highest reward attached to it? Because the only begotten Son of God is the Peace-maker. He came to make peace, true peace in righteousness and holiness. He made peace by His life and death; He sends the message of peace to all, far and near; He brings peace to the greatest enemies, and despisers of His gospel. By the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, He gives believers to be partakers of His own peace.

Christians are therefore at peace, and the makers of peace. They are faithful to God, and to His truth; their testimony is against sin and unbelief in the world, against hypocrisy and unfaithfulness in the Church; but as love is their life-element, so peace is their characteristic. "Into whatever house ye go, salute it;" and this is the salutation, "Peace be with you." "And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you." As if Christ said, You possess peace as your own, in alienable and most precious, deep-seated in the very heart of hearts. You go forth to wish, to declare, to bring peace. They who receive you shall through your peace be brought to peace, as flame kindles flame. They who reject you shall not disturb your peace, or even diminish it, or embitter you, or discourage you for your further work.

We are to follow peace - cultivate it earnestly. We must have peace within first, if we are to be the sons of peace, the peacemakers. Let us therefore look constantly to Jesus.

There are dark thoughts in the heart; a discontent with things around us, and a dissatisfaction with our spiritual state and attainments: a discontent which is barren of useful or helpful thoughts and actions. There are fears and misgivings which paralyze and fetter; a downward bent, the soul cleaving to the dust; the mind running to and fro in fruitless retrospect, calculating and planning future amendment. But it need not be so. The child of God ought to walk in the light of His countenance. Saved by grace, his life is a life of faith in the Son of God, who loved him, and gave Himself for him.

Again, there are Christians who, although they know the grace of the Lord, seem always to be in search of something to give them a fuller peace. They run eagerly after every new doctrine and movement, as if it might bring them the unknown treasure. Oh, dear soul, remember thy baptism in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost! Look unto Jesus, who died for thee, and who now liveth to pray for thee, and by His Spirit to conform thee to His image. If Jesus dwells in the heart by faith, it is peace. We rest in the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus, and

from which nothing shall be able to separate us. Christ's peace, beginning in the conscience, pervades the heart with its affections, and the mind with its thought and purpose. It passes all understanding; it manifests itself in humility and quietness. There is sometimes among Christians a restlessness and feverish energy, running to and fro in order to draw water, which shows that there is a want of the true peace within. Christ has given to us to have within us a well of water springing up into eternal life.

If God's peace is within us, we love the brethren and all men. We are able to deal with them tenderly and calmly. Humility, affection, and hope fullness characterize the son of peace; for he is always praising the boundless grace of God in which he stands.

Thus, in our relation with our fellow-men we are in communion with God; therefore the apostle adds: "Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord." How beautiful and solemn are these words. They seem to descend from the very throne of God, out of the brightness of that light which no man can approach unto. And yet every heart must assent, and every conscience set to its seal. "Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord." Who can hear the words without bowing in reverence, and saying, Amen? .And such is the divine simplicity and power of these words, that once heard they can never be forgotten. They live forever in the memory. But do these words fill me with fear or with love? do they repel and chill? or do they attract and animate? Do they disturb or deepen my peace, and the sweet assurance, I am the Lord's, and He is mine?

Some of us may remember the time when this word and similar declarations of Scripture brought to us fear and the spirit of bondage. Some here may still be in this state. Is it not strange that we should think this a hard saying, and that we should avoid looking it earnestly in the face? and yet we pass so lightly over a word like this, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." And what is this declaration, "Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord," but another form of the same most solemn truth: The flesh cannot please God, and sinners cannot stand in His presence. Only the renewed, who by faith in Jesus have received power to become the sons of God; only the spiritual, born of the Spirit, have fellowship with the Father and the Son. But when you hear, "Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," you think of a doctrine and of a past experience. While when you hear, "Holiness, without which none shall see the Lord," you think of God and yourself, living now, and this indeed is full of awe and solemnity.

God is holy, separate from all darkness and sin; but not in isolated majesty banishing the imperfect and sinful from His presence: for God is light; God is love. It is the nature of light to communicate itself. Remaining pure and bright, undiminished and unsullied, it overcomes darkness, and kindles light. The holiness of God is likewise mentioned in Scripture, mostly in connection with love, communicating itself, and drawing into itself. "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts The angelic creation is also holy; for it is God's. "Heaven and earth are full of Thy glory;" for in Christ both heaven and earth are to be filled with the divine light and love. "The Holy One of Israel, and your Redeemer." "I am holy" - but God does not remain alone, separate - "be ye also holy." "He that is mighty hath done great things to me, and holy is His name."*

I behold then in the holiness of the Lord His most pure, righteous, solemn, and yet most tender and compassionate, love condescending to me; not willing to leave me in my sin, opaque darkness, flesh, Adam, but to bring me unto Himself; nay, to make me a partaker of His holiness. I see the holiness of God manifested in Jesus. I see Jesus, the Holy One, God and Man, Creator

and Creature, Lord and Servant, Adored and Adoring; I see the Babe, that Holy Thing which was born of the Virgin Mary, holy, and yet flesh; I see Him on earth, the Tabernacle of God; I see Him on the cross, the Holy Temple broken, nay, the Holy Temple accounted sinful, and deserted by God; I see Him risen, the Holy Temple built again; I see Him ascended, the great High Priest. "Holiness unto the Lord" is written on His fore head; and I know that in Him I also am holy to Jehovah. By the blood of Jesus we are brought nigh to God. In the great High Priest we arc priests, holy, set apart to worship and serve God. We who were formerly darkness, are now light; we who were enemies, are now in the love of God. In Jesus we are sanctified. As Luther frequently said, "My holiness is in heaven." (*Compare also Psalm 99;Hosea 11:9. The Spirit, who in condescending love comes most directly into contact with us, is emphatically called "holy.")

Hence the exhortation of the apostle, when he says, Follow holiness, is the same which he urges in all his epistles: "Remember, that by the death of Christ you have been delivered, and separated from sin and this evil world; reckon yourselves to have died with Christ, to have been buried, and to have been raised to seek the things which are above." "As you have received Christ, so abide and walk in Him." "Follow" (as the one constant and earnest object of life) "that holiness, without which none shall see the Lord."

There are two errors against which we must guard. Justification and sanctification proceed from one source. When we first believed in Jesus, we received not merely pardon, but the renewal of heart and will. Then we were separated from sin unto God. Then faith saw the old man condemned and crucified. Then we began the new life of faith, in which there is conflict between the Spirit and the flesh. Now, we must always remember and hold fast this beginning. There is no second starting-point for sanctification; there is only one starting-point and beginning of the new life. It is not by some subsequent resolution, in which we concentrate our energy, and by an act of our will that we determine henceforth to live a godly life, but by faith constantly grasping what it grasped at conversion, the grace of God in Christ, that we are disciplined and conformed to the will of God. The apostle never exhorts Christians to make a new beginning, to resolve, to consecrate themselves, to seek a fresh baptism; but to reckon themselves to have died, to have been transplanted, to remember that they had received the Spirit, and that they were set apart unto God. God is holy; Christ is my holiness; I am holy in Him, who died for me, and for me is now in heaven. Humbled and comforted by this assurance, let me abide in Christ; let me put away, in His strength, all sin and worldliness, from which His death separates me; let me live by faith in Jesus.

Again, it is not a matter of degree. The flesh is condemned; sin is judged; the world is crucified. My aim is not to be a little less sinful, carnal, and worldly to-day than I was yesterday. My aim is to mortify the old man, with all its affections and lusts; not to love the world, and any of the things that are in the world; to follow that holiness according to which I have been brought into the position of a child of God, a member of Christ, and a temple of the Holy Ghost. It is not said to me, Become perfect, but be perfect; I am to be a partaker of God’s holiness. This is the peculiarity of the divine method. All human religions are ignorant of this mystery. Ask a Jew, a Mohammedan, a Rationalist, anyone but a Christian, "What do you mean by your righteousness, or your holiness?" His reply is, "I mean my integrity, my kindliness, my purity, my benevolence, my good thoughts, feelings, and works." It is always "my." Ask a Christian, "What is your righteousness?" His answer is, "Jehovah - Christ is my righteousness." "What is your holiness?" "My holiness is in heaven - Christ." "What is your life?" "My life is hid with Christ in God, and Christ liveth in me."

Christ then is made unto us sanctification. If only holiness can admit us to the blessed vision of God, it must be Christ; for imperfect holiness is as great a contradiction as unclean purity. But what is meant by following (striving after) holiness?

If you are one with Christ, you must know that there are within you two, which war against each other with a most determined hostility. The aim of the flesh is nothing less than to kill the Spirit. Its object is total extermination. It is not that you should pray less, but that you should not pray at all. It is not that you should love Christ with less fervour, but that you should forget Him. The aim of the Spirit is to kill the flesh, even sin. This warfare is painful; for sin is still in us. It is not like a garment that we wear. It has entrenched itself in our flesh; that is, the old Adam-nature of body, soul, and spirit. Hence cleaving to Christ and our holiness in Him is crucifixion of the flesh, and that is painful. To overcome the temptations of the world, with its allurements, fascinating errors, or alarming frowns, involves conflict and sacrifice; implies painful watching and constant self-denial. To follow a human standard of holiness, to perform the self-imposed task, to deny oneself the self-chosen number and kind of enjoyments, may involve a certain amount of hardship and pain; and the world has an admiring eye for this kind of saintliness. But what is it to the fight of faith? What to the task of presenting our bodies - our whole self, and that always - a living sacrifice unto God? What to the conflict, in which there is no intermission, to the aim of glorifying God which enters into the minutest detail of our life, whether we eat, or drink, or whatsoever we do? What to the desire to walk in love, even as Christ loved us, to be imitators of God as dear children, to have the same mind in us which was in Christ? Let us study the epistles of the apostle Paul, and learn the solemn and awful character of the Christian life, warfare, and race; the constant need of watch fullness and concentration of energy; of diligence, self-restraint, and self-denial. But let us learn from them that it is a blessed and joyous thing to follow "the Holiness;" to abide in the light and love of God; to dwell in Him who is Light, and in whom is no darkness at all; who is Love, and who hath shed abroad His love in our hearts.

While we thus know the fountain of holiness, let us use with diligence and reverent humility the channels of divine blessing. God has given His word, that the man of God may be furnished thoroughly unto every good work. We are sanctified through the truth. The commandments of God, and the precepts of the Lord Jesus Christ, are to be our constant study, our inward delight, and our daily path. If we keep Christ’s commandments, we abide in His love. The child of God regards all the commandments of God as channels of blessing, and of communion with the Father and the Son; as safeguards against the inroads of the enemy; as expressions of the divine love seeking our love. "Be ye holy, for I am holy," is the language of infinite love, which has chosen us to be His portion for evermore.

He who seeks the holiness, without which none shall see the Lord, must remember that our whole man - body, soul, and spirit - is to be presented unblamable, that in all things we are to glorify God. Let us therefore have regard to all the commandments and warnings of the Word. Two dangers are here pointed out by the apostle, worldly lusts and profanity, or ungodliness.* Believers still need such exhortations. The apostle writes to Timothy, faithful and spiritual as he was, "Flee youthful lusts." The epistles contain many direct and pointed warnings against different sins. No humble Christian will pass over these injunctions as unnecessary. (*InHebrews 12:15, the apostle exhorts the congregation to remember their corporate responsibility for each member. They are to look diligently, lest any man fail of the grace of God. An outward professor may be brought,

through the loving care and zeal of the brethren, to true faith. But if this object is not attained, church- discipline is an important ordinance and duty, "designed by Christ Himself to prevent these contagious evils in churches." (Owen.) The reference is toDeuteronomy 29:18. Out of such, as a root, spring bitter results - a burden of guilt which oppresses and denies the whole congregation. Even when the bad example does not infect the rest, the guilt resting upon the Church, neglecting discipline, acts as defilement. The character and history of Esau is a beacon. We know fromGenesis 24:37; Genesis 27:46; Genesis 28:1-6, that Esau had no appreciation of the divine blessing and promise. He was "profane;" that is, earthly-minded or ungodly. We are here told that Esau was also sunk in carnal ways. (This statement rests probably on tradition.) Yet the time came when he regretted that for a paltry gratification he forfeited his right. Afterwards, when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected. For though he sought carefully with tears to change his father’s mind (α■τ■ν, that is,μ■τ■νοιαν), he found (in Isaac no place for change of mind. This seems to be the meaning of tins difficult passage. Esau is never represented as an apostate, as one who professed and appeared to be a believer, and then fell away. So (apart from other reasons) the meaning of the apostle cannot be that Esau, as an apostate, was not able to find repentance. But we know that, notwithstanding his vehement and urgent entreaties, Isaac could not change his mind, or repent him of what he had done in conferring the blessing on Jacob, which God approved of. This explanation is adopted by Owen, and fully defended by Kurtz.) The child of God, separated by the blood of Jesus, and sanctified by the indwelling Spirit, has received from God the love of holiness. He has been made by grace partaker of the divine holiness, and his daily desire and aim is to realize his position, to live according to it, and to resist and overcome sin, the flesh, and the world. Amid many falls and failures, in fear and trembling, with tears and sighs, his soul followeth hard after God. But the Lord says, "Only be strong, and of a good courage." It our sincere desire is, Show me Thy glory! the Lord will declare unto us His name. If we wish to see God, our hearts, purified by faith, shall behold Him, and in the glory we shall see Him face to face. Living in the presence of God, he who loves and seeks holiness offers this prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts: and see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting." Walking in the light (following peace and holiness), we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanseth us from all sin. And as there is nothing here to discourage the weakest believer, so let the very knowledge that God’s holy people in glory behold the Lord, preach glad tidings unto the sinner. What were the Corinthians whom the apostle Paul brings and espouses as a chaste virgin unto the heavenly Bridegroom? They were once sinners, transgressors, living far from God and His ways; but they are washed, they are sanctified, they are justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Saints are sinners saved by grace. Having washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, they walk by faith as strangers here, and shall behold the face of God in glory everlasting. Thus the future glory preaches present grace to all sinners.

39 - Heb_12:18-29

CHAPTER X X X I X.

MOUNT SINAI AND MOUNT ZION.

Hebrews 12:18-29. AS in his epistle to the Romans the apostle had argued, "Sin shall not have dominion over you: for ye are not under the law, but under grace; "so here he confirms his exhortation to follow peace and holiness by the assertion, "for ye are not come unto Mount Sinai, but unto Mount Zion."

Mount Sinai and Mount Zion are contrasted, as in the epistle to the Galatians Hagar and Sara are contrasted. The contrast is very great, striking and far-reaching. The apostle speaks first of Sinai. He reminds us of seven things in connection with the giving of the law.1 The mount which, writing to Hebrews it was not necessary to name, is that "Mount Sinai in Arabia, which gendereth to bondage." "The Lord descended upon it, and the whole mount quaked greatly."2 There was fire also, that burned, symbolic of God s jealousy, and His holy anger against sin. We read also of blackness and darkness, the thick cloud upon the mount,3 and tempest; that is, thunders and lightnings on the third day in the morning. And more awful than the thunder was the sound of the trumpet, which sounded long and waxed louder and louder; and last of all, most solemn and more awful than the sound of thunder and the trumpet, the voice of words, "God spake all these words, saying," beginning, "I am the Lord thy God;" and ending, "Thou shalt not covet." [1(1) The mount touched by God; (2) Fire; (3) Blackness of cloud; (4) Darkness; (5) Thunder; (6) The sound of a trumpet; (7) The voice of God.2Exodus 19:18;3Exodus 19:16.] The terrors of the majesty of God kept the people at a distance. Even Moses, the mediator of the old covenant, said, "I exceedingly fear and quake. Nothing can give us a more vivid impression of the awe and terror connected with the dispensation of mount Sinai than the significant fact, that even Moses, the chosen servant of God, and the mediator between God and the people, was not able to approach without fear and trembling. Nothing can show us more clearly that Moses was not the true mediator; that the true mediation by which the love of God is brought to us, and we are brought unto the holy God, is not through a sinful and finite man, but through Jesus, the holy Son of God.

We are not come to mount Sinai, but to mount Zion. Here are also mentioned seven great and solemn heavenly realities.

1. Mount Zion. Mount Sinai represents the law. It manifests the majesty of God above us as creatures, the wrath of God against us as sinners; it reveals to us God’s judgment and our condemnation; it convinces us of our guilt and of our strengthlessness; it represents the state of fear and darkness, of distance and alienation from God. There is no true mediation; Moses and the angels minister, but cannot truly and fully bring God and man together. Here we are not children and heirs of salvation; here we are in bondage, and under condemnation. It is winter, without sunshine, without flower and fruit, without the song of birds, the melody of praise.

2. Mount Sinai has passed away. It was only temporary. God touched it, but did not abide there. There is another mount, even Zion. "The Lord hath chosen Zion; He hath desired it for His habitation. This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it."* Upon God's holy hill of Zion He hath set His King, even the Son. Mount Sinai represents the law, temporary and intermediate; mount Zion the Gospel, eternal and abiding; Mount Sinai is connected with God's dealings with man according to responsibility; Mount Zion with the eternal election of grace. The one is touched by God as it were for a moment; the other chosen to be His habitation. The one brings fear and terror; the other brings joy and peace, because God delights in it. In the one, the very Mediator trembles; in the other, God's own Son, crowned with glory and power, brings nigh His people, who approach "boldly" in the peace and joy of Christ. (*Psalms 132:13-14.)

Mount Zion represents the Gospel, but we know there is a real Mount Zion, of which the earthly Mount Zion was only a type. We read of Mount Zion, the citadel of David, the King of Israel, the place of the sanctuary of God, the glory of Jerusalem, the city of peace, where David had assembled the godly of the land, whither the tribes of the Lord went up to give thanks unto the name of the Lord. We know that these earthly places symbolized the heavenly, true, and eternal Zion and Jerusalem. There is the throne of God and of the Lamb: we read of the holy city coming down out of heaven.* Jesus is preparing a place for us. The earthly Zion and Jerusalem have also a glorious future; but we believers are now come to the true mount Zion, even to the throne of grace, to the Jerusalem above, the heavenly city, free and holy. (*Rev. 21.)

3. We have come to myriads of angels. This expression reminds us of what is written: "The Lord came with ten thousands of His holy ones;"1 and again, "Thousand thousands ministered unto Him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him."2 It is an innumerable multitude. The Lord is the Lord of hosts. While this thought fills us with awe, and helps us to realize the majesty and grandeur of the kingdom into which we have been brought, it also strengthens and gladdens the heart to think of so many bright and loving angels, who show forth God's glory, and who minister unto the heirs of salvation. When the thought of Satan and his legions brings fear, we ought to comfort ourselves with the assurance that more in number, and greater in power, and may we not also say nearer to our bodies and spirits (for they are in communion with the Lord), are the loving and watchful angels, who for Christ's sake regard us with the deepest interest and affection.3 The moment we came to Christ, He brought us unto all the angels, who rejoice in the salvation of sinners. (1Deuteronomy 33:2;2Daniel 7:10. CompareRevelation 5:11.3The Bible teaching on angels has not been sufficiently woven into our daily thought. According to the teaching of the Lord's Prayer, we should always remember "as it is in heaven.")

4. We have also come to the general assembly of the Church of the first-born ones, whose names are written in the heavens. The term general assembly (παν■γυρι■) implies not merely a great, but the full number. And this circumstance, that all the members are collected, gives the assembly a character of solemn and joyous festivity.1 The Church of the first-born ones, whose names are written in heaven, means evidently the New Testament believers who first trusted in Christ, who are the first-fruits unto God. As the priests in Israel represented the first-born, as Israel itself was called the first-born, and therefore the heir of the promise, so believers are chosen in Christ to be the first-born sons and heirs of the eternal inheritance.2 Their names are enrolled as citizens of heaven. Christ Himself is the First-born. In eternity He is the Only-begotten; with reference to creation He who is the image of the invisible God is the First-born of every creature.3 Being thus

the true First-born, His priesthood is perfect. After His death on the cross, as the First-begotten of the dead,4 He entered (strictly speaking) on His priesthood. Believers possess, by virtue of their union with Jesus, the rights and privileges of primogeniture. Their names are enrolled in the lists of the heavenly city (πολ■τ■υμα); they all enjoy the same privilege of access, and the same hope of the inheritance. When we come to Jesus, we are admitted to communion with all the saints. (1Kurtz.2CompareEphesians 1:12;James 1:18;Numbers 3:12; Num. 13;3Colossians 1:15;Revelation 3:14;4Revelation 1:5.)

5. In this blessed city of God there is no condemnation, there is no more judgment. But there is order, rule, government, to which all render obedience with joy and praise. We are come to God, the Supreme Ruler and Governor, who will vindicate His people, falsely accused and unjustly oppressed, who will give unto each his true position and just reward, who at present upholds the persecuted and tried saints on earth. By "the spirits of just men made perfect," are meant the Old Testament saints. They have finished their course. The discipline of divine grace has accomplished in them the purpose of wisdom and love. Every believer is called from earth at the right, the appointed moment. The measure of sorrow and trial, experience and work, is then complete. Delivered from sin and the body of death, they enter at once into the more immediate and, need we say, conscious communion with God. They are "perfected," they have reached the end of the journey and conflict, and are free from sin. They are called "spirits," because they are still waiting for the resurrection. In one sense, they are not made perfect, "without us," till the second coming of Christ; in another sense, as there is no sowing, and working, and trading with the talent beyond the grave, they have reached their ultimate condition. The departed saints of the old dispensation are now with the Lord, in whom, as the coming Saviour, they trusted; and we are brought into union with them because (6) we have come to the "Mediator of the new covenant." He, God and man, is the One Mediator between God and sinners; and having removed all our guilt, and overcome all obstacles which separated us from God, Jesus brings now to His people that perfect peace and joy which He Himself possesses. The apostle calls the great and glorious divine Mediator by His greatest and sweetest name - Jesus! In the Pauline epistles especially, the name of Jesus is frequently brought out as the name of greatest significance and consolation, as the name of the exalted Lord. The apostle seems to have been always hearing the Voice that said unto him, on that memorable day, "I am Jesus." This same Jesus, who died for us, is on the throne; and the blessings of the new covenant are in His pierced hands. Blessed are we, if by faith we always come to the Lord Jesus, and hear His voice: "Fear not; I am the first and the last: I am He that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore; "when we see it is Jesus, our brother Joseph, who is now exalted a Prince and Saviour.

Lastly (the seventh link of this chain), we have come to the blood of sprinkling.*[*(1) Mount Zion; (2) The heavenly Jerusalem; (3) The myriads of angels; (4) The Church of the First-born (The Judge, the God of all); (5) The spirits of just men.; (6) The Mediator of the new covenant; (7) The blood.] The precious blood of Christ, which was shed m Golgotha, is sprinkled (using a symbol of the Old Testament sacrificial ordinances) on the conscience and heart, and sinners are thus justified and sanctified.1 We have frequently had occasion to notice in this epistle the special importance attached to the blood of Christ as distinguished from His death.2 When we believe in Jesus, then the blood of Christ is applied to us. It is a great and solemn transaction, spiritual and real in its character. Christ is set forth by God a propitiation, and faith beholds the blood of Christ in

the heavenly sanctuary as a great reality. Abel’s blood cried to heaven, and testified against his sinful brother; but the blood of the Lord Jesus, who was hated and killed by man because He was righteous, speaks more powerfully and effectively, securing our pardon and acceptance.3(1CompareHebrews 9:13-14; Hebrews 10:22; Hebrews 13:12;2Lecture 6.3Holding last the spiritual character of the sprinkling of the blood of Christ by which we are sanctified, we may ask: When the apostle says we have come to the Mediator of the new covenant, Jesus, and to the blood of sprinkling, when he teaches us that Jesus entered with His own blood into the holy of holies, or that God brought Jesus from the grave (into heaven) through (■ν) the blood of the everlasting covenant, is the language merely figurative, reminding us that, because Christ shed His blood on the cross, He is now our High Priest and Mediator? or does he mean that the blood of Christ is in the heavenly sanctuary? The latter view seems right for the following reasons: 1. According to the Old Testament type, the blood of the atonement, as we have already seen, pertains to the holy of holies. Jesus died outside the gate. Did He not fulfill the other part of the type, in which the high priest brought the blood into the most holy place? (Heb. 9;Hebrews 13:11-12.) 2. It is written that God will not suffer His Holy One to see corruption. The life is in the blood. The blood of our adorable Lord is called precious, it is contrasted with things that are corruptible, and compared with the "incorruptible" seed of the Word of God. 3. Our Lord distinguishes the body which is broken, and the blood which is shed. After His resurrection, speaking of His glorified body, He said, "It is I myself: handle me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye see me have." (Luke 24:39.) He does not say "flesh and blood;" for "flesh and blood," coexisting as in our present condition, cannot inherit the kingdom of God. (1 Corinthians 15:50.) This view is very fully defended by Bengel, Ötinger, and more recently by Slier. Some of theirinferencesdo not seem to me scriptural. Calvin and Goodwin use expressions which tend in the same realistic direction. It is better to take Scripture literally, even when we cannot fully understand or picture to .ourselves the thing stated, than to have recourse to weakening the force of the inspired expressions.) In this grand contrast of seven things, as the first link of the series was the two mounts, Sinai and Zion, so the last link is the voice of God uttering the Ten Commandments, and the blood of Jesus speaking peace. In our actual experience, the last link comes first. When we behold the blood, we are delivered out of Egypt, and from the condemnation of the law. Jesus is the door and the way. The door comes first, and then the path. The door is an open door, when we see Christ crucified. By this open door we must enter. Then comes the narrow way, the life of obedience in communion with God. But there is no walking on the narrow way before we enter in at the strait gate. Jesus is Alpha. Until we believe in the blood of Christ, we are outside the gate, and do not even see the path. The path commences when you enter in at the strait gate. What a discovery it is to one who has known only Mount Sinai and the ten commandments, to behold the Lamb of God and the blood of atonement! Convinced of sin, condemned as guilty, trembling before the majesty of the Holy God, and yet feeling that only in Him are blessedness and life for the immortal and God-created spirit, the heart looks up and sees nothing but thick darkness and clouds; it can discover no blue of loving heaven-speaking peace and hope; the mighty voice, louder than the trumpet-sound, is echoed in the conscience, and there is none to help. When to such a heart is brought the message of salvation by grace through a crucified Redeemer; when he hears of Jehovah-Tsiclkenu (the Lord our righteousness); of the Son of God, who was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our iniquities; when there is declared to him complete and immediate forgiveness according to divine justice and truth, the

infinite and never-changing love of God in Christ Jesus, what peace and what joy enter the soul! what astonishment, gratitude, and adoration! How beautiful is the light of peace which proceeds from the Lamb! How glorious is the love of Him who in Christ is now the Father, the justifier of the guilty who believe in Jesus! How sweet is the welcome of the Church, into which the Spirit baptizes us! How near are the angels who rejoice with the Shepherd over His found sheep! How radiant with grace is the heavenly sanctuary! Do you know the contrast between Mount Sinai and mount Zion? But as our privilege, so our responsibility is much greater under the gospel-dispensation. See that ye refuse not Him that speaketh. God came down from heaven to earth, and spoke on Mount Sinai; Jesus ascended from earth to heaven, and speaks now to us from mount Zion. (Hebrews 12:25) The character of the present dispensation and of gospel-speaking is heavenly.* The heaven-descended God gave the law on Sinai. The heaven-ascended Son declares glad tidings from His throne of glory. The blood of Abel cried from earth to heaven for vengeance; the blood of the Lord Jesus speaks peace from heaven to earth. How can we escape if we neglect so great salvation? (*CompareJohn 3:31;1 Peter 1:12.)

Mount Sinai passed away, and the dispensation of the law has vanished; but Jesus is the Mediator of the new and everlasting covenant. Jesus speaking from heaven is God’s most perfect and loving, as well as His ultimate message. Jesus is the first and the last; He shall come again and reign for evermore. Heaven and earth shall pass away; all things that can be shaken shall be removed; Jesus shall make all things new, and the saints who have learned on earth the new song of eternal redemption shall rejoice in Him forever. How can we escape if we neglect the eternal salvation?

How solemn is it to hear the message proceeding from Him who is exalted above all heavens: "Hear, O heavens, and give ear, O earth: for the Lord hath spoken." To listen to the voice of the eternal Word, the Only-begotten of the Father, who declares to us the salvation-will of God, the counsel of eternal love - is most solemn and awful. It is the greatest and most sublime message. It is the sweetest message; for the salvation it declares has its source in electing love, its channel is the sacrifice of Christ, and its end in the glory, even the marriage supper of the Lamb. It is the ultimate and everlasting revelation of God. Heaven and earth shall pass away; this present world shall vanish; but the weird of Christ, the word of the gospel, shall abide for evermore. The blessed gospel reveals to us God our Father in Jesus, and therefore perfect peace; it reveals also the inheritance of glory, and therefore a lively hope for the future. This peace and hope are full of solemnity, we therefore serve God acceptably and with godly fear; for we know that our God is a consuming fire. (Hebrews 12:29.)

Before we are brought to Christ, we know there is a spiritual world as well as a world to come. Conscience testifies, and the heart believes, that beside the outer world, there is the true and spiritual world; in which God is the great Centre, Lord, and Judge, and that our true and real life depends on our relation to God Most High, whether we are with Him and in His favour, or whether God is against us, and we are far from Him.

We know also the future world. From earliest childhood we know that life is short, that all flesh is grass, that the flower fadeth, that the dearest and sweetest tie of earth must be broken, that the world passeth away, that it is appointed unto man to die. When we have scarcely a past to remember, when we have only emerged out of the mysterious morning - land of infancy, we

already look forward to a boundless, never-ending future; for God has written eternity in the human heart When the child of man stands thus before God, not daring to lift up his eye unto the high and holy heaven; when God is above and against him; when he is convinced of sin, and yet thirsteth after the living God; and when he knows he is hastening to eternity on the wings of inexorable time - then out of the highest sanctuary, high above the clouds of Sinai, high above all created heights, comes forth the voice of the gospel, majestic and sweet, full of authority and grace, bringing light and love, "I am Jesus." In this gospel we hear that all that separated the heart from God, all that prevented the heart from breathing the atmosphere of divine life and love, is removed, and that according to the perfections of God. And now that sin, the condemnation of the law, the wrath of God, the sting of death, and the power of Satan are taken out of the way, the heart looks up to the Father and to Jesus - it looks forward to the Bridegroom's return and the glory.

What else can we say to such a gift, but thanks! glory to God! Now we believe, and trust in God. Faith towards God (fiducia) never was in our hearts till Jesus came revealing the Father's love and His grace. Faith is the daughter of revelation, the echo of the divine voice, the reflection of the manifestation of Christ to the soul. In Christ, whom God hath appointed heir of all things, we have also the promise of the in heritance. The object of God's eternal purpose was the new, eternal, holy, and perfect world, which can never be moved; the new heavens and the new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness. They who trust in Jesus have received in Him the kingdom which cannot be moved. The apostle speaks now of this eternal and immovable kingdom as our great and immediate prospect; having such a promise, we are without excuse if we refuse to listen to the Lord in heaven, (Hebrews 12:25-29.) The prophet Haggai, whom the apostle quotes, comforted his people, who in troublous times, in the day of small things, were cast down. The glory of Solomon's temple was remembered by the aged, and the present seemed to be a time of weakness and trial. Then the prophet announces that the second temple would excel the first in glory, that David's house would be exalted. But before this kingdom is established, and this glory manifested, the whole world of nations will be shaken, and mighty signs of divine judgment and power will be seen throughout the realm of creation. "I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land: and I will shake all nations, and the desire of all nations shall come." This catastrophe, crisis in the world's history, hope of the godly, reminds the prophets of the awful signs and wonders and voices at the exodus and the giving of the law. God shall again appear with all His saints. All His enemies shall be subdued, and Jehovah be King of the whole earth. From this prophecy the apostle infers that the things that will be shaken will be removed, in order that there may be established that which is to be abiding. In other words, that the kingdom will be established which, according to the prophetic word, is to take the place of the powers and kingdoms of the world;1 that the age will commence in which the name of the Lord alone shall be exalted, after all that is proud and lofty has been abased.2(1Daniel 2:7;2Isaiah 2. "In the prophetic word the final manifestation of Jehovah is compared with the redemption out of Egypt, and the descent on mount Sinai. (Micah 7:15; Hab. 3.) What the LXX render yet once more means, that between the prophet's time and the final catastrophe is only one period; that is, one uniform period, possessing the same character; and that this period will be short." (Condensed from Delitzsch.) The dealings of God with Israel in Egypt and on Mount Sinai form the beginning and type of that final manifestation of Jehovah in judgment on His enemies and in grace to His people, in the establishment of the theocracy (Christocracy), of which Haggai prophesies. Hence the apostle's quotation, "yet once more," gives the true meaning of the passage. Onlyoneother great

crisis, and then the final change of things that can be shaken and moved into the enduring and abiding kingdom, which was the purpose of God from the beginning.)

Let us therefore have and show gratitude for God’s unspeakable gift. If Jesus is ours, need we, can we, covet anything?* If the kingdom is ours, are we not separated from this present evil world? Let us serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. (*Compare the first word, "I am the Lord thy God," and the last commandment, "Thou shall not covet.") For our God, God in Christ, is a consuming fire. In Jesus we behold the holy, righteous, jealous God. We trust and rejoice, but it is with solemn awe, with godly tear. We have been brought nigh to God; we live in the presence of the Most High. The Lord is in His holy temple. Let all that is within us keep silence before Him. Let us worship and serve as priests, the first-born sons who are separated by the blood of the covenant, and by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead; as kings who do not suffer sin to have dominion over them, and even in this present time of weakness and suffering live in the spirit of the future glory. "Our God is a consuming fire," perfect light, perfect love. In the everlasting covenant He is the Lord our God, who hath chosen us to be His, entirely and forever.

40 - Heb_13:1-16

CHAPTER X L.

EXHORTATIONS AND BENEDICTIONS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL.

Hebrews 13:1-16. THE argument and exhortation of the apostle seem to have reached their solemn and impressive conclusion in the twelfth chapter, especially in the heart-searching words of the last verse: "For our God is a consuming fire." But, as we find in other Pauline epistles,* that after the apparent conclusion of the doctrinal and practical portion, the apostle adds isolated concise counsels, injunctions and benedictions, so also here. As if the apostle could not separate himself either from the theme or the people, so dear to his heart, and as if he felt that he had still much to communicate out of his abundant treasure of knowledge and love. (*Compare in Romans, first conclusion,Romans 15:33; second,Romans 16:24; and third, 27.) But this concluding chapter possesses a special interest and value, because we seem to see more distinctly the writer's individuality, and his personal relation to the Hebrews. As we read the chapter, in which many Pauline peculiarities occur, and in which we meet for the first time in this epistle the personal pronoun "I," we see more clearly the beloved countenance of the apostle, and feel more confirmed that we have been listening to the well-known voice of the chosen witness to "the Gentiles, and the children of Israel."*(* Acts 9:15.)

Hebrews 13:1-3. "Let brotherly love (φιλαδ■λφια) continue." The intimate connection between love to God and love to the brethren, is constantly pointed out both by the Lord Himself and in the apostolic writings. In the epistles of John, this seems almost the central thought.

"Love never ceaseth;" and as the Hebrews had just been reminded that the things that are made shall be shaken and removed, they are now exhorted to let that abide which is of God, which is eternal, even love. Even prophecies, tongues, and knowledge shall vanish; but love never faileth. "If we love one another, God dwelleth in us."1 Love to the brethren is always represented as the first indication and fruit of the new life2 as well as the final aim and result of divine grace. (11 John 4:12;21 John 5:1;Acts 16:33.) The Hebrews had given striking proof that they possessed this mark of Christ's disciples, and the apostle had commended them for their love, their sympathy, and their compassionate and helpful charity.1 Like the divine Master, he connects exhortation with commendation. We must watch and cherish the gifts of grace which we have received. Love to the brethren manifests itself specially in sympathy with the afflicted. "Whether one member suffer, all the members of the body suffer with it."2 The children of God are to resemble their heavenly Father, who is a lover of the stranger.3 In showing hospitality they are often rewarded by receiving messengers of divine truth and blessing. The disciples of Jesus are to remember with sympathy and intercession their brethren in adversity; as long as we are in the body we may all be called to suffer, and the fellow-heirs of glory ought to abound in kindness and tenderness towards those who are counted worthy to endure affliction and persecution. It is one of our privileges on earth to weep with them that weep, and to comfort and help the Master Himself in succouring His tried and fainting disciples. Thus also shall we retain the spirit of strangers and pilgrims, whose home is

above. (1Hebrews 6:10; Hebrews 10:33;21 Corinthians 12:26;3 Deuteronomy 10:18-19.) The next exhortations have reference to earthly life in two important aspects. First, as to marriage. It was instituted by God in Paradise before the fall, it was irradiated by the presence and blessing of Jesus at Cana, it is invested in Scripture with a sacredness most solemn and tender, for it is used as a symbol of the relation between Jehovah and His people, between Jesus and the Church. Let marriage then be regarded as honourable by all. Some are not called in providence to enter into this state; some, like the apostle Paul, voluntarily choose a single life, that they may serve God more freely; but let all regard this relation, as appointed by God, holy and full of blessing. And where the sacred character of marriage and of the family is recognized and felt, the result will be purity. All sins of impurity are sins against His holy ordinance of marriage, and against the divine institution of the family. God Himself will judge those who violate this funda mental law of His goodness.

Secondly, as regards the occupation whereby we earn our livelihood. Covetousness is idolatry; the love of money* is the root of all evil. Jesus commands us, not to lay up treasure on earth, because our heart is where our treasure is. He does not merely forbid us to set our affection on earthly treasure, but to cut off the possibility of such heart- estrangement from God by not aiming at the accumulation of wealth. And as in the sermon on the mount, so here, covetousness is viewed as connected with a lack of faith in the living God; for God Himself (in the Scripture) hath said, "I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee."2 The first expression assures us that God will never with draw His guiding hand; the second, that He will never withdraw His protecting presence.3 Having God's gracious and considerate promise, may we not, like David, say with a soothed and quiet heart, " The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me? The Lord taketh my part with them that help me."4(1■φιλ■ργυρο■. Compare1 Timothy 3:3; 1 Timothy 6:10;2Deuteronomy 31:6-8;1 Chronicles 28:20; and often in Isaiah.3Kurtz.4Psalms 118:6.) Our earthly life will be full of peace and contentment, of light and strength, though not without the needed difficulties and chastenings, if we obey these apostolic injunctions; if we cherish love to the brethren, and a sympathetic, considerate, and helpful spirit towards the suffering and needy; if we cultivate family affection and communion; and if we keep ourselves free from the feverish race for riches and worldly distinction, and learn to be content with such things as we have, eating our meat with gladness and singleness of heart. Have we not "enough" for the journey? When we reach home, and Jesus asks us, "Did you ever lack anything?" what will our answer be?

Having warned them against the dangers of selfishness, fleshly lusts, and covetousness, the apostle proceeds to warn them against the dangers threatening their faith and loyalty to Christ. He reminds them of the guides, the teachers and rulers, which God had given to them - men who laboured in the ministry of the Word, had sealed their testimony in their death, (Hebrews 13:7.) Some have thought the reference is pre-eminently to martyrs like Stephen. But all their departed teachers and elders had shown them in life and death what they had declared by their word: the just shall live by faith. They had passed away; but the great Prophet, the great Apostle and High Priest, the true Shepherd, remained - Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, to-day, and forever. He is the only foundation, and His the only name. The heart finds rest in thinking of Him, the Rock of ages, the eternal, unchanging Son of God, our Lord, Saviour, and Mediator. Of this inexhaustible verse, let us only indicate a few aspects for meditation. We contemplate here the Son of God as the Christ, set up from all eternity in the divine counsel. We behold Him as incarnate, God and

man, two natures in one person. By a bold anticipation, not more bold than true, we call Him Jesus Christ even before His advent.1 He is eternal, and yet He has a yesterday, to-day, and an endless future. His "yesterday" has no beginning, but it ends with His burial in that new tomb. His "to-day" commences with His resurrection, and is even now - this acceptable year of the Lord, the gospel dispensation - the "to-day" while we hear the voice of grace. His "forever" commences with His second advent. His dominion is everlasting. And throughout He is the same. From all eternity He is the Lover of our souls, the Friend of sinners, the Advocate, Intercessor, and Mediator; His incarnation is only the manifestation of the mind that was in Him from all eternity. Let us adore, and adoring, let us love and rejoice. Let us adore Jesus as our apostle did, when he, in this very epistle, applied to Jesus the words: "Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth;" and, with the beloved disciple, let us hear the voice of Jesus in heaven, "I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the ending, saith the Lord, which is, and was, and is to come, the Almighty."2 And thus beholding the glory, let us also behold the love, divine and brotherly, of the Lord Jesus, the Saviour, as Christ, Prophet, Priest, and King. Time’s waves and billows cannot move our Rock; we are but as grass, and as a flower of the field, but the eternal mercy, without beginning and without end, is upon us.3(1ComparePhp 2:5;2Revelation 1:8. The same expressions which we read in the prophet Isaiah of Jehovah, "He is First and Last," Α and Ω; there are many intermediate letters, and some of them rebellious ones, that assert themselves. But He alone abideth. -- BENGEL.3Psalm 103.) This is the sure foundation on which we are to build. The heart can only be established on this Rock, and only by grace (Hebrews 13:9); for by grace (not by works) we were built on the stone which God laid in Zion; and only by grace, continually received by faith, we continue. The various Jewish laws (teaching both complicated and foreign from the gospel ποικ■λαι■ ■α■ ξ■ναι■) concerning eating and drinking, whether it refers to daily ordinary life, or to the sacrificial meals, stand in no connection with the life and growth of faith. For, as the type already taught, of that sacrifice which was offered up as an atonement for sin, only the blood was brought unto the most holy; the bodies were burnt outside the camp.1 The meat of other sin-offerings had to be eaten by the priests in the holy place ("it is most holy"); but the sin-offering for atonement was to be carried forth without the camp. The priests were forbidden to eat of it.2(1Leviticus 6:36;2Leviticus 16:27. Contr.Leviticus 6:25-26.) In the fulfillment Jesus suffered without the gate. The beloved city, Jerusalem, is viewed as the camp. Our Lord was crucified and buried outside the tent and the camp. In the type the sacrifice was slain in the outer court, and the body burnt outside the camp. In the fulfillment the idea is carried out even more fully. Jesus was the sin-offering. God made Him to be "sin" for us. He was numbered with the transgressors. To the eye of the world and of the unbelieving Jews, He was a transgressor dying on the accursed tree. By His precious blood, with which He entered the most holy, He has sanctified us. Here also the fulfillment is beyond the type. The blood is brought into the heavenly sanctuary, and we are separated unto God, and perfected forever.

We who believe possess therefore the true altar.* Of the type of this altar they who serve the tabernacle were not allowed to eat. But the reality is hid from them. By faith we behold it, and our hearts are established. (*Verse 10 [Hebrews 13:10] has had a great variety of interpretations, and offers many difficulties.■χομ■νcan, I think, refer only to believers. The expressionhaveis emphatic in this epistle.θυσιαστ■ριον, altar, does not refer to the actual cross, of which it cannot be said that we have it, but to Christ Himself, as the sin-offering. As Owen remarks, that .which the apostle throughout opposes unto all the utensils, services, and sacrifices of the tabernacle, is Christ alone.

So here Christ is both sacrifice and altar, and by Him we offer the sacrifice of praise and good works. "They that serve the tabernacle." The Levitical priests (tabernacle is always used for temple) had no right to eat of the typical sin-offering of atonement, and in their ignorance of Christ and unbelief they did not know the true altar. The connection of thought seems to be: Do not think of the meat of the temple altar; look to Christ in heaven, in order that your heart may be established. He is our altar and sacrifice. Even in the type there was no eating connected with the sin-offering for atonement. Now Christ has sanctified you, and brought you nigh unto God. And this very position calls on you to go outside the camp and bear the reproach of Christ, to separate yourself from that which is waxing old. The thought lies very near, that in the fulfillment Christ gives us His body, which is meat indeed; and His blood, which is drink indeed. This however is connected with the Passover, which is the most comprehensive sacrificial type, and does not fall, we think, within the scope of the apostle’s present argument.) But our position, while it is heavenly with Christ, is here upon earth outside the camp. If with Jesus we have entered into the holy of holies, let us also go unto Him outside the camp, bearing His reproach. We must be separate from all that is against Christ, from all that beguiles men from the simplicity that is in Christ Jesus, and substitutes forms and outward legal observances for the body, the substance. In proportion as our worship, our affections, our aims are heavenly, as we seek the future and continuing city, we must expect to bear the reproach of Christ. For the "cross" of Christ will always be "outside the camp." True faith in Jesus will never, in this dispensation, be according to the spirit and taste of the world. Spiritual worship will always be an enigma to the world, and its aversion. But we have Jesus; and by Him we draw near as priests, and with sacrifices well-pleasing to the Father, (Hebrews 13:15.) We now worship the Father offering unto God praise, and bringing unto Him gifts with cheerful and thankful hearts. Praise and gifts are the sacrifices of the Christian. Nor must we forget that while there is nothing meritorious in our offerings, yet the praise of our lips, if it proceeds from the heart, and is confirmed by our lives, and the offering of our gifts, be it out of our affluence or poverty, be it the word of sympathy or the sacrifice of time and talent, are pleasing to God. So the apostle says here, "With such sacrifices God is well pleased; "and the apostle Peter, speaking of the same spiritual sacrifices, calls them "acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." Again, when alluding to the gift of money sent by the Philippians, Paul says, "The things which were sent from you, an odour of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God." Let not a one-sided view of justification by faith, or our latent sloth and selfishness deprive us of this most comforting and stimulating teaching of Scripture, that both our words and works, our praise-worship and our offerings and ministry to the poor and the house of God, are regarded by God with delight, and accepted by Him; that thus praise and works have a substantiveimportance, not merely as evidencing our faith, but as actual sacrifices offered through Jesus, and accepted sacrifices with which the Lord is pleased. When God has taken away all our iniquity, and has received us graciously, then, to use the significant expression of the prophet Hosea, "we render the calves of our lips." Song is but the outward expression of the inner praise, and of the general confession of Christ in word and life. The first song of praise is recorded in Exodus; for it is redemption, which brings praise. In Paradise man was able to sing unto God, the Creator, and with the angels ascribe glory and thanksgiving unto the Lord. But after the fall, sinners could only praise through redeeming grace. In Egypt, the house of bondage, were heard tearful sighs and earnest supplications; on the great night of the Paschal lamb Israel waited in solemn and awe-filled silence; at the Red Sea the cry of anguish unuttered rose up from the heart of Moses; but at last came completed redemption. The Red Sea

separated Israel from Egypt; old things had passed away; and "then sang Moses and the children of Israel this song unto the Lord, and spake, saying, I will sing unto the Lord, for He hath triumphed gloriously." This is our song: "Christ our passover was slain, Christ our Lord is risen again." On this God-made day may we indeed rejoice and be glad.* For He who died for us, liveth now for evermore. (*Psalm 118.)

It is good to give thanks unto God; to behold the beauty of the Lord; to rejoice in Him, our unchanging, faithful, and ever-blessed God. This thankfulness is an offering unto the Lord. He is pleased with it. Jesus still asks: Were there not ten cleansed? Where are the nine? Jesus loves to hear the voice of melody. Seven times a day, constantly, let us praise God. The heart that praises God is delivered from anxious care and self-centered gloom. The heart that praises God is like the temple filled with God’s glory.* Praise is heaven anticipated; in praise we even now join angels and perfected saints. (*1 Chronicles 22:5.)

How much did the apostle Paul abound in praise! His epistles are full of thanksgiving - of doxologies. His heart was always giving thanks, and ascribing glory. Think only of this man, who, like his divine Master, was a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief. From the hour that Jesus appeared to him, from those three days of awful, intense soul-dealings with God, in which his whole past life, righteousness, strength, were taken from him, and through dying to the law he became alive unto God, what was his whole earthly career but taking up the cross, and following Jesus? Hated by Israel, whom he loved so profoundly; persecuted, derided, imprisoned, and scourged; in poverty, in toil, in danger by land and sea; with the burden of all the churches upon his priestly heart; suspected by Jewish Christians, grieved and hindered by schismatic and self-willed disciples; without the solace of wife or child; going from city to city with this only certainty, that bonds and afflictions awaited him everywhere can you picture to yourself this man of prayer, of vigil, of tears, of heart-breathed intercessions for unbelieving Israel, and for unfaithful Christians; this lonely, suffering man, with his burning soul, with his toil-worn frame, with his body bearing the marks of the Lord Jesus, with all the world against him, and with the martyr’s death before him? Oh, then, see that in all this he was constantly offering the sacrifice of praise!* In his heart is melody; he finishes his course with joy; and out of the overflowing thankfulness of his soul he writes to all the Christian churches, " Rejoice in the Lord: and again I say, Rejoice!" (* Php 2:17; Php 4:4.)

Learn from him to offer up the sacrifice of praise to God continually; that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to His name.

We praise God in declaring His name. The preacher’s petition is: "Open Thou my lips; and my mouth shall show forth Thy praise." I praise God when I preach Jesus, the Saviour of the sinner, the High Priest, example and joy of the saint,* To confess and to praise is the privilege of God’s people, to show to the world that we are at peace, that we rejoice, that heaven is our home even now, that in sorrow and prosperity God is our song. We are to praise God always. When Christians are in deep sorrow, and when they are called to endure great trials, it is often given unto them to rejoice in God, and to praise Him who is good, and whose mercy endureth for ever. Many of David’s most jubilant songs were written in hours of persecution and distress. The Christians who are. most deficient in praise are not the suffering, poor, bed-ridden, and afflicted; but those whose earthly path is smooth and easy, who fall into a languid and dull routine, whose hearts become

forgetful of the Lord and His marvellous love. (*Some churches are reproached for being preaching, and not praying churches. Let us remember that true spiritual preaching is also praising God, and declaring His name.) A joyous heart is also a generous heart. When we praise the Lord, the bountiful giver, and thank Him for the gifts of His grace - gifts so undeserved, precious, and abundant - our hearts will be liberal. We shall not forget to do good and to communicate; rather shall we be anxious to discover the good works ordained for us, that we may walk in them, to find out the poor and needy, the lowly and afflicted members of Christ, that we may help and cheer them. With such sacrifices God is well pleased. He beholds in them our gratitude and love, a manifestation of the Spirit of His own Son, who for our sakes became poor. When we "abound" in this grace also,* the blessing of God on our souls will descend plentifully, and we shall reap an abundant harvest of spiritual fruit. (*2 Corinthians 8:7.)

Let us study and imitate the example of the first congregation at Jerusalem. They were filled with the Spirit, they rejoiced and praised, they did not suffer any member to lack. And thus they found favour with the people, and the beauty of the Lord was upon them; and the Lord added to the Church daily.1 Study the exhortation to the grace of liberality given by the apostle Paul to the Corinthians; so urgent, so loving, so full of the gospel. "Thanks be unto God for His unspeakable gift"2 is the conclusion as well as the foundation and the centre of his admonition. (1Acts 2:44-47;22Cor. 8 and 9. Two beautiful and important chapters.) The sacrifice of praise and of good works* can only be offered "by Christ." As all the offerings of the old dispensation rested on the atonement, through the sacrifice for sin, as the necessary foundation, so it is only the forgiven children of God who offer now the sacrifice of praise, confessing the name of Christ, and declaring His truth; who by ministering unto the saints, by doing good to all men, by helping the mission-work of the Church, bring thank-offerings to God. And as both these sacrifices rest on the one and only sacrifice of Christ, and proceed out of a renewed heart; as both the praise and the works are fruits of the Spirit, brought forth by the living branches, so it is by Christ’s intercession they ascend unto the Father, and are well-pleasing unto Him. (*"Ohne Loben und Lieben vergeh keine Stunde." Let no hour pass without praise and love.)

41 - Heb_13:17-25

CHAPTER X L I.

EXHORTATIONS AND BENEDICTIONS OF THE APOSTLE PAUL - CONTINUED.

Hebrews 13:17-25.

TEACHERS and rulers* are again recognized, and the Hebrews are exhorted to obey them, and to yield themselves to their teaching and rule, to adapt themselves to their peculiarities, and to carry out their wishes and arrangements with a willing mind; for therein God is honoured, and the welfare of the congregation promoted. Ministers watch for your souls as they that must give account of their stewardship. Their responsibility towards God is great; their labour towards you is incessant and anxious. You may well meet them with confidence and a plastic mind, trusting that their counsels are the result of thought, prayer, and experience. Nothing discourages a minister more than the want of response on the part of Christians to his advice, entreaty, and plans. He returns from his work to God, not with joy, but with sighs and tears, with complaints and grief. "This is unprofitable for the people." They only hinder and retard the blessing which would otherwise come to their hearts, homes, and neighbourhood. (*Verses 7 and 17 [Hebrews 13:7; Hebrews 13:17] show that there was a stated ministry, that there were recognized and regular teachers and pastors in the congregation, whose gifts not only, but whose office was acknowledged.)

"Pray for us." This is eminently Pauline. No other apostle writes thus, requesting the intercession of the Church.* It is very instructive and touching to notice how constantly and earnestly the apostle asks the Churches to pray for him, that utterance may be given him; that the word of the Lord may have free course and be glorified; that he may be preserved amidst the persecution of unbelievers; that he may be restored to the brethren. He who laboured more than the other apostles, and who was endowed with so many gifts, seems to have had the greatest craving for sympathy, for affection, for communion, and the most vivid conviction that God only giveth the increase; that it is not by might nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord. Of all the apostles, Paul was the most affectionate, the most tender hearted, the most brotherly, fatherly, motherly. "We were gentle among you, even as a nurse cherisheth her children: so being affectionately desirous of you, we were willing to have imparted unto you, not the gospel of God only, but also our own souls, because ye were dear unto us." And none was more willing to be nothing, nay, to be accounted as the offscouring of the earth, that Christ alone may be exalted. The reference to "a good conscience" is very touching. His whole apostolic life is the comment. His farewell address to the elders of Ephesus, while it reveals his "tears" as the characteristic feature of his ministry, also discloses the high standard of integrity, unselfishness, and blamelessness, at which, in common with Joshua and Samuel, he constantly aimed. (*Romans 15:30;Ephesians 6:19;Colossians 4:3; Phil. 22;1 Thessalonians 5:25;2 Thessalonians 3:1.)

He asks specially prayer for himself, that he may be "restored to them the sooner." From this expression it is evident that he had been with them at some former period, that he wishes and

intends to go to them again, but that this depends on circumstances, which may either retard or expedite his return. He requests their prayers that he may be set free.

Verses 20, 21 (Hebrews 13:20-21). The apostle concludes with a benediction, very comprehensive, and in a manner a summary of the whole epistle.

"The God of peace" is likewise a Pauline expression. It does not occur in any other book of the New Testament. In the Pauline epistles we meet with it frequently.*(*1 Thessalonians 5:23;2 Thessalonians 3:16;2 Corinthians 13:11;Romans 15:33; Romans 16:20;Php 4:9.) 1. The Author of peace. From all eternity God purposed in Himself the counsel of peace; and when by reason of sin, discord and misery came into the world, the Lord always comforted His people by the promise of redemption, "For I know the thoughts that I think toward you, saith the Lord, thoughts of peace, and not of evil." In the fullness of time came Jesus, the Peace-maker, and He declared the love of God, and preached the acceptable year of the Lord; and when the chastisement of our peace was upon Him, the Father made peace through the blood of His cross. Jesus Himself is our peace; but it is the God of peace who gave Jesus, and who by His atonement made peace, and reconciled all things to Himself. For all things are of God; of Him are we in Christ Jesus, and of Him Jesus is made unto us all in all. The Spirit leads us to see in and through a crucified and exalted Redeemer the God of peace.

Peace means not merely calmness and rest of conscience and heart, based on the righteousness of God, but it means also restoration to health and well-being; or rather, since in Christ God makes all things new, not a restoration to Adam’s state of innocence, but the creating us anew after His image. This seems to be the reason, why the title God of peace is connected by the apostle with our sanctification, our being made like unto Jesus: "And the very God of peace sanctify you wholly; and I pray God your whole spirit and soul and body be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ;" and likewise in our passage, "The God of peace make you perfect in every good work to do His will." The God of peace can have no other purpose than our perfect blessedness and glory, that we should be conformed to the image of His Son. This purpose is fulfilled in Jesus, and through His precious blood. Our peace is complete the moment we believe in Jesus; our peace is consummated when we are presented unto the Father at the coming of our Lord. In like manner we are still looking forward to our salvation and our adoption.*(*1 Peter 1:5; 1 Peter 1:9;Romans 8:23.) 2. Jesus the channel of peace. Our Lord Jesus was the Paschal Lamb on Calvary. From that moment our peace was purchased, and we were identified with the substitute. Now the Lamb that was slain is also the good Shepherd, that laid down His life for the sheep; He is not merely the good, true, genuine Shepherd; He is also the great Shepherd, the mighty, sublime, the only one, who leads the flock out of the grave to the heavenly glory. He is here contrasted with Moses. "Then He remembered the days of old, Moses, and his people, saying, Where is he that brought them up out of the sea with the Shepherd of the flock?1 We read also, "By the blood of thy covenant have I sent forth thy prisoners out of the pit wherein is no water."2 God brought Him not merely again, but up even into heaven. For Jesus returned not to the days of His humiliation and flesh; He was glorified, and He ascended high above all heavens, that He might fill all things. It is God who raised and exalted Him, and us with Him; God has thereby made peace and perfection. (1Isaiah 63:11;2Zechariah 9:11.) 3. God works in us. Have we thus risen to the thought of the God of peace, the Redeemer, the Restorer, who through the sufferings of Jesus, and by His blood, delivered us from all evil, and has raised us together with Christ, unto a new, spiritual, and endless

life, then we can understand the benediction, that God should work in us both to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are humbled by the sense of our trangressions, of our sins of ignorance and omission, and above all of the sinfulness of our old nature. Let us be exalted by the grace of God. True we groan in this tabernacle, being burdened, but we rejoice in God. The Lord works in us. He gives good desires, true petitions, living words and works. He prepares us for the work in time, as He prepared the work for us in eternity. He works in us that which is well-pleasing in His sight, for what is born of the Spirit is Spirit. The cup of cold water given to a disciple, the gift of gratitude and kindness sent to Paul, the visit of Onesiphorus to the prisoner, the word spoken in season to the thoughtless or the afflicted, the affection and training given to our children, the disciplined walk at home and in the world, the faithful and diligent discharge of duty in our earthly calling - all is begun in us, carried out and finished by the grace of God, by His holy Spirit, and it is well-pleasing in His sight. Conscious as we must be of our failures and sins, let us rejoice in the mercy of our heavenly Father. He regards all Spirit-wrought words, feelings, and works with delight. And all is wrought through Jesus Christ. For He is our life and strength. Only abiding in Him can the branches live and bear fruit. The spirit in us is not a substitute for Christ, but the connecting-link between the Lord and us. Thus the divine energy within us acts simply through our faith in Jesus. Lean then on Jesus, and you will conquer sin. Trust in Him, and your strength will be renewed. Look with the eye of faith to the Lord, and you will receive not merely the commandment, but the spirit and the power to obey it; you will not merely see the example, but be conformed to His image. The apostle describes his epistle as the word of exhortation, (Hebrews 13:22.) For his object throughout was to exhort the Hebrews to continue stedfast; to consider the great Apostle and High Priest of their profession; to live by faith; to rejoice in hope of the glory of God. Scripture exhortation is based on doctrine, or rather on the revelation of God in Christ Jesus. All Scripture teaching is practical, and only Scripture teaching is practical, because godliness can result only from beholding, believing, and loving God in Christ. The whole Scripture is given us that we may be furnished unto every good work, strengthened for every duty, and fortified against all temptation. No doctrine is rightly understood unless it appeals to conscience and heart; unless it affects our walk and conversation. To separate life from doctrine is to separate life from the revelation of God, from Christ; and is not He our life? But this word of exhortation, as it comes out of the bright atmosphere of truth, so it comes out of the genial atmosphere of affection. As in the epistle to the Romans, the messenger of God does not command, but beseech; the very mercies of God are the heart-constraining motive and the sustaining strength of obedience. The apostle asks a favourable and loving reception of His word. In the epistle to the Romans the great apostle, in that spirit of humility and meekness which characterized him, writes in like manner: "Nevertheless, I have written the more boldly unto you in some sort, as putting you in mind, because of the grace that is given to me of God." He calls the exhortation short, "in few words;" not with reference to the length of the letter, but to the proportion between the length of the epistle and the comprehensive and sublime subject of which it treats. It was necessary to bring the whole subject of the heavenly high-priesthood before them; and this vast and grand subject he endeavoured to put before them briefly, so as not to tax their patience too severely.

Verses 22-25 (Hebrews 13:22-25). With the benediction the epistle is concluded, just as in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. The epistolary form has been gradually adopted. The concluding verses are quite in the form of a letter. The apostle uses the first person singular, and addresses his readers quite personally.

Verse 23 (Hebrews 13:23). He cheers them with the news that Timothy (whom he loved so dearly, and to whom he likes to refer in his epistles) had obtained again liberty. With him, if he comes shortly, he hopes to see them. The apostle, it seems, had already left Rome, and was anxious to start on his journey from Italy to the readers of this epistle. He sends them salutations from the brethren in Italy.

Verse 24 (Hebrews 13:24). The apostles, and especially Paul, address their epistles rather to the people than the teachers and elders,1 including women, children, servants, young people, they write to all.2 Paul sends a message to Archippus by the Colossians.3 So here. "This epistle, containing strong meat for the perfect, is addressed to the whole congregation. If any part of Scripture was to be kept from the common people, we might fancy it would be this epistle. The writings of the apostles, as well as the prophets, were read in the public assembly, how much more ought it now to be left to everyone to read them according to his need?"4 (1Php 1:1;2Ephesians 5:22;1 John 2:18;2 John 1:1;1 Peter 3:8; 1 Peter 5:5;3Colossians 4:17;4BENGEL. Very seasonable words at this present time of sacerdotalism.) The concluding benediction, "Grace be with you all," is common to all the (thirteen) epistles of the apostle Paul. "The salutation of Paul with mine own hand, which is the token in every epistle: so I write. The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with you all. Amen."1 The expressions are sometimes slightly varied; but the substance of all his subscription is the same: "Grace be with you all." Now when the apostle mentions, as a token whereby an epistle might be known as his, this concluding benediction, and not the fact that his name is prefixed at the commencement; and when we observe that the epistles of Peter, of John, of James, and of Jude conclude with words entirely different,2 may we not regard this as an additional confirmation of the Pauline authorship of our book? (12 Thessalonians 3:17-18; 2Entirelydifferent. Take the trouble to compareJames 5:20;1 Peter 5:14;2 Peter 3:18;1 John 5:21;2 John 1:13;3 John 1:14;Jude 1:25. Is this accidental?) "Grace be with you all. Amen." This is the most comprehensive, the best, the sweetest wish. Grace bringeth salvation. Grace contains all things pertaining to life and godliness. By grace we have been saved; by grace we stand; in grace we rejoice, and grace will end in glory. May the free, unmerited, boundless, all-sufficient love of the Father in the blood of the Lord Jesus Christ, the blood of the everlasting covenant, shed for the redemption of guilty and helpless sinners, be with us through the power of the Holy Ghost. By Jesus, and in Jesus, we say Amen. For He is the Amen, in whom all the promises of God are sealed.

"THE atoning work is done, The Victim’s blood is shed, And Jesus now is gone His people’s cause to plead;

He stands in heaven their great High Priest, And bears their names upon His breast "No temple made with hands His place of service is; In heaven itself He stands, A heavenly priesthood His: In Him the shadows of the law Are all fulfilled, and now withdraw.

"And though awhile He be Hid from the eyes of men, His people look to see Their great High Priest again: In brightest glory He will come, And take His waiting people home."

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