Hebrews Verse by Verse - William Newell

Part 1 - Hebrews 1-7 Verse by Verse
Part 2 - Hebrews 8-13 Verse by Verse

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AUTHOR'S NOTE - THE TEXT used is in general that of the Revised Version, which is much more accurate than that of the Old Version. At times it is necessary to render literally; and, in several instances to paraphrase, to make clearer the meaning. (Ed: Some of the passages are also in the NAS77)

FOREWORD

The object of HEBREWS is to set forth CHRIST, above angels—their Creator, indeed; above Moses--as Son, not servant; above Abraham--who paid tithes to Melchizedek; Christ, not connected with Aaron; of wholly different order, for earthly tabernacle, priesthood, sacrifices are done away in HEBREWS; not priest on earth, but Christ our Great Priest at God's right hand in Heaven itself--who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

All earthly "religion," therefore is superseded—even Levitical, though given by God Himself!

Since the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, we "worship by the Spirit of God" (Phil. 3:3); glorying "in Christ Jesus", through Whom we offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually (Heb. 13:15).

Believers, therefore, are directed to constant access to God's throne by Christ's blood and through the veil ... His flesh; partaking, as they do, of a heavenly calling: belonging to and in Heaven, though at present engaged in pilgrimage through this world.

If Hebrew believers have not here an abiding city now, surely Gentiles have none. All believers (along with Abraham), look for the city which hath the foundations--the city of the Living God.

The great object of HEBREWS, then, is to set before these believers' eyes, CHRIST, the Son of God; the Son of Man; the Great High Priest in Heaven; and to cause them constantly to occupy their thought and worship with God, into Whose presence Christ by His blood has brought them:

Without the camp: WITHIN THE VEIL!

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Hebrews 1

Hebrews 1:1 In many parts, and in many manners of old, God, having spoken to the fathers in the prophets, 2 at the end of these (Old Testament) days did speak to us in (the person of His) Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things, through Whom also He made the ages; 3 Who, being the effulgence of His glory, and the exact expression of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;

WE BEG THE READER'S permission thus to begin the opening words of this great epistle with a literal arrangement of the order of the Greek words, which may at first appear strange; but which will profit us as we remember that God thus spake. God did not, as does our English version, place His Name as the very opening word of the epistle. But He sets forth His many Old Testament words, and His divers manners of speaking in that time past to the fathers by the prophets--as contrasted with His speaking to us at the end of these (Old Testament) days ... in a Son!

Now this is a strange manner of speech; to speak in a Son! But thus, in a word, is set before us the great message of Hebrews. God hath spoken to us! How? Not after the former messages in the Old Testament prophets; but in a Person, a Son-Who is now declared to be God, Creator, Upholder, Lord, Heir of all things!

In the "Four Gospels," as four "books of the Bible," Christ is set forth; for in these records God speaks to us in His Son! In Matthew He walks before us as the King of Israel; in Mark as the Servant of Jehovah; in Luke as the Son of Man; and in John as the Eternal Word, "the Only Begotten Son," Creator-God! So it is not in the New Testament as in the former Old Testament portions or manners. in the Old Testament God spake by prophets. Now God hath spoken unto us in (the Person of) His Son. "God was manifest in the flesh."

And here at the beginning let us bow our whole being at this word, God. God has spoken! An old Puritan preacher used to say there were just two things he desired to know: "First, Does God speak (concerning any matter)? Second, What does God say?" Atheists-fools, deny God's being. Deists deny that He has revealed Himself--that He has spoken. The great multitude of humanity ignore Him, living their little selfish earth-lives, to hear at last the fearful words, "Depart from Me." "Hear, and your soul shall live" is the constant message of Scripture. Nor is God named in Hebrews 1:1 as "The God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," as in Paul's epistles to the Church as such. For the subject immediately taken up in Hebrews 1 is not our salvation or blessing, but the Person and place of God's Son!

First, the whole Old Testament revelation is compassed in simple words: Having of old time spoken unto the fathers* in the prophets by divers portions and in divers manners (literally, multi-partedly and multi-manneredly). This of course refers to God's revelation of Himself in the Old Testament, especially the period following Abraham and Genesis 12 through Malachi—before the Son was sent. We remember that in these thirty-nine books of the Old Testament there are various parts or "books": history, biography, genealogy, legislation, religious ordinances, spiritual experiences, prophecy. And God spoke in various manners: sometimes by the Spirit directly upon His servants; sometimes through angels, or even in theophanies (appearances of God Himself as the Angel of Jehovah, as to Abraham in Genesis 18); sometimes by conferred Divine wisdom, as Proverbs and Ecclesiastes; sometimes through putting His words in the mouth of His prophets; and sometimes through prophetic visions or dreams of the night.

* (In reading Hebrews, Gentile believers naturally and correctly, though unconsciously, assume that "the fathers" belong to them. For a Gentile believer is told that "Abraham is the father of us all," that is, of all true believers: "If ye are Christ's then are ye Abraham's seed, heirs according to promise." (Ro 4:16, Gal. 3:29).

* It will not do at all to view the writer of Hebrews as building up that which God has destroyed, as regards the present standing of national Israel in His sight. We repeat over and over that today Israel is Lo-ammi--"not God's people" (Hos. 1:9); that the Kingdom of God has been "taken away" from that nation (Mt 21:43); that nation having crucified their Messiah, their Messianic promises and hopes were deferred to a remnant at the Lord's return. Meanwhile, God had raised up Christ His Son, and set Him at His own right hand, in a priesthood compared to which Moses and Levi and Aaron were but "shadows." National Israel was left behind at the Cross--as were indeed all men! The Cross was the end of man; God was manifest in the flesh and they spat in His face and crucified Him.)

Hebrews 1:2 : At the end of these days God did speak unto us in (the person of His) Son, Whom He appointed Heir of all things, through Whom also He made the ages--

Astonishing it was, indeed, even in that "old time," that the infinite, eternal, glorious God should speak unto dust and ashes such as man is! But this wondrous fact of God's having spoken in past days is to prepare us (vs. 2) for a more stupendous statement: (God) did at the end of these days speak unto us in (the person of His) Son!*

It should be noted that the words, did speak unto us in Son, (which great fact carries throughout the epistle) refer to the Son at His incarnation and onward. John, indeed, defends His absolute, eternal Sonship in his opening verse: "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God ... All things were made through Him; and without Him was not anything made that hath been made." God spoke indeed through the Old Testament writers. But this was before God spake unto us IN (His) Son. ("In Son", there is no article, there is no possessive pronoun, in the Greek. Again we feel the poverty of English idiom, and must translate, "His Son," or "a Son". But if we say over and over to ourselves the very words, God did speak unto us in Son, our hearts will feel the meaning, though our words cannot translate it.)

It is, in these first two verses of Hebrews, not the fact that God hath "spoken": but that, having spoken to the fathers by divers portions and in divers manners, He has gone beyond these former "Portions" and "manners" of speaking and did speak in (the person of His) SON!

Nor is it to have this Son Himself here speak to us. God speaks: and lo, the Son is there! "This is My Beloved Son!" Nay, infinitely beyond this: for God does not in Hebrews say, "Hear Him." Nay: the Son does not speak to us in Hebrews. But God speaks concerning Him. And it is after the Cross, after the resurrection, after the post-resurrection salutation to Christ--"Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek."

It is in view of the Divine glory of the Person of Christ, the SON, Heir of all things, addressed as God, Lord, Creator and Upholder of all things; also, indeed, as Son of Man--for as man He is to be set over all things! And we even now behold Him, "because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor." Thus is He, the Son, set before us at the very first in Hebrews!

How utterly different is this from Old Testament "words" and "portions." Truly this is another "manner of speaking" than those messages of old time unto the fathers in the prophets. Here is the only begotten Son Who declares the Father! (John 1:18).

I repeat, Christ does not speak in the book of Hebrews. He, Himself, is God's message to us here!

And now we behold the snare into which so many have been drawn. They go back to Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John and study "the teachings of Jesus," as they call them. They dream to honor Him in terming Him "the Great Teacher."

But the fundamental truth set forth in Hebrews is that Christ Himself, the Son of God, is God's message, His voice to us. Herein the message of Hebrews resembles John 3:16, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son"; and again, "He that hath the Son hath the life; he that hath not the Son of God hath not the life" (1 John 5:12).

There comes for everyone who has believed on the Lord Jesus Christ a moment when he HEARS--when God the Father speaks by the blessed Spirit to his heart. Christ, therefore, is no mere Teacher, but the personal Voice and eternal Gift of God to him! Such an one knows what the words before us mean, God hath spoken to us in (the person of His) Son.

The presence of the Son comes steadily before us in the Bible. First the prophecy of "the Seed of the woman" (Gen. 3:15); then, "Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel" (God with us)--Isaiah 7:14; next, the manner of fulfillment: Gabriel announces to Mary: "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee: wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" (Lk 1:35). Then, the angelic rapture, and the song the shepherds heard: "Glory to God in the highest!" The star, and company of worshiping wise men from the East; the voice from Heaven, "This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased; hear ye Him"; the years of His ministry of mercy; Gethsemane--and the accepting of the cup from the Father's hand; the laying down of His life at Calvary; the final word, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit"; the resurrection, and the message to Mary Magdalene, "Go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God" (John 20:17).

Now all these things are familiar to us; but look again at the language: God hath spoken unto us in Son. We naturally expect to hear that Son speaking to us in this book of Hebrews. From the beginning to the end He is before us, there at God's right hand. The Holy Ghost inspires the writer of Hebrews to portray His eternal deity and glory; His real humanity; and His session at the right hand of the Majesty on high, where He "ever liveth to make intercession." Over the house of God as Son, not servant; greater infinitely than the host of angels, or the servants of God on earth; appearing "before the face of God for us," a seated Priest!--His one offering for redemption forever over! And, in the infinite power and worth of that sacrifice as known by God alone, a "Great High Priest": One able to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities," having been "in all points tempted like as we are--sin apart."

Thus God hath spoken to us in Son. In the silent depths of our hearts we either hearken to God speaking in this Son, and respond to God's invitation to enter in boldly, by the blood of Jesus, to the throne of grace, in a life of faith and praise and worship; or, we "neglect", "drift away", and finally "refuse"--what? The voice of God Himself, speaking to us in His Son! so, it is not the "voice of words," as at Sinai, that comes to us. God speaks to us in a Person, His dear, only-begotten One: Jesus Christ, "the same yesterday, and today, and unto the ages."

Now let us consider the seven marvelous utterances (Heb 1:2-3) concerning this Son in Whom God hath spoken unto US.

1. Whom He appointed Heir of all things.
2. Through Whom also He made the ages (aionas).

3. Being the effulgence of (God's) glory.
4. (Being) the exact-expression of His substance.
5. Upholding all things by the word of His power.
6. He ... made purification of sins.
7. He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

First, Whom He appointed Heir of all things--This great revelation naturally evokes a threefold inquiry: First, as to the place of God in appointing Christ Heir. Second, Why Heir, and appointed when? Third, What do "all things" embrace?

The Son shared the Divine glory before the world was. He emptied Himself" when He came into the world. (Philippians 2:7, Revised Version. That is, He laid aside His glory, His power, and His wisdom, leaving them with the Father, and taking the "form of a servant" down here. He spoke of the glory He had with the Father before the world was. He said, "The Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He seeth the Father doing"; and "I by the Spirit of God cast out demons." This Self-Emptying as to the fact of it, affords no difficulty to simple faith; although the process of it is Divinely inscrutable. Christ when on earth continued just as certainly Deity as from all eternity: "Before Abraham was born, I AM." This voluntarily self-emptied state continued. He said to Peter in Gethsemane, "Thinkest thou that I cannot beseech My Father, and He shall even now send Me more than twelve legions of angels?" He did not make the request. And at another time, He saw a fig tree afar off, and came "if haply" He might find fruit thereon, refraining from using His power.)

Throughout Hebrews (and the whole Word of God, indeed!) we find God the Father and God the Son equal in fact of Deity, yet the Son constantly doing willingly, yea, gladly, the will of the Father; and the Father, just as gladly, constantly exalting the Son.

Now heirship follows sonship: among men, naturally; between God the Son and God the Father, eternally. It is therefore as Son--He having come into the world at the end of the Old Testament revelations; and God "having spoken" to us in that Son--that His appointment as Heir of all things is announced. Indeed, He thus regarded Himself: Mark 12:1-12: They said, "This is the Heir."

Now that "all things" are spoken of, let us reflect that "all things have been created through Him and unto Him." (Col 1:16, Heb. 1:2; cf. Prov. 8, John 1). We find God's plan for the future also in Ephesians 1:9, 10: "According to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him (Christ)" looking forward "unto a
dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (not the things of the world below, the lost, though they will bow the knee to Him as Lord--Philippians 2:10).

Christ--Heir of all things, through Whom God created the ages; "all things were made through Him;--"all things were created through Him and unto Him ... and in Him all things hold together"! (Col 1:16, 17). We opened our eyes from sleep and lo, the created light! But it was Christ's voice that spoke, "Let there be light," when darkness had thralled a ruined world. We arose to dress, and lo, for all our clothing He had prepared the materials. We sat down to eat, and lo, all our food had been made by Him. We passed through the garden, and lo! every plant beautiful to the eye or good for food, Christ had created for us. We saw afar the mountains, and lo, it was His strength that had set them fast! We looked beyond the mountains, and the sea was there; but again, "The sea is His and He made it." We looked above the mountains and the sea, and there was the sky, blue and wonderful; but lo! His voice had spoken: "Let there be a firmament!" And as for the clouds, they are "His chariot," and "Behold, He cometh with the clouds," just as a cloud received Him out of the sight of the gazing apostles on Olivet. And He has ascended "far above all the heavens"! He has "passed through the heavens," as the appointed Heir of all things. For as the Son, He inherits all things, which as we have seen, He made, created and also the very ages (aionas), each with its order of things and its Divine purpose.

But someone is weary of all this recital. Someone objects, "I believe man has his place, and his powers, and his planning and thinking." Well, O puppet, what hast thou created? Ye "brought nothing into the world; and can carry nothing out." O dust, living a little while, to dust returning: can you get on without breathing, a day, an hour? Nay, you must depend for every breath, nay every heart beat, on the God "in Whose hand thy breath is"; and He has spoken in His Son--even Christ!

Let us meditate deeply and frequently upon this stupendous statement: God's Heir is Christ!

a. This is for eternity: there will be no change in God's mind and the blessed Spirit's delight in this matter.

b. Men agree that the surest title known on earth is that by inheritance. By the Divine pleasure and decree, the Son of God comes into possession, forever and ever, of all things. They are His. He is Heir!

c. Note the peculiar fitness and safety of Christ's being Heir Of all things. With men, inheriting a fortune is the occasion, often, of the development of inherent selfishness. But Christ, while possessing (even in Gethsemane) the power of self-deliverance, absolutely rejected, even unto death, the path of selfishness. Language utterly fails us to express the boundless, unselfish devotion which said to the very end, "The cup which the Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" The Son of God proved what He claimed: "I am come down from Heaven, not to do Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me." Mark the sweat falling down as blood in Gethsemane where the Father gave Him to taste the cup of wrath for our sins, ere sin was laid upon Him! And even when forsaken of God, He held fast His claim, "My God!" Oh, for language here, but we have none for the unselfishness and devotion! For all eternity, His death, toward which He "steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem," has proven Him the fit and safe Heir of all things!

d. He shares with those He calls "His brethren" with the same infinite readiness, (as we shall find in Hebrews 2), so that we read, "joint-heirs with Christ" (Rom. 8:17). It is as Man that all things will be subjected to Him. And we find (Heb. 2:13-14) that in order for

this, God is manifest in the flesh—Christ steps in among men, His creatures, in a body "prepared" by God (Heb 10:5).

Yes, the Son of God has fellow-heirs! And God speaks to us redeemed sinners, delivered from "the hole of the pit," thus: "The Spirit Himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are children of God: and if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; if so be that we suffer with Him, that we may be also glorified with Him" (Rom. 8:16-17). And again, "Thou art no longer a bondservant, but a son (adult son huios); and if a son, then an heir through God" (Gal. 4:7).

Alas, this poor, poor world! In the words, "We brought nothing into the world ... neither can we carry anything out," Paul wrote the biography of every man! Men have struck gold, heaped it up, and left it--to be paupers eternally! Men have labored, and with genius, to "accumulate," as they say, and have left it forever--paupers. Xerxes of Persia had no limit to his earthly possessions, but dying without Christ, to what was he heir? An eternity with nothing! For Christ has been appointed Heir Of all things! The proud millionaire, yea, they say the billionaire, is with us today. For a few years he is rich and then leaves it all and is poor forever! While some humble servant of his, who had Christ, dying, steps out into an unspeakably glorious eternity, rich beyond all imagination. Why? He is an "heir of God, and joint-heir with Christ," who was appointed Heir of all things. Yea, indeed, let us meditate much on these words. I am writing these words in sight of the most elegant private mansion in all of the United States; but was the builder, who is gone from it now, an heir with Christ? There is no other eternal good!

2. Through Whom also He made the ages--We have this action illustrated in the opening verse of the Bible: "In the beginning God created the heavens and earth." Then after the judgment period of verse 2, we have, "And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." Here spoke the eternal Word Who gives creative utterance to the counsels of the Deity: "For all things were made through Him" (John 1:3).

Made the ages (aions)--An aion, (English aeon) as we know, is a space of time during which God is developing some special phase of His purpose.

For example, in Genesis 1 there is brought before our eyes an earth surrounded by the "deep," with "darkness" upon its face. That this was not the original condition of the world when created is shown in Isaiah 45:18:--"For thus saith Jehovah that created the heavens, the God that formed the earth and made it, that established it and created it not a waste, (Heb. tohu) that formed it to be inhabited" (or, habitable). That the "darkness" and "deep" were a judgment upon a former condition is also brought out in the words of Genesis 1:2: "And the earth was (Heb., "became") tohu and bohu--waste and empty," whereas God says He created it not tohu, a waste, but habitable, as we just saw.

Note also, when man is created, he is told to replenish the earth, just as Noah was commanded at the end of the Flood: Genesis 9:1: "And God blessed Noah and his sons, and said unto them, Be fruitful and multiply, and replenish the earth"—which had been emptied of population.

Therefore, the words of Hebrews 1:2, He made the aionas, refer to those processes in each age by which God is bringing to pass His great purpose. It is a solemn word indeed, that "now once at the end (literally, consummation) of the ages (aions) hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of
Himself" (Heb 9:26). The "evil age" that crucified Him is still on, to be ended by His return to earth when the aion to come, the Millennium, will begin. How unutterably wonderful are the words of Revelation 22:4, 5, concerning the saints: "They shall see His face; and His name shall be on their foreheads. And there shall be night no more; and they need no light of lamp, neither light of sun; for the Lord God shall give them light: and they shall reign unto the ages of the ages."

Be it noted now that while in Hebrews 1:2 we are told that the "ages" were "made" (Poieo) through Christ, when we come to the original of calling creation into being, a different Greek word is used-- ktidzo, create: but the same Person, Son of God, is declared to have "created all things." Indeed, it is further
asserted that: "In Him were all things created, in the heavens and upon the earth, things visible and things invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers; all things have been created ... in Him ... through Him, and unto Him." (Let all note these three words, in the Greek, en, dia, is, of Colossians 1:16. They mean, in view of Him, through His direct action, with respect to His honor and glory!) (will, we may say, ties with God; creative command, with Christ, the Word; and the execution of The command, with the Spirit: "Thou sendest forth Thy Spirit, they are created" (Ps 104:30). We see the Spirit present in Gen. 1:2, also.)

Heb 1:3: Who, being the effulgence of His glory, and the very image of His substance, and upholding all things by the word of His power, when He had made purification of sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high--

3. Being the effulgence of His glory--We are reminded at once of, "No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He hath declared Him" (John 1:18). In John 1, He is therefore the Word by Whom God is, declared unto us. The term "effulgence," used in verse 3, presents the Son as the Person of the Deity in and by Whom the glory of that Deity is manifested. And the glory (doxa) "is the expression of the Divine attributes collectively."

"All that God is--not merely in His ways, but in His being--is expressed absolutely by the Son ... No one has grasped what the Son of God is until he has prostrated his soul before Him 'God over all, blessed forever'! (Rom. 9:5). I would that I could put it so strongly that every soul would bow to the truth of it, the absolutely essential, perfect divinity of the Son of God, our Lord Jesus Christ, We admit not one iota of a question, not one shadow of a doubt, not one bit of tarnish upon that glory which God has spread

before us on this page."--Ridout, Lectures on Hebrews.

4. And the exact-expression* of His substance--From our Lord's words, "God is a Spirit," many unconsciously conceive spirit, and, consequently, God, as not having "substance." (The very image of His (God's] substance. Two words in this phrase instantly awaken intense interest. In their order they are, (a) "image", or better, impress: the Greek word is charakter. Primarily this word denotes the instrument used in engraving or carving, and from this, the impression made by the die or engraver: "The exact expression (the image) of any person or thing"; in our verse, literally, the exact-expression of substance of Him (of God); (b) "substance"; see comment on #4, text.)

But we must not confuse "substance" here with matter as we know it. In Deuteronomy 4:15, 16, Jehovah indeed protested to Israel, "Ye saw no manner of form on the day that Jehovah spake unto you in Horeb out of the midst of the fire; lest ye corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image in the form of any figure." But this was a protection against idolatry, as seen in the verses which follow, especially verse 25. But in Exodus 24, in connection with the ratification of the first covenant, we read:

"Then went up Moses, and Aaron, Nadab, and Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel: and they saw the God of Israel; and there was under His feet as it were a paved work of sapphire stone, as it were the very heaven for clearness. And upon the nobles of the children of Israel He laid not His hand: and they beheld God, and did eat and drink" (Ex 24:9-11).

This in no wise contradicts God's word to Moses in Exodus 3. Moses had said, "Show me, I pray Thee, Thy glory." God in answer promised to "make all His goodness" pass before him, saying: "Thou canst not see My face; for man shall not see Me and live. And Jehovah said, Behold there is a place by Me, and thou shalt stand upon the rock: and it shall come to pass, while My glory passeth by, that I will put thee in a cleft of the rock, and will cover thee with My hand until I have passed by: and I will take away My hand, and thou shalt see My back; but My face shall not be seen" (vss. 20-23). See also Exodus 34:5 ff. This agrees also with the visions of Ezekiel 1:26-28, 3:12-14, 8:2, 9:3; 10; 11:22. These Scriptures reveal the Triune God, enthroned upon the cherubim. We see in Revelation 5:6 our Lord's essential place there, "In the midst of the throne and of the four living creatures, and of the elders." Although being also the Son of Man, He is a Lamb (lit., "a little lamb") "as though it had been slain"-about to take the kingdom on earth (but His place is in the glory that He had with the Father before the world was).

This word "substance" in Hebrews 1:3 relates to Deity itself--the "exact expression" of which, the Man Christ Jesus is!

5. Maintaining* all things by the word of His power—John Owen said, "Our Lord Jesus Christ, as the Son of God, hath the weight of the whole creation upon His hand." (See Vincent. Who says, "It implies sustaining, but also movement." It deals, as Weiss Puts it, "with the all, in all its changes and transformations throughout the aeons.") Men talk of "the laws of nature"; of the "laws of being." In the absolute there are no such things! In the light of this all-embracing, overwhelming word, maintaining all things, and the method and means by which Christ does it by the word of His power, to talk of the "laws" resident in things is simply infidelity, or sublime ignorance.

Certainly there were creative commands in Genesis: "Let the earth put forth grass ... Let there be light ... Let the waters swarm with swarms of living creatures, and let birds fly above the earth ... Be fruitful, and multiply, and fill the waters in the seas, and let birds multiply on the earth ... Let the earth bring forth living creatures after their kind." Again, after making man in His own image, after His likeness, God said "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it."

Nevertheless, man is utterly dependent! As God said to Belshazzar, "The God in Whose hand thy breath is, and Whose are all thy ways"; or Paul to the Athenians, "In Him we live, and move, and have our being"; and, "He Himself giveth to all life, and breath, and all things"; or as Job utters it: "In Whose hand is the soul of every living thing, and the breath (spirit) of all mankind" (Job 12:10); so it is, not only with man, but with every living creature and with the plants of the field, which if God command, shall come up "in a night" (Jonah 4:10)--every living thing is sustained in being by the Lord Jesus Christ, the eternal Son. Humbling, but true, O proud man! Yea, blessedly true! Say God's saints.

When the Son of God acted in creation by His Word, did He resort to the "laws" of non-existent things? You say, Impossible. "By faith we understand that the worlds have been framed by the word of God, so that (as a result of which) what is seen (the visible universe) hath not been made out of things which appear." People of simple faith accept it: and there is no other sort of faith: for, "Except ye turn and become as little children ..."!

So the same Person Whose word created still upholds (maintains). Mighty wonder! You object, "Christ Himself said, 'Not a sparrow falleth without My Father'"--making the first Person of the Deity exercise what we call "providence." Alas, how quickly, unless deeply and constantly taught of God, does the human mind become unitarian, rejecting Christ's Deity!

The Jews knew better, who heard His words, "I and the Father are one." (John 10:30). They took up stones to cast at our Lord when He asserted His eternity of being, in John 8:58-59; and again, when He stated His Divine unity with the Father, John 10:30-31. Our Lord's saying that He had come from Heaven, from the Father, divided the multitude, as we see in John 7:25-44, and 8:23; as His frequent claim that the Father that sent Him was with Him, aroused their blind enmity (John 8:16, 20-27).

The Greek word translated "upholding" (phero) is found, for instance, in Mark 2:3-4 when they came bringing the paralyzed man. Again, our Lord said in Mark 12:15-16: "Bring Me a denarius ... And they brought it" (phero twice). It is used seven times in one chapter, John 15, concerning bearing fruit, the emphasis being upon the branch's bearing fruit, and not the fruit, the branch. This is the word used in Hebrews 1:3 of our Lord's upholding the universe in every, even the minutest, particular! He maintaineth all things.

Confess that He is God the Son, and as being so He would have all power as part of His eternal glory. Then the word of His power becomes an overmastering thought, beyond the conception of mind, but the delight of faith, like that of a babe trusting its mother. We are not permitted here, as it seems to me, to let a created universe "run along," after giving it certain trends. But the word of His power ("The creating, omnipresent Word"--Ohlshausen) is certainly as much His word as that with which He created all things in the beginning.

The **word of His power** was constantly spoken of by our blessed Lord in His ministry among men; and He is the same, "yesterday, and today, yea, and forever." He "cast out the spirits with a word"! "I will, be thou made clean," He said to the leper. "Young man, I say unto thee, arise," He said to the widow of Nain's son. "Lazarus, come forth!" He cried at Bethany, "and he that was dead came forth." The centurion of Matthew 8:8-13 entered into faith in the word of His power: "Only say the word, and my servant shall be healed!"

Certainly it is true that our Lord could command an order of things, as we read in Psalm 119:90-91:

"Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth, They abide this day according to Thine ordinances; For all things are Thy servants."

But do not dream that there are any "ordinances" which leave out the direct and constantly exercised power of the Lord Jesus Christ. "In Him (Christ) all things consist," or "hold together" (Col. 1:17). (Bishop Lightfoot says concerning this word: "Hold together, cohere: He is the principle of cohesion in the universe. To take one instance, the action of gravitation, which keeps in their places things fixed, and regulates the motions of things moving, is an expression of His mind. Similarly, in Heb 1:3, Christ the Logos is described as sustaining the universe.)

To conceive that the Son of God can maintain all things by the word of His power, and at the same time or for an instant, be absent from His creation (in the sense in which evolutionists claim) is hideous infidelity which would banish God from His own creation if it could! An example dear to us is our Lord Jesus' constant care for all His saints. Thousands upon thousands are asking Him daily for this and that: and He is able to speak the word of power to all and to each. How? He is God! There is no limit to His power.

"All, all that buds, and blossoms, and rejoices, hath My Beloved made;
His wisdom and His tenderness and gladness told forth in leaf and blade.
All, all that buds, and blossoms, and rejoices, hath My Beloved made;
All moves unto the music of His power that fills the woodland glade."
-- Gerhardt Ter Steegen

Such a song is that of the Christian: not of the pantheist or the atheist, neither of whom want God. Ghastly wonder of all the ages: man, a creature, whose very name is need, need, need; who must be "kept" from outside himself, like a newborn babe supplied with breath, with food, with air; kept in balance by a power wholly without himself; who must be warmed by a created sun; the temperature of his body kept by a marvelous adjustment; his blood kept circulating; his heart kept beating--yet the constant effort of human "science" and "philosophy" is to get as far away as possible from the consciousness of this creating, providing, maintaining Lord God!

6. When He had made purification of sins--This is the most brief and comprehensive statement in all Scripture of our Lord's work at His first coming. "Purification" here is to be conceived of in the largest sense as including not only believers' sins expiated on the Cross, where propitiation and remission were secured; but also the whole task of Christ as to the removal of sins from God's sight--described in one word! ("In the thought of making purification of sins is already foreshadowed the work of Christ as High Priest, which plays so prominent a part in the
epistle."--Vincent.)

Looking at the work done Godward, it is "the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world." Note that it is purification of sins, not, from sin: it is the great work of the Cross, effective everywhere and forever, whereby God pardons and remits the sins of individual believers, and brings in a new creation where righteousness is "at home." But, here used, it is a great word preparing the way, laying the foundation, for the priestly work of Christ revealed in this epistle.

7. Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high—These words present the last of the seven revelations concerning the Person of that Son in Whom God has "spoken unto us." Lack of much reverent consideration of these wondrous words of God concerning the Son accounts for the shallow, doubting "Christianity" everywhere. My first visit to London came just at the season when favored persons were being "received" by royalty (Edward VII). I marked the conduct of those Americans who were preparing to be "received at court," their assiduous daily study of the proper attire, address, and every detail they thought would be important. My heart sank at the contrasting heedlessness of these same human creatures towards their God, and towards that Son in Whom He has now "spoken."

All, the supernal dignity of these words, sat down ... Majesty ... on High!* It is indeed a seated Priest, after an accomplished work, Whom we are to find in Hebrews! But now the infinite greatness of His Person and position is before us. Indeed the word "Majesty" is simply the Greek word "great" formed into a capital noun, used in Scripture only of the majesty, the greatness, of God (Heb. 1:3,

8:1; Jude 25. Compare 2 Sam. 7:22, Ps. 145:3, 6; 1Chr 29:11). THERE IS NO OTHER GREATNESS! May we be brought into this consciousness!

*** Four times in Hebrews is Christ seen as having sat down on the right hand of God:**

1. In Heb 1:3, as Son, Heir, Effulgence, Upholder—after "purification of sins," He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High. This is in view of His Person.
2. In Heb 8:1, 2 we have the High Priest's ministry described: "Who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens, a minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, not man."
3. In Heb 10:12, contrasted with earthly priests, that keep standing "day by day ministering ... He ... sat down on the right hand of God." Here, His sitting down is in view of His one sacrifice. The sacrifice is never to be repeated, therefore the Priest is seated.
4. Heb 12:2 He is seen as the Leader (Archegos) of the "great cloud of witnesses who lived, walked and conquered by faith (Heb 11): "Jesus, the Leader and Perfecter of the faith, Who for the joy that was set before Him endured the Cross, despising shame, and hath sat down at the right hand of the throne of God." Here neither His Person, His ministry, nor His finished work is before us, but His inner motives in view of the "joy set before Him"; and His consequent "race"--enduring the Cross, despising the shame."

Reflection upon these four wondrous views of Christ's session at God's right hand will greatly edify the believer.

Hebrews 1:4: Having become by so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they:

"Better" (the Greek word kreitton) is used thirteen times in this book of Hebrews, out of nineteen times in the whole New Testament. Beginning here in Heb 1:4 with Christ Himself better than the angels we have "better things" (Heb 6:9); "better person" (than Abraham (Heb 7:7); "better hope" (Heb 7:19); "better covenant" (Heb 7:22); "better covenant ... better promises" (Heb 8:6); "better sacrifices" (Heb 9:23); "better possession" (Heb 10:34); "better country" (Heb 11:16); "better resurrection" (Heb 11:35); "better things" (Heb 11:40 and Heb 12:24). No wonder Paul uses the same word "better" in Philippians: "To depart and be with Christ ... is very far better"! (Phil 1:23).

(Jewish minds thought much of angelic glory. They had received the Law as ordained by ministry of angels (Acts 7:5). They were wont, therefore, to regard with awe and wonder those obedient messengers of God's power. There can be no stronger proof of this than John's temptation to worship one (Rev. 19:10, 22:8-9). Hence the weight of the further testimony here to Christ's glory, He having become by so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they.)

This blessed Son having in His humanity the "body" which, He said, His Father prepared for Him (Heb 10:5), was "made for a little while lower than the angels" (Heb 2:9). Astonishing fact! (--which, by the way, eternally protects the elect angels from the pride by which the others were lost, following the dragon in his pride--Rev. 12:4, 8, 9). Now this Son is said to have become so much better than the angels, as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they. And this was as MAN, remember! For He is here set before us as the Son in Whom God--at the end of the Old Testament days--had spoken! So He is "the Word made flesh" and having as such, "tabernacled among us" (John 1:14), of whom God is here speaking! Read Hebrews 1 over and over!

Now, how much better than the angels had He, though Man, "become"?

1. He is the Son of God; they are "servants" (Heb 1:5, 7).
2. He is to be worshiped by the angels! (Heb 1:6).
3. He is addressed as "God" by God the Father! (Heb 1:8).
4. He is addressed as "King"--Whose "sceptre" is that of "uprightness" (Heb 1:8).
5. For His love of righteousness, and hatred of iniquity, His God had "anointed Him with the oil of gladness above His fellows"--whoever they be! (Heb 1:9).
6. He is addressed as "Lord," Who "in the beginning did lay the foundations of the earth," and the works of Whose hands the very Heavens are! (Heb 1:10).
7. He shall continue, though these Heavens shall pass away: "They shall perish, but Thou continuest ... Thou art the same; Thy years shall not fail" (Heb 1:11, 12).
8. "Of which of the angels hath He said at any time, Sit Thou at My right hand, till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet?" (Heb 1:13).
9. "Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?" (Heb 1:14).
10. "Not unto angels did He (God) subject the world to come" (whereof in Hebrews we speak, and to which we look forward) (Heb 2:5)

Of course no moral or spiritual excellence is indicated here, for He was ever perfect. But He was, we read, "perfected through sufferings (Heb 2:10, 5:9, 7:28). He went on from trial to trial, from testing to testing, to perfect obedience to God's will--which

involved His death, and that as a Sin-offering. But thence God raised Him, and thus He must be held in our minds--from the words of Heb 1:3, "When He had made purification of sins," as a Risen One, seated on the right hand of God! He has taken that place above the angels which belonged to Him eternally as Son and Heir of all things, and now belongs to Him as the "one Mediator between God and men, the MAN Christ Jesus" (1 Tim. 2:5). Few believe in their very hearts that there is a MAN in the glory!--and that Paul wrote of "Christ concerning the flesh," the words, "Who is over all, God blessed forever"!

Note especially that word "become." As God the Son, He could not "become." He could say, "Before Abraham was born, I AM!" But, as having emptied Himself, having taken the form of man, and humbled Himself, even to "obedience unto death, yea, the death of the Cross"--it is thus He is seen in the words before us. His "becoming" took Him for a little while "lower than the angels." Now, raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, and being by the right hand of God exalted, He has taken His seat as Man (none the less God, but as Man) on the right hand of the Majesty on High. And this phrase, become by so much, measures the distance--infinite and incomprehensible to us--between the Risen Christ and the angelic host. How much better? As He hath inherited a more excellent name than they. This "Name" is never for a moment to be thought of as in competition with the angels or other beings. Competition with their Creator? Subjection is their delight! "Glory to God in the highest," they sang when He was born in Bethlehem--to be for "a little while lower than the angels"! How happy is their sweet ministry, "sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation," which service they delight to do. But, brother, it is not the vote of the heavenly beings that makes the Son of God become by so much better than the angels. It is the facts in the case. He is God. They are creatures. The cleavage is infinite, between Him and all creatures and between His work and that of any creature, forever--much as God loves His faithful servants.

Note that it is by so much and not merely so much better. That is, it is a measure Of place, or degree; not of quality of being. (This comparative phrase, in its four occurrences in Hebrews, really sets forth infinity. The measure in each case is beyond measure! Hebrews 3:3, 5 says Moses was faithful in all God's house but Jesus was "counted worthy of more glory than Moses by so much as He that built the house hath more honor than the house." Heb 7:22: "Inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath ... by so much also hath Jesus become the Surety of a better covenant." (Not until Heb 13:20 will the great announcement of that "eternal covenant" between God and Christ, by which He was "brought again from the dead," be definitely set forth; but it is doctrinally involved throughout the book from Heb 1:3-4, on.) And Heb 8:6 "He hath obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as He is also the Mediator of a better covenant.")

The great mystery we must never forget is even that when He became "for a little while lower than the angels," He was still the same in Deity as when He created all things. We must make careful distinction here between "having become" and "having inherited a name." This "inheriting" compels us to regard Him as Man, as the Word made flesh, as the Son, perfected forevermore, and ascended to Heaven. Indeed, the language of the whole Verse sets this forth. He "sat down," the previous verse tells us, and now, "having become," and having "obtained by inheritance," are spoken of Him.

After these seven utterances concerning our Lord's Person (Heb 1:1, 3), God cites seven Old Testament Scriptures, elucidating and proving verse 4. Let us examine these seven quotations made, as usual in Hebrews, from the Septuagint. "The Septuagint was a translation of the OT from the Hebrew into the Greek language, made about 270 to 235 B.C.; so-called because of the 70 translators said to have been engaged in making it. It is the most ancient of all versions of the Hebrew OT."--Angus, Cyclopedic Handbook to the Bible.

Hebrews 1:5: For unto which of the angels said He at any time, Thou art My Son, This day have I begotten Thee? (Ps. 2:7).

That Christ's Deity is here before us leaps into utterance in this verse. These angels are creatures, with the same creature-responsibility possessed by all creatures, a fact which is readily seen in God's pronouncement of future judgment upon the fallen angels in Psalm 82:6-7 (see John 10:34,36), Though called "sons" as created beings--as, indeed, Adam is called, being Divinely, created (Lk 3:38), yet no angel is ever addressed as is Christ. "In OT, 'sons' is applied to angels collectively but never individually. See Ps. 29:1, 89:6. Similarly, 'son' is applied to the chosen nation: Ex. 4:22, Hos. 11:1; but to no individual nation."--Vincent. Here (Ps. 2:7) Christ is addressed in an entirely different manner. First of all, He is the eternal Son. The relationship of Father, Son, and Spirit always existed in the Deity. Second, when He was born in Bethlehem, that is, in the incarnation, He is also called "Son of the Most High" and "Son of God" (Lk. 1:32, 35; see also Isa. 9:6, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given"). Third, when He was raised from the dead He was so saluted, as we read in Acts 13:33: "The promise made unto the fathers ... God hath fulfilled ... unto our children, in that He raised up Jesus."

To what Occasion, then, of our Lord's life, do the words in Hebrews 1:5 refer? To His eternal Sonship? To His incarnation? Or to His resurrection-ascension, and session at God's right hand? Evidently to the last named. Paul said plainly to the Jews in Pisidia: "In that He raised up Jesus; as also it is written in the second psalm, 'Thou art My Son, this day I have begotten Thee.' And as concerning that He raised Him up from the dead, now no more to return to corruption, He hath spoken on this wise, 'I will give you the holy and sure blessings of David.' (Isa. 55:3). Because He saith also in another psalm (16:10), 'Thou wilt not give Thy Holy One to see corruption.'"

Here Paul clearly connects the words of the Second Psalm, "This day have I begotten Thee," with our Lord's resurrection and His

salutation by the Father as risen.

In the address, Thou art My Son, This day have I begotten Thee, are these two distinct elements: first, the fact that He is the Son eternally; and second, His public recognition as such afterwards, and most especially at His resurrection, when He was "declared to be the Son of God with power"--as is so emphasized in Romans 1:4.

But in Hebrews 1:5 the question is not when He was called Son, but the fact that He was so called, as over against the fact that no angel was ever thus addressed! We find God speaking to David in the great royal covenant (1 Chron. 17:13; 2 Sam. 7:14) whereby He promised him a Son, the throne of Whose kingdom He would establish forever, of that One of David's house Who should inherit his throne forever:

I will be to Him a Father,
And He shall be to Me a Son.

How wonderfully the Spirit of God brings out the thought of God, where our poor minds could not have followed! The words, He shall be to me a Son, are of course spoken of Christ as a Son of David--as Man. As God He was eternally in the relationship of Son. Again we would warn against seeking to probe into this mystery, which faith and faith alone can receive. (A godly and deeply instructed brother has written: "We cannot fathom what He was. Our hearts should not go and scrutinize the Person of Christ as though we could know it all. No human being can understand the union of God and man in His Person: 'No one knoweth the Son, save the Father' ... All that is revealed, you may know; we may learn a great deal about Him ... but when I attempt to fathom the union of God and man ... no man can.") When our Lord was born, He was Emmanuel, God with us (Isa. 7:14); and He was Man, yea, a babe, Who by the spirit of prophecy said, "Thou didst make me trust when I was upon My mother's breasts" '(Ps. 22:9).

There are in Matthew 11:27 three great facts shown unto us by our Lord: first: "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father" (of this we do not now speak). Second, "No one knoweth the Son, save the Father." Of this we must speak with profoundest emphasis: for this "knowing" is that of which only God, and no creature, is capable. Third, "Neither doth any know the Father, save the Son, and He to whomsoever the Son willeth to reveal Him." This He has willed for us who, begotten of God, born of His Spirit, are of God's family (1 John 2:13). But it is upon the Father's knowledge of the Son that we must ponder especially in Hebrews 1.

To sum up, Christ being the Son of God, greeted thus before incarnation and constantly afterwards, is "declared to be the Son of God with power ... by the resurrection from the dead" (Ro 1:4), and thus preached. "'Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten Thee,' is His relationship in time with God. It depends, I doubt not, on His glorious nature; but this position for man was acquired by the miraculous birth of Jesus here below, and demonstrated as true and determined in its true import by His resurrection."--J.N. Darby.

Hebrews 1:6: And when He again bringeth in THE FIRSTBORN into the world, He saith, And let all the angels of God worship Him:

In this, the third of these great Old Testament words concerning Christ, the Spirit goes back to Psalm 97:7: "Worship Him, all ye gods." (Perhaps also there is a reference to Deut. 32:43, Sept.) The 97th is one of the psalms of the second coming and millennial reign of Christ. Note first the beautiful name of Christ here (Heb. 1:6): THE FIRSTBORN. It is in itself an absolute title, a name. He is The Firstborn--the immediate expression of the rights and the glory of God. He has universal pre-eminence. Instead of looking at this wonderful Name from the creature's viewpoint, as do the Unitarians, modernists, and all infidels, let us view this Name from its only proper viewpoint, that of God Himself. Then indeed does it begin to teach us marvelous things of blessing!

When we quote Col. 1:15, "Who is the image of the invisible God, The Firstborn of all creation," Unitarian hosts rush to cry, "Yes, the Firstborn, the highest--but a creature, evidently." But let them read the next verse, "For in Him were all things created in the heavens and upon the earth." We press upon the reader that there is no faintest hint of Christ's being a creature, but the exact opposite: "God was manifest in the flesh." The movement is from God toward us, in infinite condescension. The Creator is coming among His creatures. The Second Person of the Deity has stepped into the creature place: not at all becoming a creature, for He Himself created all things! But the Father prepared Him a body (Heb. 10:5) and from the womb of the virgin, according to the word of prophecy, it could now be said, "Unto us a Child is born, unto us a Son is given ... and His name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of eternity, Prince of peace." O sinner! O saint! Read this and adore. In proceeding out into His creation should He not have the title, "The Firstborn"? He is not of creation in His origin, but He is one with us in grace.

This name, Firstborn (Prototokos) is applied seven times to our Lord (although in Mt 1:25 and Lk 2:7 it concerns His birth: "She brought forth her firstborn son"). In Ro 8:29, "The Firstborn among many brethren"; Col. 1:15, "The Firstborn of all creation," because "by Him were all things created"; Col. 1:18, "The Firstborn from among the dead" (in resurrection, of course); Heb. 1:6, When He again bringeth in The Firstborn into the World; Rev. 1:5. "The Firstborn of the dead" (for Christ did not go back, as did Lazarus, into the life of earth, but was raised in "newness, of life": Ro 6:4).

It is, we repeat, a title--not the eldest son of a family. See Ps. 89:27, where God, in speaking of David's tenth son (1Chr 3:1-5) Solomon, declares, "I will make (or, appoint) him firstborn the highest of the kings of the earth" (2Chr 9:22,24).

You remember that in our Lord's prayer in the 17th of John, He asks that the Father will glorify Him "with the glory which I had

with Thee," He said, "before the world was." He was there in all eternity past, one Person in the ineffable Trinity, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. To that eternal past the title, The Firstborn, cannot belong. Where, then, do we begin to find it? In God's motion toward creatures--even ourselves--not angels but men! Why this coming forth into creation and toward creatures? Was not the triune God sufficient in Himself? Were not His attributes all glorious? Was not the fellowship of Father, Son and Spirit enough--infinitely enough?

Nay. God is Love! And He would bestow that love upon creatures, who, by that bestowal, would be forever blessed. And He would reveal the absoluteness of that love in sending the Son of His love to redeem those who were otherwise guilty, lost, and forever undone. So God "brought in" His Son "into the world" first at Bethlehem. Again and again our Lord testified that He had not come of Himself, but that the Father had sent Him: "I came forth and am come from God; for neither have I come of Myself, but He sent Me" (John 7:28, 29; 8:42; 10:36). Now this was His first coming. And, according to hundreds of passages in the New Testament, as well as those in the old prophets, He is to be sent again into this world. God will again bring in THE FIRSTBORN into the habitable world, where He was once rejected: mark that! God will bring Him back to earth again, and in revealed glory. Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 4:14, "If we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so them also that are fallen asleep in (Gr., through) Jesus will God bring with Him." Not only will God bring Christ back but the Saints with Him! See 1 Thes 3:13: "The coming of our Lord Jesus with all His Saints"!

(Note: Of the adverb translated "again" (palin), Thayer says, "Joined to verbs of all sorts it denotes renewal or repetition of the action ... In Heb. 1:6. palin is tacitly opposed to the time when God first brought His Son into the world." And Alford: "In this epistle, when palin is joined to a verb, it always has the sense of 'a second time'. The A.V. reading, 'And again, when He bringeth in,' makes 'again' a simple
particle, not an adverb, and so obscures this reference to Christ's second coming.")

Second, "the angels" are to be taken into a higher place than they have ever had, even that of worshipers, a new and understanding place, where they will know God's love, and His electing Grace, seen in the redeemed, the members of Christ's Body! The words, Let all the angels of God worship Him, we find marvelously carried out in Revelation 5:7-12. There is deep instruction for us in this passage. After the Lamb has taken the governmental seven-sealed book, the four Living Ones and the twenty-four Elders fall down before Him, having each one a harp, for it is the day of Heaven's joy, celebrating His death and His purchasing (men) unto God with His blood out of "every tribe, and tongue, and people, and nation," to "reign upon the earth." Then come the angels. Their time of serving the saints is over, and their time of worship of the Lamb continues. "And I saw, and I heard a voice of many angels round about the throne," John tells us, "and the number of them was ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands; saying with a great voice, Worthy is the Lamb that hath been slain" (Rev. 5:11, 12).

Someone may ask, Have not the angelic beings always worshiped Christ the Son, through Whose word they were created? Doubtless they have always worshiped the Triune God. But when in the eternity past did God reveal Himself as at the incarnation when the only begotten Son, Who was in the bosom of the Father, "declared Him"? (John 1:18). It was not that God dwelt in Heaven in thick darkness as He appeared on Sinai. On the contrary, it is written of Him, "Who only hath immortality, dwelling in light
unapproachable" (1 Tim. 6:16). Read again the note regarding "again" on Hebrews 1:6.

In the various "theophanies" of the Old Testament, the Son was the Speaker--as He was the Speaker of the creative word of Genesis 1:3. And we know Isaiah saw Christ's glory, as God (Isa 6; John 12:41). Yet not to the Old Testament fathers did God speak "in a Son," as now. Nor do we read in Scripture of any other being than man created in God's imaged and likeness. For God's counsels were connected with Christ as man.*

God will "sum up all things in Christ, the things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth"--which is the "secret of His will" made known in Eph. 1:9, 10, 11-14 and following show our direct connection with Christ as God's "inheritance" (vs. 18); while Eph. 3:10, 11 tells us that it was God's intent that now "unto the principalities and powers in the heavenlies might be made known through the Church (the Assembly, the Bride of Christ) the manifold wisdom of God, according to the purpose of the ages (margin) which He purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord."

These "ages" run back to the beginning of God's creation, including, we believe, all things God has created. So this "purpose of the ages"--God's great ultimate object in them all, was to reveal Christ, in Whom dwelleth all the fullness of the Godhead, and the Assembly, as Christ's fullness (Eph. 1:22, 23).

Just how much the angels knew of our Lord as the Eternal Word, we may not know. What a celebration there was on the night He was born in Bethlehem as God manifest in the flesh! But here
in Hebrews 1:6 the angels will be called, we believe, into a ministry of intelligent worship such as they never knew before. Read carefully here 1 Peter 1:11, 12: "Which things angels desire to look into"! What things? Those things concerning "the sufferings of (appointed unto) Christ, and the glories that should follow them." Those matters which concern God's redemptive plan reveal His nature as Love: which things are shown directly to the objects of redemption, lost men; but which must be learned by observation by sinless heavenly beings. Christ "took hold of" (or "gave help to") the seed of Abraham, "not of angels" (Heb 2:16). So that the pardoned sinner knows the heart of God as no angel, cherub or seraph can!

Having, therefore, beheld God's love in sending His dear Son to the Cross, the angels enter with delight unimaginable upon the worship of that Son, when He takes over the kingdom things, as we
said above.

Hebrews 1:7: In the fourth Old Testament citation concerning the Son's place above the angels, we see their former ministry described thus: And of the angels He saith, Who maketh His angels winds, And His ministers a flame of fire:

This is quoted from Psalm 104:4, the word "maketh" indicating, according to a revered expositor, "He created them so." "The thought expressed here is that God employs His angels in the physical operation of the universe"--Conybeare. Here the angels are servants, whereas in the following verse, the Son is
addressed as God. For it is a state of being, not a ministry, that is in view in all this passage. It is the Son of God above the angels, although God created them able "to fly swiftly" (Da 9:21)'and to be His ministers Whose throne is "fiery flames." See again in Daniel 7:9, 10, and Revelation 8:2 God surrounded by these ministers, as Gabriel said (Lk. 1:19), "I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God."

("It will be well to trace through the Revelation the Very remarkable, often wholly unexpected, and hitherto unrevealed angelic activity.

"We have already noticed ... the constant and prominent part angels have in the ministration of affairs in Heaven: Rev. 5:2-11, 8:3-5; then (Rev 8:6-11:15) the seven angels with the trumpets, sending terrible direct judgment from Heaven. How God places in angels, 'Mighty in strength' the execution of His
plans, is concretely suggested in Rev. 10:7. In Rev. 14:18 we find the angel 'that hath power over fire'. In Rev. 16:5, 'the angel of the waters'; in 16:8, an angel the agent that gives power to the sun to scorch men with fire; and in 19:17 an angel standing in the sun, speaking His message. These are instances of the remarkable Powers and offices Possessed through Divine gift by these beings called angels. God continually and Personally ministers the affairs of this earth; and we learn from such verses as Rev. 7:1, that He does it through angelic ministers. He loves to delegate His power to His faithful servants."—The author's book, The Revelation, pp. 109-110.)

In the fifth and sixth citations of Scripture here in Hebrews 1, we have several marvelous features. In the first place, both these quotations, (first, vss. 8-9, from Ps. 45; second, vss. 10-12, from Ps. 102) are assertions of our Lord's Deity: the first, with respect to His Person; the second, with respect to His creatorship. In the second place, these quotations are taken out of their Old Testament context by the Holy Spirit, and applied to Christ in a manner that is startling. Finally, like all the seven citations of Scripture we are considering, they are utterances of God the Father, concerning, or directly unto, God the Son.

Heb 1:8 : But of the Son He saith, Thy throne, O God, is forever and ever; And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom.

9 Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.

(Here, as Deity, He is addressed as God by God the Father, and, as also Man, by the words, "Thy God." For as Man, He "emptied Himself--of His glory, power and wisdom (Phil. 2:6-8).)

This, as we have said, is from the beautiful Psalm 45 (which read), a rapturous welcome of the Lord at His second coming in glory, by the saved remnant of Israel: as the first verse says, "I speak the things which I have made touching the King."

Notice the enraptured words addressed to Christ: "Thou art fairer than the children of men; Grace is poured into Thy lips: Therefore God hath blessed Thee forever."

Here Christ is plainly addressed as Man--as note "Thy fellows," in the preceding verse.

But we come to the sixth verse in this 45th Psalm, and He is addressed as God! The Spirit of God quotes this verse in Hebrews 1:8, and addresses it to Christ: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. No Unitarian evasion can escape it. Here God goes away back before the incarnation. Vain and dangerous indeed it is for the human mind to speculate on the union of Deity and humanity. Christ is both. Faith receives it!

Here are three things: First, the Son addressed as God by the Father. Our Lord's walk, words, and works were in full consciousness of this: "Therefore the Jews sought the more to kill Him, because He not only brake the sabbath, but also called God His own Father, making Himself equal with God" (John 5:18). There are no degrees in Deity!

Second, the Son as the Lamb shares the throne of Deity. Nor does this conflict with 1 Cor. 15:28: "When all things have been subjected unto Him (Christ), then shall the Son also Himself be subjected to Him that did subject all things unto Him, that God may be all in all." "For He must reign till He hath put all His enemies under His feet" (1Cor 15:25). It is an administrative throne (rather than "mediatorial," as it has been sometimes called) on which He "must reign till". It is not the throne of Heb. 1:8. Therefore when that work of administering judgment to the enemies is completed, Christ voluntarily "shall deliver up the kingdom of God, even the Father." The fact, however, that He has (a) become man, and (b) had all things delivered unto Him of the Father for the task of putting down foes, does not detract from His own essential, eternal Deity. Even in the final revelation to us, the throne of God (Rev. 22:1, 3) is "The throne of God and of the Lamb"--a precious word! For the words "The Lamb" show Him Man, as we know Him to be God!

Third, the Lamb, seen in the midst of the throne in Rev 5:6, does not retire into that throne of the triune God again, but is "the Lamp" of the glory of God in the new Jerusalem forever (Rev. 21:23). He is Man forever, being God from eternity to eternity. He sits

"forever" upon the throne with God: "equal with God." Yet His eternal delight, as when upon earth, is to do the will of the Father; and the Father's eternal delight is to glorify the Son!

Now we proceed, in Psalm 45:6, 7, quoted in Hebrews 1:8, 9: "And the sceptre of uprightness is the sceptre of Thy kingdom." Both in the psalm and here, we may see the righteousness of Christ's millennial reign. Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity; Therefore God, Thy God, hath anointed Thee With the oil of gladness above Thy fellows.

We shall note what this word "fellows" (metochoi) means. It occurs five times in Hebrews. We must remember that the 45th Psalm, which is here before our eyes, is "a goodly matter touching the king"--that is, concerning Christ at His coming to reign. Ps 45:3-5 of this psalm see Him with His sword upon His thigh, riding on prosperously, His "arrows sharp," the "peoples falling under Him," "the King's enemies." This corresponds with our Lord's coming as "KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS" (Rev. 19:11-16). There, "the armies which are in Heaven followed Him." They are seen as companions, "fellows." But the words: God, thy God, hath anointed Thee with the oil of gladness, gives us a blessed view of that day of delight when our blessed Lord comes upon that glorious hour appointed by the Father (Acts 1:6, 7) when He enters upon His kingdom. He will indeed say on that day to His faithful servants,

"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. 25:21, 23).

But His joy will abound "above" theirs, in these respects:

(a) He is God the Son; they are creatures.

(b) He has therefore infinitely loved righteousness and hated iniquity.

(c) He has been looking forward to that day (the millennial coming) which Psalm 45 depicts, from ages past.

(d) As Psalm 2 and Hebrews 10:13 and many Scriptures show, the holy purpose of God involves the overthrow in wrath of all His final enemies. And when the day comes, it will be measureless joy to the Son to clear the unrighteous away--just as it was a delight to do the Father's will in bearing the sin of the world.

In the Millennium, our Lord will "rule in the midst of His enemies," for although all obey, it is written that they "yield feigned obedience" (Ps. 18:44, 81:15, 66:3), and rush to Satan's banner when he is loosed (Rev. 20:7-9).

We must receive into our thinking the fact that His infinite joy includes the removal of final foes.

Note further the holy love and holy hate which marked Christ's course on earth, resulting in that anointing with the oil of gladness to which our Lord refers in the words, "Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" or in Hebrews 12:2, "Who, for the joy that was set before Him." The eternal, immeasurable gladness of Christ as having done to the utmost the Father's will, and having been anointed of Him--ponder upon it--His "fellows" share it in due measure.

Come now to the sixth of these great Old Testament citations, from Psalm 102:25-27:

Heb 1:10 : And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the works of Thy hands:

11 They shall perish; but Thou continuest: And they all shall wax old as doth a garment;

12 And as a mantle shalt Thou roll them up, As a garment, and they shall be exchanged: But Thou art the same, And Thy years shall not fail.

13 But of which of the angels hath He said at any time, Sit Thou on My right hand, Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet?

14 Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?

Heb 1:10: Thou Lord, in the beginning didst lay the foundation of the earth,

And the heavens are the works of Thy hands: The circumstances of this passage are profoundly moving to a spiritual heart. For in Psalm 102:23, 24, our Lord Jesus in speaking thus to the Father: "He weakened My strength in the way; He shortened my days. I said, O My God, take Me not away in the
midst of My days: Thy years are throughout all generations."

How blessedly human are such words! At thirty-three a man has just found his vigor, and the things of earthly life have their greatest interest and power. This beautiful, touching appeal is made by the Man Christ Jesus to God as His God, when it is revealed to Him that His days are to be shortened, that His
strength is to be weakened--for, "He was crucified through weakness" (2 Cor. 13:4). "Take me not away in the midst of My days," pleaded the Man Christ Jesus. And then the argument with His God: "Thy years are throughout all generations." How this must have touched the very heart of God His Father! And what
answer does He make to His Son? Now, have simple faith and be prepared for what the Spirit of God does at this place. For, though Christ is speaking in Psalm 102:23, 24, God answers Him in Ps 102:25-27! We should look upon the earth and the heavens as becoming old" (Heb. 1:11). Thus shall we become occupied with Him to Whom God says, But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail.

Again we remark that these mighty words of comfort are addressed by God the Father to His dear Son then in humiliation, in answer to His cry, "Take Me not away in the midst of My days." The Father declares to His Son, pointing to the eternity past, that He, the Son, Whom He addressed as Lord (Heb. 1:10), made the earth and the heavens! Then, pointing to the eternity coming, He assures Him, But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail. It is God the Father's answer to His Son's cry--and what an answer!

And what a testimony by the Father to the Son's Creatorship is this verse of Hebrews 1!* The Father willed creation, the Son spake it, the Spirit executed it! (Ps. 104:30). (Fosdick, the infidel who has publicly, in print and by voice, denied all the fundamentals of the faith of the gospel, has a sermon on "The Danger of Worshipping Jesus of Nazareth." What will God say to the Fosdick atom in that day--in view of this verse, where God addresses Jesus as, "Thou, Lord," and makes Him the Creator?)

Heb 1:11: : They shall perish; but Thou continuest; And they all shall wax old, as doth a garment.

Here self-existent Deity is ascribed to Christ. Then as to what He has made, the earth, the heavens: They shall perish, as contrasted with Christ's continued existence. Our Lord Himself said, "Heaven and earth shall pass away." It is not in God's mind to preserve forever this present creation. Its end is revealed in they shall perish ... wax old ... be rolled up ... exchanged! How brief is the existence of present created things! Poor man, in all his thinking and living, treats the present earth and heavens as abiding. The mockers of the last days make what they regard as the fixed permanence of the universe the basis of their scoffing at Christ's coming, with the stupendous changes it involves, saying, "Where is the promise of His coming? for, from the day that the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning of the creation" (2 Pet. 3:4). Every believer should read often the two closing chapters of the Revelation, and remember that the present creation is to be exchanged, as our next verse in Hebrews tells us. Before the face of the Sitter upon the Great White Throne of final judgment, "The earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them ... He that sitteth on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new."

Heb 1:12: : And as a mantle shalt Thou roll them up, As a garment, and they shalt be exchanged:

What an expression and prophecy! Christ will be the One before Whose face earth and Heaven flee away. Note the word exchanged, rather than changed,* for there shall be a new Heaven and a new earth, in place of the old, which shall utterly pass away.

* "To cause one thing to cease, and another to take its place."--Thayer.

As Stuart well remarks, "The heavens are often represented as an expanse, and to roll them up, is of course to remove them. The language, however, in the case before us, is borrowed from the custom of folding up, laying aside, garments that have become unfit for use."

Covert says of the new heavens and the new earth: "Both heavens and earth are new. They are of new materials: not merely a purifying of the old. They are not new because they are a fresh modification of the old materials! This verse teaches us that the heavens and earth are new in their materials, as well as in their form. 'The earth is new, for the old earth passed away.' If I say 'A new man-of-war graced the port of Plymouth, for the old Victory foundered in the Atlantic'--none would suspect me of asserting that the old vessel was fished up, and that its timbers, rearranged, constituted the new vessel. 'The former earth and heaven passed away.' The former chapter exhibited the destruction of the old creation; it had no longer any locality. Now we are presented with the final state which succeeds."

We hear also Isa. 51:6: "Lift up your eyes to the heavens, and look upon the earth beneath; for the heavens shall vanish away like smoke, and the earth shall wax old like a garment."

"The course of thought is easily traced: as the garment which has grown old is rolled up and changed, so the former heavens and earth shall give place to the new heavens and the new earth."--Moulton.

But Thou art the same, and Thy years shall not fail. Here we see Christ's uncaused continuance of being. Every creature changes, every creature's years fail, for creatures are dependent. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, three in One, are not dependent, but are seen to all eternity-past, and to come!

Heb 1:13: : But of which of the angels hath He said at any time, Sit Thou on My right hand, Till I make Thine enemies the footstool of Thy feet?

This is the seventh of these wonderful citations concerning the Son of God's position above all angelic creation. Angels and saints are much in the mouths of Romanists, as with the early Gnostics, who built up a series of higher and higher powers they called "demiurges"--finally to reach God! How we praise God for the simplicity of His Word! Christ, and Christ alone, God's dear Son, is the Word of God! As to God's purposes for the future, Christ's enemies shall be by God placed beneath His feet. For this we see our Lord waiting, in Hebrews 10:13. Note this word "enemies." We have it here in Hebrews 1:13, from Psalm 2; and in Heb 10:13: "Henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet"; and again, Heb 10:27, "A fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries." We shall not pause here to describe these "adversaries," except to say that they are those who "will not

that this Man reign over them" (Lk. 19:14, 27).

Perhaps no utterance of Scripture is more misunderstood than this 13th verse, yet see how plain it is:

1. The Son of God is asked to sit at the Father's right hand.

2. It is promised, as to His enemies, not that they shall be converted, but that they shall be made the footstool of His feet.

3. The Father is seen bringing back His Son to this earth, for it is on earth that both human enemies and Satan himself are, at Christ's coming, put beneath His feet. See Revelation 19:11-21. Compare 1Corinthians 15:25, which we have noted above; and see that Psalm 110:1 is quoted by our Lord in Matthew 22:44, Mark 12:36, and Luke 20:42; and by Peter at Pentecost (Acts 2:34, 35)--besides here in Hebrews 1:13.

4. At the time when God the Father will bring back His Son into this world, men are seen arrayed against Him: His "enemies." Only the willfully blind can possibly deny this. This absolutely contradicts the mouthings of "Modernists" that this world is going to be won by "moral suasion," and what they call "the kingdom," by human effort: "movements," "uplifts," man's appeals to "what is best in humanity." No less does this Scripture give the lie utterly to "Postmillennialism," together with the horrid bastard, "a-millennialism."

"Enemies"! Yes, this world has not changed, except every day for the worse, since "both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles and the peoples of Israel, were gathered together, against the Lord, and against His Anointed" (Acts 4:26). "The mind of the flesh is enmity against God." We have not words, nor this book pages, to paint the picture! The Son believes exactly what the Father tells Him of His future "enemies," and that they shall be made the footstool of His feet, and therefore is "expecting" this event. This 13th verse of Hebrews looks forward to the stupendous scene of Revelation 19:5 ff., when, against the glorious Lord Who comes riding with the armies of Heaven to tread

"The winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty," we find the kings of the earth lined up, under God's great enemy, the Beast, the Antichrist (Rev. 19:19).

But "Modernism," along with the wretched sect-slaves whose "standards" declare that man will make a "better world," that "the kingdom is already here," and that this world shall be prepared for Christ by being better instructed, better exampled and led, until it is so turned to God that Christ will be welcomed here!--all this, the first chapter of Hebrews proclaims to be a lie! That any so-called "great denominations" and their Bible-ignorant "standards" that hold it, only proves it is false. "Great"? In whose eyes, pray you? In His Who forbade sects? Great in numbers, property, worldly religious influence, yes. But all that is Laodicea! Christ will spue it out.

Heb 1:14: : Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to do service for the sake of them that shall inherit salvation?

What a ministry for the "angels of His power," the "mighty in strength"! To them, service is a delight. The thought of a seat above others--to "be as the Most High" indeed entered the heart of the "anointed cherub" (who is now Satan), the Adversary. But it is farthest from the imagination of "the elect angels." Even to little children these love to belong, as "their angels," always "beholding the face of the Father," in their interest. They fulfill God's word, hearkening unto the voice of His word (Ps. 103:20), and His word at present is that they shall serve creatures beneath them, them that shall inherit salvation,*- with a humble fulfillment of this ministry that we should meditate

upon. God will duly reward it.

Ministration-Salvation: In these two words appears the measureless difference between angels and the redeemed. Michael, the archangel, is seen in Dan. 10 and 12 sent to instruct that prophet. Gabriel, who "stands before God," was sent to Zacharias to announce the birth of John the Baptist, and to the virgin Mary, foretelling Christ's birth. All angels are seen in such "service."

But as for them that shall inherit salvation, these (although in themselves sinners, such as the angels were preserved from being) are made objects of value, worth and dignity, only to be measured by the infinite price paid in their redemption, and by the place God assigns them--to be directly connected with His own person and glory in Christ, forever! So the first chapter of Hebrews sets forth the Son, "having

made propitiation of sins," and having "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High," as "having become by so much better than the angels as He hath inherited a more excellent name than they," as we have seen. But they that shall inherit salvation--those sons He brings to glory--are so absolutely connected with Him that it is written, "He that sanctifieth and, they that are sanctified are all of one."

You may say the question in verse 13 was, What angel did God ever command to sit at His right hand till He made his enemies his footstool? True, there was no such angel, as we know. But we desire to emphasize, at the close of this first chapter: First, that believers are inheritors of salvation--what a heritage! And second, that such "heirs of God" are constantly being served by heaven-sent angels! But remember always the great word of this first chapter--that God's Son is Heir of all things--God, Lord,

Creator and Upholder of all things!

Hebrews 2

Heb 2:1 Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away from them.

2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward;

3 how shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation? which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard;

4 God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers, and by gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will.

Heb 2:1: Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard--

This word "therefore" means, because of all that has been spoken in Hebrews 1 of the glorious person of the Son of God; and His infinite height above His creation; especially, as the argument proceeds to declare, that to us God hath spoken through the Lord. This refers evidently to the Four Gospels, and to the Acts; as we saw in Hebrews One.

More earnest heed.--If the Old Testament prophets should be heard, how much more the Lord of glory Himself! He having come to earth, become Man, and speaking to men! To the things that were heard--These Hebrew believers had read the Old Testament, and heard the gospel. Many were like Apollos, who had been "taught by word of mouth" (Acts 18:25, R.V. margin). Compare also Theophilus (Lk. 1:4, R.V. margin).

We are in a different position, in that we have the complete, living, written record of our Lord's earthly ministry, the apostles' witness in the book of Acts, and also the epistles. That these Hebrew believers, however, had been accurately and thoroughly instructed, even if "by word of mouth," is taken for granted by the apostle.

Lest haply we drift away (from them). It was not the gospel that might "slip away" but the people who heard it might by inattention drift away from it! The world is ever tugging at the believer, and that so often unconsciously to him, to go along with its false hopes. Satan likes nothing better than a neglecting Christian! We all know, too, that the tendency of our natures is to drift along with earthly things away from the gospel. The Hebrew believers to whom the great exhortation of this book is directed, had heard. They were familiar, first of all, with what we call the Old Testament Scriptures, and with their own history as a nation. They were also familiar with the coming and death of Jesus, their Messiah, together with His glorious resurrection and ascension. Possibly some were not ignorant of His priestly work. For at that time the preaching of Christ did not omit, as largely today, the mention of His present priestly ministry and their

dependence thereupon for their walk. But that the Levitical economy was entirely ended; and that the Son of God was Priest after another order than Aaron, and that forever--even "the order of Melchizedek," this epistle is designed to teach them!

Howbeit, the desperate danger was that they should "drift away."

* In driving from Buffalo to Toronto, one passes very close to the great falls of Niagara. I stopped there one day several years ago and asked a guard concerning a beautiful large yacht which had lodged upon the brink of the great falls.

"How came that yacht there?" I asked.

The guard said, "The owner of that vessel was a patriotic millionaire who lent it to the government for use in World War I. It was turned back to him after the war. He and a company of his friends were sailing down the Niagara below Buffalo, and the party, and all the crew, had gone ashore for refreshments. What was their astonishment and dismay, when they came back, to find their vessel gone! The employee responsible admitted he had tied it up hastily and insecurely--not reckoning the force of the current! And their vessel was gone!"

I asked the guard whether it could not be recovered.

"No machinery known to man could rescue that vessel," he replied.

Had the party been aboard it, and had fallen into slumber, not one could have been rescued!

Alas, how many thousands have heard the word of the gospel--only to drift away from their moorings forever,--through sluggishness and neglect! Drifting is the quietest, easiest, most delightful way of dying!

Let us remember all through this book of Hebrews that -it is not called an epistle, but a "word of exhortation" (Heb. 13:22). In fact, this verse contains the word "exhort" twice: "I beseech (Gr., exhort - parakaleo) you, brethren, bear with the word of exhortation." In Romans 12:7-8 we find exhorting distinct from teaching: "He that teacheth (let him give himself) to his teaching; or he that exhorteth, to his exhorting." Barnabas, you remember, whose first name was Joseph (Acts 4:36), was "by the apostles surnamed Barnabas (which is, being interpreted, Son of exhortation)."

Now an exhorter's gift is to persuade those who have heard into obedience to what they have heard. Such, therefore, is Hebrews. And so at the very beginning (Hebrews 2:1) we find, We ought to give the more earnest heed to the things that were heard, lest haply we drift away. But to "bear with" a word of exhortation, that may shout its warnings into our heavy ears, is not easy. Many will not bear with such a word!

Heb 2:2:: For if the word spoken through angels--

That is, the Law, whether or not we fully understand yet Galatians 3:19, "The Law ... was ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator"; or, "This is he (Moses) that was in the assembly in the wilderness with the angel that spake to him in the Mount Sinai" (Acts 7:38). ("Behold, I send an angel before thee, to keep thee by the way, and to bring thee into the place which I have prepared. Take ye heed before him, and hearken unto his voice; provoke him not; for be will not pardon your transgression: for My name is in him." (Ex. 23:20-21). See also Ex. 32:34, and Acts 7:53. "Ye who received the Law as it was ordained by angels, and kept it not.") We may have overlooked this truth, as it is not brought out till after Jehovah had pronounced the commandments
(the "ten words") with a great voice from the top of Sinai. God's word to man, also was frequently delivered by angels, as to Lot (Gen. 19:1-22), or Daniel (Dan. 9:21; 10:4-14). God does not tell us in what manner the word was spoken through angels; but it proved steadfast. The argument of the verse is: If the Law ordained through angels, who were creatures, brought just recompense, how much rather when the Lord Himself comes and speaks, and men reject or neglect His word!

We know from the terrible experience of Israel in the wilderness something of what it is to receive a just recompense of reward for every transgression and disobedience. "Transgression" (Gr. parabasis) here means willful overstepping of a commandment; "disobedience" (parakoe), failing to hear through "neglect." But note the emphasis is upon "angels." Angels have just been seen to be creatures, servants; yet God backed up His word He had spoken through them!

Now we come to the first of the long series of great warnings in Hebrews. It is in the form of a question:

Heb 2:3: : How shall we escape, if we neglect so great a salvation which having at the first been spoken through the Lord, was confirmed unto us by them that heard

(See an extreme translation of the same Greek word in Matt. 22:5; "They made light of it.")

How shall we escape? (2:3). "They escaped not"! "Much more shall not we* escape"! (See Heb 12:25.)

* How shall we regard this epistle to the Hebrews in view, for example, of the "we" four times, and the "us" of the first three verses? There are those that say that the writer speaks "only as a Hebrew to Hebrews," and that as we are not Hebrews, most of us, it was not spoken to us! How fallacious and dangerous is such talk! "Whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning." And again, the "holy brethren" to whom this epistle was directed were, as we shall often repeat, not at all the Israelitish nation as such, but those believing Hebrews who were "partakers of a heavenly calling" (Heb 3:1).

Gentile believers, therefore, should "give the more earnest heed" to the things of the Epistle to the Hebrews. For God had not of old sent His word to Gentiles! (Ps. 147:19-20). Therefore the nations (for Heb. goyim and Gr. ethne (ethnos) always mean nations as over against Israel, God's elect nation), were wholly ignorant of the "shadows" and "types" of God's great salvation set forth in the O.T. Instead of superciliously handing over the Hebrews epistle "to the Jews," they should read it with profound reverence and humility. For by Israel's disobedience "salvation is come unto the Gentiles, to provoke them (Israel) to jealousy." We "now have obtained mercy by their (Israel's) disobedience ...that by (the example of) the mercy shown to you (Gentiles) they also may now obtain mercy" (Ro 11:11, 30-31).

Gentiles, who now have the O.T. (a part of the grace and mercy God is now showing to us!) are tempted two ways: First, under burden of conscience to go back for relief to the Law which God gave Israel; second, to "hand over" to unbelieving Israel the O.T. as belonging only to them, and speaking about them; and not to Gentiles.

Mark carefully then: God spake in the Old Testament to Israel. Gentile believers of the New Testament gospel, hearing the same God whom they have believed explaining the Old Testament to Hebrew believers are at once edified,--as is anyone who hears God speak; instructed, both by the types of the Old Testament and their contrast with the heavenly realities into which both Hebrew and Gentile believers have now entered; and warned by God's dealing with the disobedient of those past days!

In these three searching sentences in Hebrews we are face to face with man's responsibility, the coming unavoidable issue. God delights in the death of no man! This must be believed. He would
rather they turned from their way and lived. But God is "the judge of all" (Heb 12:23). Although He has judged human sin once upon a Substitute, Christ, God will not "save every one," as the Universalists claim. For human choice is not invaded: "I would," said Christ, "but ye would not." Neglecting, despising, turning away, most men do despite God's goodness.

The word "escape" emphasizes that great crisis to which morally responsible human beings are travelling on. If true believers, they have already escaped! Our Lord said, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, he that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment." That is, God's judgment against him has been already executed upon a Substitute, the news of which great event * called The Gospel, or "good tidings": "He that believeth on Him is not judged" (John 3:18).
The "second death," which is the "lake of fire," hath no power (Rev. 20:6: Gr. exousia,--authority: R.V. margin) upon him who is thus pronounced "blessed and holy ... those who have part in the first resurrection"!

But if they are neglecters and despisers, there is terrible warning for them in this searching word, HOW SHALL WE ESCAPE? God's dealing with triflers--with those who neglect so great a salvation, will not be merely judicial, but personal! Those who "lay up wrath against the day of wrath" will discover, when the
moment comes for the revelation of the righteous judgment of God, that they have fallen "into the hands of the Living God"—which is what we are told in Hebrews 10:31 is "a fearful thing"! He says, "I will recompense." In Malachi 1:4 we read of those against whom

"Jehovah hath indignation forever."

Our Lord uses the same Greek word for "escape" in Luke 21:36: "Watch ye at every season, making supplication, that ye may prevail to ESCAPE all these things." Paul uses it in that searching question of Romans 2:3: "Reckonest thou this, O man ...who judgest them that practice such (evil) things, and doest the same, that thou shalt ESCAPE the judgment of God?" And again, in 1 Thessalonians 5:3, concerning the great and terrible Day of the Lord that is coming: "When they are saying, Peace and safety, then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall in no wise ESCAPE."

The prospect is appalling! We are looking today upon a time like that which preceded the Flood, as our Lord said: "As it came to pass in the days of Noah, even so shall it be also in the days of the Son of Man (at His second coming to earth). They ate, they drank, they married, they were given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered into the ark, and the Flood came and destroyed them all." Again, He likens it to the days of Lot: eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; "but in the day that Lot went out from Sodom it rained fire and brimstone from Heaven, and destroyed them all: after the same manner shall it be in the day that the Son of Man is revealed" (Lk. 17:26-30). Unjudged lust and violence we see to be filling the earth. A properly separated Christian, one filled with the Spirit, fears the boasted "progress" of this age, abhors the bolder and bolder flaunting of naked abominations before the eyes, and knows from

Scripture that all the nations of the earth (and America especially) are "polluted" by unjudged murder (Num. 35:33), by unnumbered adulteries, and by despising of the marriage vow (Jer 3:1), that "putting away" which God hates. (See also Mal. 2:16; Matt. 19:3-9.) (Of course the warning of Lk. 17:31 does not refer directly to the Church, which will be raptured away before "the end," the "Tribulation," in a moment, "in the twinkling of an eye" (1 Thess. 4:16-18; Rev. 3:10).)

God over and over declares that He will visit this earth for its iniquity with terrible judgments. Read Isaiah 24, and remember that the seals, trumpets, and bowls of wrath of Revelation 6 to 16 all precede the coming of the Great Day of Wrath of Revelation 19, when our Lord returns as King of kings to tread the winepress of the fierceness of the wrath of God, the Almighty.

But let us mark that the flaming question in Hebrews 2:3 is not how shall they, the nations, escape, but how shall WE escape? Hebrews, like the rest of the epistles, is spoken not to the world, but to those who have professed faith in the Lord Jesus!

How shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation?--Since Hebrews, we repeat, is addressed to professing Christian believers, "neglect," among many phases, would include:

1. Ceasing to give the attention and earnestness to the things of God and of salvation that once we gave; a growing distaste for Bible reading; willingness to be absent from the assemblies of the saints of God (Heb. 10:25).
2. Absorption in earthly, selfish interests.
3. Increasing deadness of heart toward Christ, His sacrifice, and to the love of God, Who gave Him.
4. Occupation with the affairs and news of this world, rather than of the world to come, and our coming Lord.
5. Loss of God-consciousness.
6. Putting away of the thought of a "judgment to come."
7. Finally, living like the "beasts that perish," so far as eternity is concerned.

All these are phases of neglecting so great a salvation.

* Among causes of spiritual negligence, or neglect, we note:

1. A shallow work at the beginning--conscience not awakened to the lost, guilty state; but only "feelings" stirred. Such persons are those "sown upon the rock"--no depth of soil. They hear with immediate joy: but in a true work of the Spirit, conviction of sin comes first--and "godly sorrow" (2 Cor. 7:10).
2. Lack of chastening--of which all God's real children are made "Partakers" (Heb. 12:8; Ps. 94:12-13).
3. Prosperity in this world: Ps. 73:3-9. "The prosperity (careless ease, R.V.) of fools shall destroy them" (Prov. 1:32).
4. Inattention to Divine earnings: (Prov. 29:1; 1 Ki. 13:20-24). God says, "In the day of prosperity, be joyful: and in the day of adversity, consider, (Eccles. 7:14).
5. Blindness to relative values and actual spiritual states, like Laodicea, in Rev. 3; following postponement of remembering whence we have fallen, and so of repentance (Rev. 2:5).
6. Conformity to surrounding indifference--which is to "follow a multitude to do evil"--forbidden of God (Ex. 23:2). The world "lieth in the evil one" (like a babe in its mother's arms!) indifferent to coming judgment (Gen. 19:14).
7. Keeping hold of some darling sin.

Which, having at the first been spoken through the Lord--That is, this "salvation" is regarded as having been spoken by the Lord Himself in the Four Gospels. His own words were, "The Son of Man came to seek and to save that which was lost"; "The Son of Man came to give His life a ransom for many."

Was confirmed unto us by them that heard (HIM)--That is, by the twelve apostles, and by all who knew and believed the Lord Jesus.

Heb 2:4: : God also bearing witness with them, both by signs and wonders, and by manifold powers--

So we have (1) the Lord Himself, (2) those that heard from His lips, (3) the direct "confirming" witness from God, from Pentecost on (Mk. 16:20): the "greater" works which Jesus said His disciples would do after He should go to the Father (John 14:12); the "many signs and wonders wrought among the people" by Stephen; the "signs which Philip did"; the catching away of Philip by "the Spirit of the Lord"; Peter's healing of Aeneas and raising Dorcas from the dead; the deliverance of Peter from prison; the healing of the cripple at Lystra by Paul; the "special miracles" at Ephesus; and the "signs
and wonders" God wrought everywhere among both Gentiles and Jews where the gospel came!

* **Signs** (Gr., semeion): "Miracles and wonders by which God authenticated the men sent by Him, or by which men prove that the cause they are pleading is God's" (Thayer). Thus our Lord had the Divine seal placed upon His works: "This beginning of His signs did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory; and His disciple's believed on Him" (John 2:11). Again, "This is again the second sign that Jesus did, having come out of Judea into Galilee" (John 4:54). And, "Many other signs therefore did Jesus in the presence of the disciples, which are not written in this book: but these are written, that ye may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye may have life in His name" (John
20:30-31).

Wonders (Gr. teras), is found only in the plural and joined with signs. "A miracle regarded as a portent or prodigy awakening amazement" (Vincent).

Powers (Gr. dunamis), the third word, means energy, or work of power. These three are seen together sometimes, as here in Heb. 2:4, in Acts 2:22, and in 2 Cor. 12:12. Speaking generally, signs indicate miraculous deeds authenticating the doer; wonders, such evident operations as indubitably indicate God's presence and working (see Acts 2:19); powers, the energy which is put forth in such deeds. Note that the Antichrist is said to use "all power and signs and lying wonders" (lit., "wonders of falsehood"--2 Th 2:9). Therefore two things should be considered: (1) whether signs, or wonders, or powers, they are beyond human power to exercise or to understand; (2) their character, whether of God or of Satan, must be determined by their correspondence to God's holy Word, and by their results.

And by gifts (lit., "distributions") of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will: This takes us to 1Corinthians 12, where the "gifts" of the Spirit are set forth fully: "All these worketh the one and the same Spirit, dividing to each one severally, even as He will" (vs. 11). Here we have the same two thoughts together, the Spirit "dividing" various gifts to individual believers, and doing this according to His will—the will of God. See also here verses 4-7. It will not do to confine this statement to the apostolic days; nor, for that matter, can any part of verse 4 be restricted to that period. For when there has been faith, throughout the Christian centuries, God has wrought signs and wonders and powers, the records of which, alas, are withheld if discovered, by a "respectable" Christianity!

* Read the account, in The Scots' Worthies, a book that no one of Christian judgment thinks of contravening, of how John Welch, son-in-law of John Knox, of Scotland, raised a young man from the dead in France; or again, in that remarkable series of books, now out of print, The Annals of the American Pulpit the account of William Tennant, raised from the dead; or the testimony of Dr. John L. Nevius, a godly Presbyterian missionary in China for over forty years, in his book Demon Possession and Allied Themes, of the Chinese casting out demons in wonderful simplicity of faith, never dreaming that there had been any cessation of this authority given by our Lord (Mark 16:17). See also the remarkable testimony of beloved Dr. A.J. Gordon, pastor of Clarendon Street Baptist Church, Boston, in The Ministry of Healing, concerning such names as Pastor Blumhardt, Dorothea Trudell, and others.

Returning now to the contrast of Christ with the angels (which Heb. 2:1-4, the first of the seven great warnings of Hebrews, interrupted), we read:

Heb 2:5: : For not unto angels did He subject the world to come, whereof we speak:

From the subject of the measureless height above angels occupied by our Lord, we pass here to God's plans concerning the millennial age that will follow this present age, wherein the Son of God will come forth to exercise on earth His Melchizedek priesthood. Not unto angels--First, let us consider that angelic control by which God orders matters behind the scenes in this present dispensation, as in the Old Testament. Angels are "mighty in strength, fulfilling His word, hearkening unto the voice of His word" (Ps. 103:20). Angels ministered unto Christ in His earthly life; at the tomb an angel descended from heaven, rolled away the stone; and angels sat "one at the head, and one at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain." (This remarkable passage (Matt. 28:2-5) reads: "And behold, there was a great earthquake; for an angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled away the stone, and sat upon it. His
appearance was as lightning and his raiment white as snow: and for fear of him the watchers did quake, and became as dead men. And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye; for I know that ye seek Jesus, Who hath been crucified.")

The "two men" spoken of in Acts 1:10-11, were perhaps angelic. An angel of the Lord opened prison doors for "the apostles" (Acts 5), for Paul (Acts 16), and for Peter (Acts 12, in which chapter two angels smite--one in mercy, and one in judgment). Although Satan is the prince of this world and god of

this age, he can do nothing without Divine permission. God interferes in answer to the prayers of His saints by means of the angels; and thus is the present world subject to them. But it will not be so in the world to come, the millennial age.

The thought of the world to come pervades the book of Hebrews, and cannot here refer to present things! See Heb 6:5, "the powers of the age (aion) to come"; also Heb 10:1, "the Law, having a shadow of the coming good things." Thayer defines the world to come: "That consummate state of all things which will exist after Christ's return from Heaven." Andrew Murray's definition is: "That world to which the psalm (Ps. 8) looks forward, the Kingdom of the Messiah, the Kingdom of Heaven upon earth." Conybeare's comment is interesting: "The 'world to come' here corresponds with 'the city to come' of Hebrews 13:14.
The subjection of this to the Messiah (though not yet accomplished, see vs. 9) was another proof of His superiority to the angels."

The apostle here in verse 5 is speaking, as he insists, (laloumen, we are speaking) of the world (the "inhabited earth," see Hebrews 1:6) when He, the Son Who created all things, shall return to this world with His enemies "the footstool of His feet." So the argument goes right on from Hebrews 1:14 to Hebrews 2:5 (as you see, vs. 5 begins with "For," connecting it with Hebrews 1:14), having in view the subjecting of the habitable earth to the Son of man, and proceeding immediately to quote in proof of this, the wonderful Eighth Psalm. We shall, therefore, repeating verse 5, quote on through verse 8b; (but not the last sentence of verse 8, But now we see not yet--which refers to the state of things at present, contrasted with those when all things shall actually be subjected under the feet of the Son of Man, at His coming).

Heb 2:5 For not unto angels did He subject the world to come, whereof we speak.
6 But one hath somewhere testified, saying, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the Son of man, that Thouvisitest him?
7 Thou madest Him for a little while lower than the angels; Thou crownedst Him with glory and honor, and didst set Him over the works of Thy hands:
8 Thou didst put all things in subjection under His feet, For in that He subjected all things unto Him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him.

Heb 2:6: : What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? Or the son of man, that Thou visitest him?

Here the Spirit takes the Eighth Psalm, quoted also in Ephesians 1:22 and 1 Corinthians 15:27, and applies it to Christ. This Eighth Psalm is one of the great Messianic psalms. At the first reading we can see David at night, gazing at the heavens, and saying (Ps. 8:3-4):

"When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, The moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained, What is man, that Thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that Thou visitest him?"

David seems to be thinking of Adam the first, to whom indeed God gave dominion. But, "The first man is of the earth, earthy., the Second Man is of Heaven," as Paul tells us (1 Cor. 15:47). Adam being a type of Him Who was to come, as we read David's words in New Testament light, the first Adam disappears upon his failure; and the Second Man, the last Adam, is before, our eyes.

Heb 2:7: : Thou madest Him for a little while lower than the angels.

(But at His birth as such, the heavenly host filled the air not with shouts that He had been made lower than they, but with shouts of "Glory to God in the highest.")

The angels referred to in Heb 2:7, 9 are of course "the holy angels," "the elect angels," whose ministry to human "heirs of salvation" is seen in Heb 1:14. Now in what respects was our Lord made for a little while lower than the angels?

First, in becoming man, the Son of God entered fully into man's limitations. Jesus, "being wearied with His journey," sat by Jacob's well, in John 4. "He Himself was in the stern, asleep on the cushion--" after a long day's preaching (Mk. 4:38, R.V.). He ate and drank to replenish strength, just as any man would do.
Angels are not thus dependent. When man attains to that (coming) age, and "the resurrection from among the dead," he will be "equal unto the angels" (Lk. 20:35-36) in manner of being.

Our Lord's undergoing the suffering of death, and tasting death for every one, (vs. 9) is the second great element in His becoming for a little while lower than the angels. They are not subject to death. He, by the Father's will, and His own ready willingness, became so.

In the third place, perhaps we ought to mention our Lord's subjection to temptation, which is so emphasized in Hebrews. After His temptation, for example, as narrated in Matthew 4, we read, "Then the devil leaveth Him; and behold, angels came and ministered unto Him." "The elect angels" were not only preserved from the original apostasy with Lucifer, but evidently from temptation, in the sense that evil did not become attractive, in the least, unto them!

* The fact that Michael contended with the devil, as seen in Jude, does not imply that he was "tempted." There was no personal tempting approach to the archangel in any sense; but on his part, firm resistance and rejection of Satan's claim concerning the body

of Moses.

Heb 2:7 : Thou crownedst Him with glory and honor, And didst set Him over the works of Thy hands:
8 Thou didst put all things in subjection under His feet. For in that He subjected all things unto Him, He left nothing that is not subject to Him. But now we see not yet all things subjected to Him.
9 But we behold Him Who hath been made a little lower than the angels, even Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He should taste of death for every man.

Heb 2:7, 8: : Here God's purpose becomes manifest concerning our Lord's millennial position, the time unto which the Lord Himself looks--"expecting" (Heb 10:13). Man is to be placed over everything. All things are to be put in subjection under the feet of Christ as Man. Of course we at once understand from the following verses that it is to Jesus--"very God and very Man," that all things are to be subject. But we are to find that others, whom He calls His "brethren," are to be associated with Him.

Mark again the purposes of God. His eternal counsels were not connected with the first man, but were announced after that man's failure--in the words to the serpent, "He (the Seed of the woman) shall bruise thy head." The Seed, Christ, the Second Man, was to be connected with us, not by generation of man, but by Divine action in what we call the incarnation. (Words about the incarnation are always addressed to faith. Gabriel said to Mary, "The Holy Spirit shall come upon thee, and the power of the Most High shall overshadow thee; Wherefore also the holy thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God." Lk. 1:35) It is the same person Who in Hebrews 1 was seen as Son of God and Heir of all things, Who is seen in this second chapter as Man-just as truly Man now, as from all eternity He was God!

Having in mind, then, that future subjection of all things to the Second Man, we see already the present state of things, in the words, But now we see not yet all things subjected to Him (vs. 8c). They will be subject, but are not yet. The Millennium's opening scene is future: see Revelation 20:1-3. Satan is today "the prince of this world"--still unbound. "The whole world lieth in the evil one" is yet true (1 John 5:19).

Heb 2:9: But we do see Him who has been made for a little while lower than the angels, namely, Jesus, because of the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that by the grace of God He might taste death for everyone.:

But praise God for these great words in Hebrews 2:9: But we see Jesus, the One Who for a little lower than the angels was made, for the suffering of death, with glory and honor
crowned. to the end that by the Grace of God He might taste of death for every one. (By the Grace of God taste of death for everyone. It cannot be rendered "everything"--as this word grace would have no meaning thus! "Grace" is not for "things," but for people, for unworthy sinners!) The eyes of believers immediately go to Him upon Whom they have believed; and lo, we behold Him ...crowned with glory and honor, at God's right hand!

Now it will be supremely necessary for us to remember, as the following verses open to us, that we are one with Him. It is not possible unto reason, but only unto faith, to conceive that such unworthy ones, such weak ones as we, should be elevated above the mighty, holy angels! (It is well to remember here, and it will help to humble us, that the Greek word aggeloi, translated "angels," literally means messengers. Rotherham's translation effectively renders it "messengers" constantly. We have the verb aggelo, meaning to announce; and from this comes aggelos, a messenger, plural aggeloi, translated, or transliterated, "angels," occurring some 75 times in the N.T. Once there is aggelia (I John 1:5) meaning "message.")

We are ready to consent that our blessed Lord, sinless in life and victorious over death, should take, His place "far above all rule, and authority, and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age, but also in that which is to come." It is a constant and subtle temptation to allow freely that the Lord Himself has passed "far above all the heavens," but with false humility to say: "That is not for me. Angels are glorious heavenly beings, and I am a poor, earthly sinner." For in the very passage just quoted (Eph. 1:21-23) we read that God gave Christ "to be head over all things to the Church, which is His body, the fullness of Him that filleth all in all," that is, the filling up of Christ Himself! As we read in 1 Corinthians 12:12: "For as the body is one, and hath many members, and all the members of the body, being many, are one body; so also is Christ." To reject this is not humility, but unbelief, or unwillingness to let go earthly things and admit our position by God's sovereign grace, as one with Christ, seated in the heavenlies with Him. We are about to read in Hebrews 2:11 that Christ and those in Him are "all of one." Blessed indeed is the man who has seen an end of his old place in Adam, at Calvary, where "our old man was crucified with Him," Christ having been "made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21)! Christ on the Cross died unto sin, thus breaking the relationship between Himself and sin, forever. For we read, "The life that He liveth, He liveth unto God." And we are likewise to reckon ourselves dead, being in Christ as the last Adam, and His death to sin becoming thus federally ours. (We must revert often to these preceding revelations, for the fact of them is taken for granted in the book of Hebrews.)

So note that in Hebrews 2:5-8 we have Christ as Man set over the works of God's hands--angels, principalities, powers, all things. We do not speak thus to create a false elation or sense of self-importance in any human breast. But, in this great book of Hebrews which reveals Christ as our Great High Priest on high, we have this destiny of Christ as Man placed over all things, at the very

outset; and, second, our oneness with this Man, even Jesus! We are not yet glorified; Christ is glorified--is crowned with glory and honor (cf. Phil. 2:9-11). He Himself, therefore, is the object of our "beholding." But it is as connected with Him, that we see Him. All our interests have passed from earth. This is necessarily true, for we read that it is because of the suffering of death--that He has tasted of death for us, that the eyes of our hearts turn to Him, crowned in the Father's delight because He became obedient to death, yea, the death of the Cross.

That by the grace of God He should taste of death for every one: What words are these! What a compass in this verse! First, Jesus made for a little while lower than the angels. Then the suffering of death; then, because of that, at present crowned with glory and honor at God's right hand. Then the sweet word of explanation of His death: that by the grace of God He should taste of death for every one. "Grace," the source of all blessing, but how feebly grasped by us! Let faith lay fast hold here! Just as on a passenger train there are steps and handles to enter into the cars, so do there come along such verses as these, for faith to step upon and hold fast to, and climb up on the train for glory! Make verses like this, O believer, personal possessions! If Christ did taste of death for every one, if God's grace extended to that, it means you, and it means me. Only believe!

* The genitive of pas (pantos), "every," is here used. But the word may be either masculine or neuter. Some insist that the expression "every one" should be every thing; but we object that the translation "every thing" looks toward Universalism. Furthermore, the following vs. (2:10) explains the expression as referring to Christ's bringing many to glory, and His being made perfect through sufferings as the Captain of their salvation. Nor does Col. 1:20 "reconcile all things," a passage sufficient in itself, change the translation of Heb. 2:9 (pantos): "every one."

So that we have in vs. 9, for every one; vs. 10, many sons; vs. 11, they that are sanctified called "brethren"; vs. 12, both "brethren" and congregation (or Assembly); vs. 13, I and the children God hath given me; vs. 14, the children sharers in blood and flesh and Himself in like manner partaking of the same; vs. 15, all them who through fear of death were subject to bondage, delivered; vs. 16, the seed of Abraham (see Gal. 3:29); vs. 17, again "His brethren"; and then, "a merciful and faithful High Priest ... to make propitiation for the sins of the people."

Hebrews 2:10 For it became Him for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Author of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

11 For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one: for which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying,

12 I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, In the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise.

13 And again, I will put My trust in Him. And again, Behold, I and the children whom God hath given Me.

Heb 2:10: For it became Him for Whom all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings. For both He that sanctifieth (Christ) and they that are sanctified (the saints) are all of one:

This verse tells both how God's grace has extended to us; and what it became this God to do, in bringing many sons unto glory, into His very presence Who dwelleth in light unapproachable!

* He was to bring them to glory. Therefore, He must go where they were, and (a) become one with them as to their guilt, which He must bear; and (b) become sin on their behalf. So bringing many sons unto glory would involve sufferings--the most terrible of all, to be forsaken of God--made a curse for us! Nothing else could "become" God as regarded our sin and our sinful state.

1. It became His being, as God. It was into God's presence we were to be brought.
2. It became His Holiness: with an infinite abhorrence He hated sin.
3. It became His righteousness: He must deal righteously in bringing sons to glory.
4. It became the God Whose name is LOVE to do this amazing thing--bring to glory many sons. Only a God of Love would want us there.
5. It became His Wisdom, "of Whom are all things and for Whom are all things." He sees the eternities and has planned for them as it "became" Him.
6. It became His Lordship over all things. Knowing all things about all creatures, He could place them all where He would. And He chose to place first those redeemed by Christ!
7. It became Him because Christ's obedience unto death revealed God for all ages. He is worthy to be obeyed, said His Son, even unto forsaking, anguish, and death!

Finally, God infinitely loved His Son, the "Captain" of these "sons." And thus it "became" Him to plan for that Son a path of sufferings untold and unutterable, in walking in which day by day that Son's fidelity to God His Father became manifest to all eternity.

The wounds that now are in Jesus' hands and feet
and side will declare, to the ages of the ages that it is good to obey God, at all cost. And God will forever remember the Son's sufferings, as if they were of yesterday.

Thus, it became God to make the Leader of our salvation perfect through sufferings.

And remember, if we suffer with Him, it is because we are redeemed by His sufferings and sacrifice. Satan hates redeemed ones, those trusting Christ's one offering. So he makes them suffer, whether by temptation to doubt Christ's sacrifice; or by calling attention to their weak faith, or inconsistent
experience. But Christ's accepted work (accepted of God!) and not our grasp of it, is the question! We know that God has accepted Christ's sacrifice, because He raised Him from the dead!

Oh, how different is what "became" God here from what becomes us! It becomes us to protect our sons. It "became" God to hand over His only well-beloved Son to sufferings; to be "driven by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted," until Satan had "completed every temptation"; to have not "where to lay His head"; to choose disciples who would all forsake Him; betray Him; one deny knowing Him! To be forsaken by the untold thousands He had blessed and healed; yea, to be forsaken of God!

When at last He said, "It is finished," and, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," it was over! He had been "perfected through suffering." He had "learned obedience through the things that He suffered" (Heb. 5:8-9); and having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the cause of eternal Salvation--named of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek."

Here we go back to what we might call the first causes: what became the counsels of God, both in sending Christ, and in His dealings with Christ upon earth. What it was "becoming," fitting, for the infinitely holy God to do--ah, what a subject for our poor human grasp! It is God Who is before us, for Whom all things exist. Whatever the works or the words of our Lord Jesus Christ, we must refer their cause to that which was "becoming to God." It is not the arbitrary will of God that is here in view, but that which was "becoming" to God Himself-to His being.

Would it have become God, the holy One, even to admit to His presence sinners of the human race who had been merely "influenced" (as some would teach) by the "perfect example" of the "beautiful life" of Jesus?

Would it have been becoming to the government of God to admit to His presence enemies who had infracted all the righteous edicts of His throne, and with no penalty imposed for that disobedience?

Would it have been becoming to the throne of infinite Majesty and glory to have about that throne--all unatoned for--those who had been in closest sympathy with God's arch-enemy, Satan?

This important tenth verse in Heb 2 is the second great general word concerning God in Hebrews. The first is, "God has spoken to us in (the Person of His) Son" (1:2). And this second word is that the Son, having partaken of blood and flesh, become man, yea God's Lamb, it became God ... to make Him perfect through sufferings. "It behooved Christ to suffer, and to rise again from the dead" (Acts 17:1-3). We insist that the very foundation of the Gospel appears in this word, it became God! It became Him to judge sin; it became Him to give His own Son to bear sin; it became Him to lay before that Son a path of obedience involving suffering--even unto death.

While we now "behold ... Jesus ... crowned with glory and honor," let us not only see His present place as God's reward to Him for His path of obedience; but also regard His path of sufferings thereto, as the only path which could become a holy God!

The Captain of their Salvation--This "Captain" (Gr.:**Archegos**s; cf. Heb 12:2 and comment there) is Christ. Thus the first view we have here of Christ, connected with these "sons being brought to glory," is as the File-Leader of the company. * Archegos: "(1) Chief, Leader, Prince: of Christ (Acts 5:31); (2) One that takes the lead in anything, and thus affords an example: of Christ, Heb. 2:10, 12:2."--Thayer. "A word difficult, not to understand, but to render in English. It is a leader, but it is more, It is used for one who begins, and sets a matter on: originator."--Darby.

Archegos is a combination of two Greek words meaning to begin and to lead. It occurs, four times in the N.T.: Acts 3:15, 5:31; and twice in Hebrews, Heb 2:10 and Heb 12:2. As used here in Heb 2:10, it does not refer to our Lord as a Sin-Offering, but as this Captain or File-Leader of those that are to be saved, whom He calls His "brethren" (Heb 2:11-12), and "the children (of God) whom God hath given" Him (vs. 13); and as the Deliverer through death of those children, having brought to nought at the Cross the devil, who had the power of death, setting free from fear-of-death-bondage, all those over whom the devil tyrannized. Christ as the Archegos, therefore, is the Leader, the Deliverer, among His brethren, becoming Himself "perfected through sufferings." Bloomfield interprets Archegos by aitios in Heb. 5:9: "the Cause of eternal salvation." There is reason for this as the word "Prince" (Acts 3:15 5:31) would indicate place, position, rather than source, supply.

It is as if God were saying, "Hebrew believers, do not stumble, as most of your nation are doing, at a suffering Messiah. (Alford calls attention to Bleek's excellent remarks "on the lingering of the offense of the cross among these Jewish Christians, who, although their ideas of the glory and kingly triumph of the Messiah had been in a measure satisfied by the resurrection and exaltation of Christ, and their hopes awakened by the promise of future glory at His second coming,--yet, in the procrastination of this great event, felt their souls languishing, and the old stumbling-block of Christ's sufferings recurring to their minds. To set forth then the way of suffering and the cross as one worthy of God's high purpose, would be a natural course for the argument of the writer to take.") Your lot is now far above that of mere Hebrews. You partake of a heavenly calling! You are journeying to Heaven,

home to God, Who is bringing you as sons unto glory. Do you not see from all Scripture that the Blessed One Who should become the Captain of sons going forth from earth to Heaven, must have suffered, yea, have been made perfect through sufferings? It becomes Me that the Captain of their salvation has so yielded to all My will as to have suffered all things."

They were to be "sons," and were to be brought "unto glory." Who was to bring them, and how? One must go where they, were, have their guilt charged to Him, bear the wrath due to them. Our Lord's course from Bethlehem to Calvary is looked at in the words: made perfect through sufferings. Yes, such a journey from the glory that He had with the Father, down to earth and back to that glory, would involve on the part of that great Captain of their salvation "emptying Himself," taking the "form of a servant," becoming in the "likeness of men," humbling Himself "unto death, yea, the death of the Cross"!

But think Who He was! "Is not this the carpenter?" the people of Nazareth asked. Yes, but He was the Creator also. And He was in a path that would shortly make Him "an alien to His mother's children," "despised and rejected of men, a Man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief," in all these sufferings, learning obedience (Heb 5:8).

* Note this word learn. Being God, He had not to obey, but participated in the counsels of the Trinity from all eternity. Even when He came to earth, "He emptied Himself--it was not compulsion. But, He having become man, the Father was now His God: and He "learned obedience." Our Lord was morally and spiritually perfect at all times and in all ways; He was God! But through sufferings he "learned obedience." And, since the sufferings were infinite, the perfection is glorious and eternal! (We shall see more of this in Heb 5:7-9; 7:28. Compare also Lk 13:32.)

Heb 2:11: : For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one:--

* Note that the word "For" introducing vs. 11 argues from vs. 10 the reason why the Captain of the "many sons being brought to glory" was made perfect through sufferings. We find that Christ that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are ALL OF ONE. Now as we have indicated, the oneness, the unity of Christ and believers, is well known from other passages. But the form of the expression here "all of one" is unique. It speaks of kind or quality of being, rather than mere unity.

But our blessed Lord's becoming "all of one" in quality of being with those whom the Father had given Him, did not at all mean that He shared Adam's nature, or became united with the sinful human race. He did not become a son of Adam. But the Holy Spirit, as we have seen, "came upon" His virgin mother, and the power of the Most High kept "overshadowing" her. Christ, therefore, took part in "blood and flesh" life directly from God,--all sinless, entirely separate from the Adamic race.

For both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one:--Look at once at the words "sanctifieth" and "sanctified." He that sanctifieth evidently is Christ; they that are sanctified are the sons (of God) being "brought unto glory." This is a use of the word "sanctify" common in the book of Hebrews. And this passage, it seems to me, allies itself most intimately with the great high-priestly prayer of John 17, where our Lord prayed: "Sanctify them in the truth: Thy word is truth... And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." This verse removes at once all thoughts of sanctification in the sense of removal of defilement, for Christ had none. Yet He says, "I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth."

In this very prayer our Lord is devoting Himself to that identification with His own, which would be consummated the next day on the Cross! He set Himself apart unto that death, in order that His disciples might share His risen life. For He testified, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone." The oneness of believers with Christ described here is not that of being members of the Body of Christ, but it is a deeper truth still, or rather, preliminary to the forming of the Body of Christ, implying union with Himself. In John 17:16, again, He said, "They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world"--and verse 21, "that they may all be one, even Thou, Father, art in Me, and I in Thee, that they also may be in Us."

So in Hebrews 2:11 the great announcement is made that Christ and they that are sanctified are all of one! They share His life Who died and rose! For which cause He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Its being connected with His sufferings makes this verse one of the most wonderful of many Scriptures concerning the identification of believers with their Lord. They are so much of one with Him that He is not ashamed to call them brethren. Amazing, overwhelming fact! Let faith lay hold of Him and rejoice in Him.

* There is what we can but feel to be a carnal, Presumptuous name given to the Son of God in the mouths of some: "Our Elder Brother." We have never heard one speak thus who understood our identification with Him in death and resurrection, as taught in Ro 6, 7; Col. 3, and elsewhere. To call Christ your "Elder Brother" is to reduce Him to Your human, Adamic standing, rather than seeing yourself condemned in Adam, and Christ dying for your guilt, and you, as connected with Adam, identified with that death. If you object that Christ called us "brethren"; why may we not call Him "Brother"? I answer, Find a hint that any of the holy apostles addressed Him thus. If He calls us brethren, it is because He became identified with us poor, wretched, lost creatures by infinite Divine grace; and, now He leads the worship of His saints as "The Firstborn Of Many brethren," indeed: but in heavenly worship. You may say, "Lord Jesus," but no believer finds himself saying, "Brother Jesus." Yet when we turn to God and Heaven, and join the praise and worship (which we should be doing--Heb. 13:13), we know it is true that He calls us "brethren." Let Him speak thus in limitless grace: for God has made us all of one with Him! But we will call Him Lord, for (a) He is eternally God the Son; (b) He is the "Second Man"—the "Last Adam" (1 Cor. 15:47, 45); (c) but He is called "the Man from Heaven," and those in Him are eternally heavenly!

Heb 2:12: : saying: I will declare Thy name unto My brethren, in the midst of the congregation (lit., "assembly"; Gr.ekklesia) will I

sing Thy praise!

To all who know the Psalm 22, from which this passage is brought to us by the Spirit, these words are captivating to the heart. For the 22nd Psalm has two parts: Ps 22:1-21, and Ps 22: 22-31. The quotation here begins with the second part, at, Ps 22:22; but the psalm begins:

"My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?
Why art Thou so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning?
... I cry in the daytime (the first three hours of the crucifixion day (Mark 15:25): 9 to 12 o'clock) but Thou answerest not:
And in the night season (the second three hours, when the absolute darkness of Divine forsaking fell upon Him (Mark 15:33) and am not silent.
But Thou art holy.
... Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death ...
A company of evil-doers have enclosed Me;
They pierced My hands and My feet ...
They part My garments among them,
And upon My vesture do they cast lots
Save Me from the lion's mouth!
"Yea, from the horns of the wild-oxen Thou hast answered Me!"

Thus was He cut off, suffering from the hand of God the judgment of our sin; but delivered "from the lion's mouth." Our Lord as He died committed His spirit to the Father (Lk. 23:46), Who received it to the disappointed hate of Satan and the hosts of hell, "the wild-oxen."

Thus ends the first half of this blessed psalm. The second half, immediately following, is our Risen Lord in resurrection-life, speaking:

I will declare Thy name unto My brethren:
In the midst of the Assembly will I praise Thee.

Now we know, from John 20, the message the risen Lord sent by Mary Magdalene to the disciples: "But go unto My brethren, and say to them, I ascend unto My Father and your Father, and My God and your God." Astonishing words, "Brethren"! "My Father and your Father"! "My God and your God"!

Note then the two parts of this great verse, Hebrews 2:12; first, He will declare God's Name unto His brethren: then, second, In the midst of the Assembly will He praise God! We constantly find our Lord among His disciples speaking of His Father, even saying to them, "When ye pray, say, Our Father." We find them at the last supper asking, "Show us the Father, and it sufficeth us." But when the Holy Ghost came, they knew!

Now the last Part of verse 12: In the midst of the Assembly will I praise Thee! This brings us to the revelation of our Lord's ETERNAL PRIESTLY WORK! The first priestly work is prayer for us (Lk. 22:32; John 17); the second is, that He bore our sins on the Cross; the third is, that He will get us home through this God-hating world, making "intercession for us," "compassed about" as we are with "infirmity"--He will get us home where He is! Upon this element of His priesthood most of our thoughts, naturally, indeed, are centered. Sad to say, we fall even below this! In our failure or sin we think of our Lord only as our Advocate—which is indeed connected with priesthood, thank God! But as to thinking of Him as Priest in the fourth phase, as eternally revealing God's name to us as His "brethren"; and as Himself singing eternally the praises of God among the saints, "in the midst of the Assembly"--many Christians have not even considered it!

Yet He says, In the midst of the congregation (of all His redeemed ones) will I sing Thy praise: Let us meditate upon this word. The question instantly comes, When and for how long will this praising be? Some have thought it will cease when all the redeemed are brought to glory. With this we cannot for an instant agree. Will Christ ever cease to lead the praise of His blood-bought saints? Will He ever cease to be the Lamb "that hath been slain"? It is the glorified saints whom Christ is leading in praise, and will lead forever! In our poor weak assembling here below, we thrill and rejoice at any consciousness of His presence, and of access to God through Him. Is His priesthood only to last until He gets us all to Heaven? Nay, it will be fully active then! Remember, God is infinite, infinite, infinite! (How lame is language!) Shall we ever come to know Him so fully that there will be no further need of our Great High Priest's "declaring God's Name" more deeply and fully unto us? Is not the Lamp of that city to which we are going the Lamb Himself? "In the ages to come" God will indeed "show the exceeding riches of His grace in kindness toward us," but it will still be "in Christ Jesus"! (Eph. 2:7).

This glorious phase of Christ's priesthood, His leading the everlasting singing, has only begun. Thank God, it will never cease!

"O Home of God My Father's joy and gladness,
O riven Veil whereby I enter in!
There can my soul forget the grave, the weeping,
The weariness and sin.

O chamber, all thine agate windows open
To face the radiant east--
O holy temple, where the saints are singing,
Where Jesus is the Priest--
Illumined with the everlasting glory,
Still with the peace of God's eternal now,
Thou, God, my Rest, my Refuge, and my Tower--
My home art Thou."
(T.S.M., in Ter Steegen).

No, to affirm that the priesthood of Christ as leading His redeemed in their worship and praises will have an end when the saints see God's face, is to forget the Lamb Who is eternally there, as "The Lamb that hath been slain," leading those He has bought, in worship!

"And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God the Almighty, and the Lamb, are the temple thereof . And the city hath no need of the sun, neither of the moon, to shine upon it: for the glory of God did lighten it, and the lamp thereof is the Lamb" (Rev 21:22-23).

It is the consciousness that will pervade the New Jerusalem forever: God so loved us that He gave His Son! Christ so loved us that He bought us with His own blood! We are here in this place of ineffable bliss, enjoying forever the unhindered outflow of the infinite love of God, because the Son of God loved us and gave Himself for us! We are forever here in Him! Our God, Who is love, has fully and eternally expressed that love in the infinite sacrifice of His Son, in Whom we are. And Christ leads our praises forever!

Now comes a further citation from Scripture:

Heb 2:13: : And again, I will put My trust in Him:

These words occur in the remarkable passage in Isaiah (Heb 8:16-17) where, after the nation has stumbled (vs. 15), the testimony, the teaching, is "bound up, sealed," among Christs disciples. The word is:
"Bind thou up the testimony, seal the Law among My disciples (which God had done when He took it from the Jewish nation as a whole and committed to our Lord's "disciples." See the four Gospels.). And I will wait for Jehovah, that hideth His face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for Him" (put My trust in Him, Septuagint translation). This is the whole spirit of our Lord in the prophetic word. It is His spirit especially in the Psalms and most especially in Psalm 16, when, in dying, Christ says,

"Thou wilt not leave My soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou suffer Thy holy One to see corruption: Thou wilt show Me the path of life."

The very words I will put My trust in Him, His enemies taunted Him with, on the Cross: "He trusted on God."

I will put My trust in Him--What a word, for One Who is Himself God, to say! It reminds us of 2 Corinthians 13:4: "He was crucified through weakness, yet He liveth through the power of God." For the Son, as Man, walked in the path of faith, looking, in weakness, wholly to Another for all things--just as "His brethren," the saints, now do, or should do, toward Him (Gal. 2:20). I will put My trust in Him was His blessed attitude. Let it be ours!

And then a citation from the next verse of Isaiah 8:

And again, Behold, I and the children whom Jehovah hath given Me: Primarily these "children" were Isaiah's two sons which were to be "for signs and for wonders": Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz. (Their names, given by God (Isa. 7:3; 8:1) sum up Isaiah's prophecy concerning Israel: Shear-jashub, "A remnant shall return"; Maher-shalal-hash-baz, "The spoil speedeth, the prey hasteth"--the judgment that was coming on the nation prior to the final restoration of the Remnant. So these children were "for signs and for wonders"--if Israel could perceive them!) But God uses them here to represent those "brethren," those "sons of God being brought to glory," of whom the preceding verses in Hebrews 2 speak.

Heb 2:14 Since then the children are sharers in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same; that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil;

15 and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

16 For verily not to angels doth He give help, but He giveth help to the seed of Abraham.

17 Wherefore it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren, that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest, in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

18 For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted.

This first mention in Hebrews of Christ's death looking toward His priesthood, shows it as compassing two great things: (a) the complete overthrow of the one having the power of death, that is, the devil: the "prince of this world" and "god of this age"; (b) Christ's taking hold, according to Divine purpose and promise, not of angels, but of the seed of Abraham, who is named of God "the father of all them that believe." (Thus Christ is Priest-not of the human race, but of "them that are of faith"
(Gal. 3:7; Rom. 4:11).)

Heb 2:14: : Since then the children are sharers in blood and flesh.

* The words "since then," which begin vs. 14, open out to us one side of the meaning of the words, "all of one." For we read: Since then the children (the "sons He is bringing unto glory") are sharers in blood and flesh, He also Himself in like manner partook of the same. The nature He takes is absolutely human, though unconnected with Adam the First. For, as we have noted, He was the "Seed of the woman," and that by God's direct power! Let this humanity of our blessed Lord captivate us wholly. We can enter no possible human condition or circumstance with which He is not immediately and perfectly familiar!

Then, second, our resurrection-oneness with Christ, the teaching of which permeates Paul's epistles, is included in these words "all-of-one"! "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God ... For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col. 3:1, 3). This marvelous oneness is asserted over and over, though never explained: for how can such a marvel be addressed to anything but to simple faith?

So then both in the fact that He is a man "partaker of blood and flesh in like manner" with us; and also that He died, and we died with Him; He was raised, and we were raised with Him, the great words, "ALL OF ONE" are ours.

Out of the two facts comes the revelation of the mystery of the Body of Christ: first, our Lord's actual humanity; and second, our sharing His Risen life.

His taking part in blood and flesh and that in like manner with us, did not enable Him to greet us as "brethren"; but when He was raised from the dead, "The last Adam became a life-giving spirit"! (1 Cor. 15:45). Then He could and did, greet them as "brethren" (but not before resurrection). Believers have "died with Christ," and are no longer in that first Adam in which they were born. What a salvation!

The "children" here are the children of God, given to Christ (vs. 10; see john 17:9-10). But we must examine closely what is said. There is no loose statement in Scripture. Therefore sharers in blood and flesh (the Greek order) should be translated exactly that way. For God said, "As to the life of all flesh, the blood thereof is all one with the life thereof" (Lev. 17:14). Marvel of marvels, of both Divine mercy and Divine wisdom! Our Lord was to be the "Seed of the woman" that should "bruise the serpent's head." The Seed of the woman, whom Satan first deceived and who led her husband into sin!--ah, how God's grace triumphs! Christ was given as "her Seed"--to bruise Satan's head! Here the preparation for that "bruising" (by means of death upon the Cross) is shown us. The first step of infinite condescension is, He took part in blood and flesh. God did not give our Lord, as He did Adam, a body complete, full-grown. In the miracle of His infinite mercy, the Holy Ghost came upon Mary and Christ's word was fulfilled (Ps. 40:6; Heb. 10:5), "A body Thou hast prepared for Me." This was uttered through David over a thousand years before Christ's day by the Spirit of God: "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy" (Rev. 19:10). God willed to "prepare a body" for His Son after the same manner as that in which our bodies are prepared, except that God by the Holy Spirit, and not a human father, communicated the life to the ovum in the womb of the virgin. Thus our Lord partook of blood and flesh ... in like manner as we: how marvelous!

* This first step of infinite condescension, He took part in blood and flesh, mystifies those who do not know their lost state, their guilt, their helplessness. The second step of equally gracious condescension is, He laid down this blood-and-flesh life: "He bare our sins in His own body on the tree." For, "without shedding of blood there is no remission." In dying, He poured out His blood, and left behind the blood-and-flesh sphere. But, "God raised Him up"--yet not back into "blood and flesh" existence. He had "flesh and bones," indeed, (Lk. 24:39). But He was raised to "newness of life" "by the glory of the Father." Only living faith follows Him there!--faith given by God, and by the Holy Spirit.

Heb 2:14: ... that through death He might bring to nought (Gr katargeo) him that had the power of death,...

* Two words must be looked at here: **kratos**--which means might; and **exousia**, which includes the right to use might or power.

* Darkness is essentially the result of sin—connected therewith constantly by God (Gen. 1:2; 1 Sam. 2:9; Prov. 4:19; 20:20; Jer. 13:16; Matt. 8:12; 2 Peter 2:4, 17--contrast here 1 Peter 2:9). Darkness has a right (**exousia**), therefore, over sinners: so that in Col. 1:12-13, the saints are seen to be by the Father "made meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the Saints in light, having been delivered out of the power (exousia, right) of darkness, and translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His love."

* NOW Satan had no right but he did seize the Power (kratos) of death--a third of the heavenly beings--"stars of Heaven" the dragon is seen to drag down With him (Rev. 12:3-4). And after Adam sinned Satan seized the might (**kratos**) of death, and he became the acknowledged Prince--yea and the god of those sinners over whom darkness now had the right (**exousia**).

* The fact that Satan is to be bound in Hades the thousand years of the Millennium shows that he had no right (exousia) over the human race. For though the race is not converted during the Millennium but rushes back to Satan's banner the moment he is "released for a little season," at the end of the thousand years (Rev. 20:7-10), it is evident that living in sin, darkness having the right over them, they are helpless and willing slaves of Satan, the arch-leader of sin's hosts--as in Heaven, so on earth!

* Now Satan having seized might (kratos) over the human race concerning whom darkness has right--it is most fitting indeed that in Hebrews the very first recorded result of our blessed Lord's death is, that that death brought to nought him that was exercising on earth the might (**kratos**) of death!

* For in Hebrews believers are constantly exhorted to hold fast their "confidence," their "boldness," toward God. Yea, to "draw

near, by the blood of Jesus," to come, (by the Spirit, certainly) where their Great Priest, their "Forerunner" has gone--through the veil, a new and living way which He dedicated for us (Heb. 10:19, ff). Believers are to become worshipers, in Hebrews, and to press on to full growth.

* So Satan's utter overthrow is the first result of Christ's death shown in Hebrews! For the saints are to do business in Heaven--not here--here Satan reigns!

Heb 2:14, 15: ... that through death He might bring to nought (Gr katargeo) him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Several questions confront us here. First, How, or on what ground, did the devil have the power of death? and what means this expression? Second, How did our Lord through His death nullify, remove, put-out-of-business, bring to nought the devil? (These are some of the meanings of the word katargeo.) Third, What is the "bondage" to which the fear of death subjects people, and how does Christ deliver them?

* Might of death: Gr., **kratos**, "might"; consistently translated thus of God's might: Eph. 1:19, Col. 1:11; and of Christ's might in Eph, 6:10. Note the same word in the doxologies of 1 Tim. 6:16, 1 Peter 4:11, 5:11; Jude 25; Rev. 1:6, 5:13.

Questions I and III: First, it is to be remembered that the devil was not an angel, but the "anointed cherub that covered" (God's throne, evidently), of the highest order of beings in Heaven. He "walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" (Ezek. 28:14). He was regarded by Michael, the archangel as a "dignity" compared to himself! (Jude 8, 9). Upon his sin (as revealed to us in Ezek. 28 under the type of the king of Tyre), he was ejected from Heaven: "I have cast thee as profane out of the mountain of God" (Ezek. 28:16). Our Lord described this ejecting of Satan in the words: "I beheld Satan fallen as lightning from Heaven" (Lk. 10:18). He became the deceiver who would displace God, and, inasmuch as the first Adam was to be tested, was permitted to visit the earthly Eden.

* Being himself a creature, Satan had no right over other creatures, our first parents, or the race. We see that in Rev. 12:9b, when he is finally ejected from Heaven and is cast down to earth, one third of the angels fall with him. it is instructive to mark his two names and the three great characters in which he is shown, in Rev. 12:9: As the "great dragon," he is contrasted with his former estate: when God said to him, "Thou sealest up the sum, full of wisdom, and Perfect in beauty" (Ezek. 28:12). As "the old serpent" he is seen using his marvelous wisdom to destroy. As "the devil" (**diabolos**, lit., the underflinger, slanderer), he is the accuser. As Satan, he is the direct enemy or adversary of God and His People. (See 1 Chron. 21:1; Job 1 and 2.) And lastly, he is the deceiver of the whole habitable earth: he deceives as to man's conceits of his own righteousness; of his creature ability (for man has none); as to all dreams of human greatness and progress without God; and especially in his "blinding the minds of the unbelieving" as to their doom (2 Cor 4:4).

His chief role, so far as the saints of God are concerned, is that of the accuser of the saints before God. If the angels, who are below the cherubim, are called "mighty," how much greater was the "might" of this anointed one of the cherubim when, his heart "lifted up in pride," and having sinned, he turned against God in that terrible endless pride which his fall brought in! That "might," all of it, he now turns against God and His creatures; and God permits him to use this fearful might against those who have chosen sin and darkness.

He did not have a right (Gr. **exousia**, authority), we repeat, over unfallen Adam. He secured that right (exousia) over fallen man, who had now turned against God. And he uses might (kratos) after man's fall. This "might" or "power" of death, then, of the devil, is a Divinely permitted exercise of power. (No creature has independent Power--even to obey God! God's holy angels, indeed, are called "the elect angels"--God having in inscrutable sovereignty protected their state of obedience.) A slave of sin himself, like Spartacus, the Roman slave, he became the leader of slaves, which now included the human race. For of sin, our Lord Jesus said, "Every one that committeth sin is the bondservant (Gr., **doulos**) of sin"; as again Paul, "Know ye not, that to whom ye present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his bondservants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom. 6:16).

Therefore Satan's hold upon man, however unjust, could be broken only by removing that sin which held man as a slave in "bondage." Let us give all our soul's attention then, to the judgment on the Cross.

With the righteous judgment of sin, and the bearing of it, at the Cross, Satan had nothing to do. The transaction was altogether between God as the judge, and Christ, the Lamb of God, (1) bearing our sins, which were transferred to Him; and (2) made to be sin on our behalf, "that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor. 5:21).

As regards Satan, our blessed Lord said, "Now is the judgment of this world ("judgment" referring to His own death): now shall the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth (at Calvary) will draw all men unto Myself" (the future kingdom triumph). There is coming a judgment day at the Great White Throne of Revelation 20:11-15. The preceding verse (Rev 20:10) sees the devil cast into the lake of fire and brimstone. He has no part in this Great White Throne judgment.

Nor has he any part in the judgment day of Calvary! There God, the first Person of the Trinity, laid on Christ, Whom He names as Son, God, Lord, in Hebrews 1, our actual sins, as it is written: "Jehovah hath made to light (Heb., R.V. margin) on Him the iniquity of

us all" (Isa. 53:6); and, "Who His own self bare our sins in His body upon the tree" (1 Pet. 2:24).

But sins, having been transferred to Him, must be judged according to the holy being of God, as really as the sins of the wicked will be judged at the last judgment day of Revelation 20. Therefore Christ on the Cross was forsaken of God. Oh, behold this! Thank God, He, as innocent, still had His faith, for He cried, "My God!" But the forsaking was real and absolute, for there was no relieving answer to His cry: "Jesus therefore ...said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit" (John 19:30). He bore our sins in His body, not Hisspirit, and His spirit was free--innocent!

This yielding up His spirit was evidently after or upon His death in the flesh, as a comparison of the four Gospels will reveal: for note: (a) "the ninth hour" had come; (b) "the veil of the temple was rent in the midst," signifying that the article of death was past for Christ. Those words, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," are not said while He is under the curse for sin. For John 19:30 reads, "When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head and gave up His spirit," while Luke adds, "Jesus, crying with a loud voice, said, Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit: and having said this, He gave up the ghost." The spirit of the Lord Jesus was of course infinitely innocent, for He was the Son of God, though He had just borne our fearful judgment!

The judgment, then, of sins on Calvary was as absolute as the judgment of the Great White Throne will be; because it is God Who laid our sins upon Christ. It is God Who forsook Him, our Substitute, instead of us. It is God Who declares, "Our old man Was crucified with Him"--that He was, we repeat, "made to be sin on our behalf; that we might become the righteousness of God in Him." Marvelous--but written! The result of this judgment was, of course, overwhelming disaster for Satan and his hosts, as announced in Hebrews 2:14: He also Himself in like manner partook of blood and flesh, that through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Question II: By what means and manner did Christ bring to nought ... the devil, who, wrongly indeed, but actually, was exercising the might of death, and making all subject to bondage through fear of death?

Let us first notice several things by which our Lord Jesus Christ did not bring Satan to nought and deliver men. It was not by the spiritual beauty and moral excellence, infinite as that was, of our Lord's life on earth, that He brought Satan to nought. Modernist preachers, befooled by the very devil whose existence they deny or ignore, would preach the "beautiful life of Jesus," to be "imitated": would preach the "standards, the ethics of Jesus," even the "unselfishness of Jesus," saying that these are all men need! If men will consider the question, "What would Jesus do?" and do it, they say, "everything will be all right." Poor dupes, poor slaves, yea, beguiled slaves beguiling other slaves to their doom!

Our Lord did not annul or bring to nought the devil, in the wilderness, by refusing to yield to his temptations. Certainly our Lord by His wilderness victory "bound the strong man," and then went about "spoiling his house," "casting out demons," "healing all that were oppressed of the devil" (Acts 10:38). But after the wilderness temptation we read: "When the devil had completed every temptation, he departed from Him until a season" (Lk. 4:13)--literally, "until a fitting opportunity." Satan, far from being "brought to nought" then, even wrought through the Lord's own, as in Peter, when the Lord rebuked him (in Matt 16:23) with "Get thee behind Me, Satan!" and on until, as we have noted, Jesus came forth from the Garden and said to the priests and soldiers led by Judas, "This is your hour, and the power (authority, exousia) of darkness."

No, not by His life, not by His example, not by His teachings, not by His miracles, did Christ bring the devil to nought. But, as the Word says, He partook ... of blood and flesh, that THROUGH DEATH He might bring to nought him that had the might of death, that is, the devil.

* An example of Satan's having the might of death, and not the right or authority, is seen in the case of job. Only when God permitted was Satan able to work: "And Jehovah said unto Satan, Behold he is in thy hand; only spare his life." (Compare 2Sa 24:1, and 1 Chron. 21:1. Here we see God's permissive use of Satan, as in Job's case--job 1 and 2.) Again, "Your adversary, the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. 5:8). He has the devouring might, but only when permitted--thank God! The tense of the verb in Heb, 2:14 is in the past: "had the might of death." Believers are not under this might or power! But as to those out of Christ, "The whole world lieth in the evil one."

This glorious truth, that through death Christ brought to nought the devil, is emphasized throughout Paul's epistles. In Romans we see Christ having become a propitiation "through faith in His blood" (Ro 3:25), bearing our sin, putting its guilt away; and we read, "We died to sin" (Ro 6:2); "Our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away, that so we should no longer be in bondage to sin" (Ro 6:6); "For he that hath died is righteously-released from sin" (Ro 6:7); "We died with Christ" (Ro 6:8); "Even so reckon ye also yourselves to be dead unto sin, but alive unto God in Christ Jesus" (Ro 6:11); "Ye also were made dead to the Law through the body of Christ" (Ro 7:4); "We have been discharged from the Law" (annulled--katargeo: Ro 7:6). If this great word katargeo, "brought to nought," is to be used concerning the bondage in which Satan held us, it must include both the removing of sin with its guilt and power, and the taking us out of that Adam in whom was involved our responsibility.

"We must look intently upon this Christ on the Cross," as Luther used to say, "made to be sin on our behalf." During our Lord's earthly life He was "tempted in all points like as we are, sin apart." But at Calvary, by God's act, He was made to become sin, the thing itself, for us! Satan was deluded at that hour into jubilance! Christ's lips had testified that God had forsaken Him. He had lifted not a hand to defend Himself. He had committed Himself to "Him Who judgeth righteously." At last He said, "It is finished!" and "He bowed His head and gave up His spirit." Thus He "suffered for sins once ... being put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the

spirit."

What now could Satan do? Of those he had held in bondage, the sin, the guilt, that liability to death under judgment which made the "bondage" possible, had all been borne by a Substitute; and He of God's appointing! Those who believed on Christ were free--as free as their Substitute! And Him God raised up from the dead, and received at His right hand--"crowned with glory and honor!" What right then had Satan over believing ones? None whatever! Let them be "subject to God," and believe, thus resisting the devil, and he will flee from them. Astounding witness to Satan's defeated condition!* (Note exact words of Jas. 4:7.)

* The Holy Spirit, our Lord told us, would convict the world of three things: sin, righteousness, and judgment (John 16:8): Men know, as to the first, that it is a sin not to believe on Christ; second that Christ is righteous, because He has left the world and gone to the Father; third, that the prince of this world, Satan, has been judged. When men realize this, it is like the cry going over a battlefield, "Our commanding general has been killed!" This world is an armed camp against God. A Holy Ghost revival shatters the world's sense of security, takes away all their confidence. Their hearts are like water. God grant such revivals!

When our Lord rose from the dead, and was received up into glory, He went up as the Victor Who had brought the devil to nought! Nothing now but unbelief or disobedience, or ignorance of their liberty, can hold men in bondage to Satan. All his basis of accusation before God, all his power to terrorize believers on earth is nullified, for the judgment for believers was over at the Cross. Do you see that, O believer? Satan has no power, no rights over you. None! He may hinder you; he may oppose you—he did and does oppose all testimony in Christ's Name. But God has reckoned to you the full value of Christ's whole work; and neither guilt, nor bondage, nor fear belongs to you at all! You are in Christ, and are as Christ in God's reckoning! "The sting of death is sin," but Christ bore the sin, and put it away. "The power of sin is the law," but those in Christ died unto law that they might live unto God (Gal. 2:19). And you are in a Risen Christ, Who is all in all to you: "righteousness, sanctification, and redemption"! if, therefore, you are not as free from the devil's bondage of fear as Christ is, it is either from ignorance of Christ's work, or lack of reliance thereon!

All their lifetime subject to bondage, is a summary of the history of most people you know. "It is appointed unto men once to die, and after this cometh judgment" (Heb. 9:27). That double engagement lies ever before men out of Christ! Drown their convictions in pleasure, debauchery, infidelity, as they may, there is ever bondage to fear of death! Peculiarly is this bondage felt by those whose consciences have been awakened to the fearful character and consequences of human guilt, and to their own inability to change their moral state. By these we mean true souls, who may not yet have learned the full truth of the deliverance Christ accomplished at the Cross in their behalf.

* Through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. From the time you were born your mother was afraid you would die; the household kept in touch with doctors--"through fear of death;" funerals passed your house, often carrying loved ones, over whom you wept; the reports that came of whole communities smitten with disease filled with dread; the cemeteries you passed cried out, "You will soon be here!" The philosophers and the poets you read made your life "a brief passing moment,"--and then death.

The human race is today SUBJECT TO BONDAGE. They may talk peace--but yonder comes the undertaker!

Now--to hear the astounding NEWS that death and judgment for the believer on Christ are PAST THINGS! that they have been borne by Another, for us; and that the believer is not coming into judgment but has passed out of death into life! also that God has raised His dear Son from the dead; and that He has passed as our Great High Priest through the heavens and is now seated at the right hand of God! and that our standing is perfect and glorious in Christ! that even if a believer should sin, he has "an Advocate--Jesus Christ the righteous"--I say, that the contemplation in faith of these glorious truths sets the heart singing in joy! And that "bondage" which arose "through fear of death" is gone forever! For the believer has died with Christ, and is raised with Him; and Christ has entered God's presence as the Forerunner of believers: where God's saints are, in their Standing, and shall be shortly in personal presence forever! So He delivered all those who through fear of death were all their life subject to bondage!

Heb 2:16:For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendant of Abraham.

The angels, whatever their past has been, were created with moral responsibility. At least one-third of them revolted with Satan in Heaven (Rev. 12:4), yet the rest, named "the holy angels," were preserved--not by creature power, but by Divine sovereign will. These are called the "elect angels" (1 Tim. 5:21). The point here is that, of these beings called angels, Christ did not "take hold." While there are profound mysteries in this subject, yet perhaps we may say this much:

First, God's purposes were always connected with man, because the eternal Son was to become man, in the eternal Divine plan! And the first man was made "in the image" of God (Gen. 1:22).

Second, "My delight was with the sons of men," God said. As the angels themselves sang: "Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace among men in whom His delight is" (Lk. 2:14).

Third, "God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son." We quote over and over words that, freely believed, would cast us on our faces weeping for joy and wonder! It was not pity, it was not self-interest--not merely to redeem back to Himself creatures who should become His servants, that God gave His Son. Nor is this wonderful verse pronounced concerning God's elect. But that "God so loved the world" is our Lord's explanation of His presence here!

Fourth, God had a sovereign right to pass by those fallen angels that had been in His presence, and to come to take hold of man,

a creature far below the mighty angels!

Fifth, the GRACE of God is revealed as nowhere else in all eternity in His coming down to the lowest of His morally conscious beings--sinners and lost, as they were--and not only
pardoning, but raising up those believers to sit in the heavenlies in Christ, members of Christ Himself!

Heb 2:17: Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make propitiation for the sins of the people.

Here we find that in order to become "a merciful and faithful High Priest," it behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren. This involved (1) Partaking of the "blood and flesh" life that they had; (2) Being thus made "a little lower than the angels" (though their Creator); (3) Being "perfected through sufferings"--even suffering death under Divine forsaking! He made propitiation for the sins of the people, being a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.

Our hearts grieve over those (and there are many) who deny that Christ's priestly work began until He was saluted by God after resurrection, "Thou art a Priest forever." But He laid down His life in priestly manner! (Note John 10.) We are amazed that some have said that His high priesthood did not begin until He presented His blood in Heaven. Some have even pointed to our Lord's words to Mary Magdalene, "Touch Me not; for I am not yet ascended unto the Father": declaring that He was on His way on that day of resurrection, to fulfill the type of the high priest in placing His blood before God, as the Levitical high priest sprinkled the blood in the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement, quoting: "There shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he goeth in to make atonement" (Lev. 16:14-17). (note: it was the High Priest, and none other, who, alone in the tabernacle on the Day of Atonement, killed the bullock and the goat. So our Lord laid down His own life--no one "taking it from Him." He "laid it down" as our High Priest, and we must so regard Him!) I would ask, What then mean our Lord's words on the Cross, "It is finished"? If the sprinkling of His blood before God in Heaven was necessary to complete the work of atonement, what mean the words, "It is finished"? What was finished? Atonement! The putting away of sin (before God) by the sacrifice of Himself! Over 700 years before Christ came, the Spirit spoke by Isaiah of what His priestly work would involve, and "He was not rebellious." We quote the wondrous words of preparation, that "morning by morning" the Father "opened His ear to hear" words of His coming priestly sacrifice. He was born King of the Jews; and He was the great Prophet Whom Moses foretold; but He was no less Priest--yea, High Priest, on His way to the Great Day of Atonement at Calvary! Hear our blessed Lord speaking:

"The Lord Jehovah hath opened Mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away backward. I gave My back to the smiters, and My cheeks to them that Plucked off the hair; I hid not my face from shame and spitting" (Is. 50:5-6).

Of course priesthood is based upon sacrifice, upon poured out blood. But as our Lord said in John 17, "Now I come to Thee, and these things I am speaking in the world, that they may have My joy made full in themselves." He desired them to bear His priestly words, to recognize His priestly relationship to them! If Isaiah could say over seven hundred years before the event, as if the event were past, "He was despised and rejected," surely our blessed Lord might speak within a few hours of His offering Himself on the Cross as if the event had already taken place, as in this same John 17:4, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do." (Mr. Darby well says "As having once for all completed His work for the putting away Of sin, our Priest offered His sacrifice once for all when He offered up Himself." (synopsis, in loc.) As also F.W. Grant: "It is certain that Christ was a merciful and faithful High Priest to make propitiation; and therefore He was High Priest before Propitiation was, or could be, made ... propitiation is by blood, and that was shed on earth!")

Before we close our study of this wonderful 17th verse, we Must meditate in detail upon two phrases, Wherefore it behooved Him, and, in things pertaining to God.

The word "behooved" in the first of these phrases, does not involve, as among men, the idea of duty or obligation, but that of a necessary condition to achieve a result. His being made like unto His brethren, "sons whom God was bringing unto glory," was necessary in His undertaking priesthood for them. Now in what particulars did His being made like unto His brethren consist? In His partaking of blood and flesh; in His being subject at Nazareth to "His parents"; in His "increasing in wisdom and stature"; engaging in carpentry work with Joseph; in His being "made for a little while lower than the angels," and traveling the troubled pathway of humility here below--"in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart," in His traversing the path the Father gave Him, "a Man of sorrows and acquainted with sickness" (Hebrew); daily, hourly, applied to by human need and suffering, and bringing His matters before God in daily prayer. (See Mk. 1:35; Lk. 3:21, 4:42, 6:12, 9:28-29.)

Here were men, utterly unable to deal with God, Whom they infinitely, hourly, needed. And here was Christ, "laying His hand upon us both" (job 9:33). These things it behooved Him to do and to be, until, "through the eternal Spirit," He should have offered Himself without blemish unto God, to shed His blood at the Cross. A Priest at Calvary, He "offered up Himself." It matters not who slew Him: "No man took His life from Him" (John 10:17-18): He laid it down of Himself, by command of His Father. No one else offered Him up: He offered up himself, a Priestly act! Then after He rose, He "passed through the heavens," being then, a Great High Priest before He "passed through the heavens" (Heb. 4:14). Note, it was a High Priest who passed through. It behooved Him in all things to be made like unto His brethren:

1. In "emptying Himself," as Deity, of glory, power, wisdom (Phil. 2:5-8).
2. In incarnation-"sharing in blood and flesh" (Heb. 2:14).
3. In individual sympathy with each of His own.
4. In sharing, in His ministry, the circumstances of His disciples.
5. In being "perfected through sufferings" (Heb 2:10).

Thus He became a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God.

Things pertaining to God (ta pros ton Theon) is used by Paul in Romans 15:17, and in Hebrews 2:17 and 5:1, these places only in the New Testament. This phrase is a characteristic one, both as to its form and its content. It is remarkable that Paul in Romans 15:17 should connect it with that priestly "offering up of the Gentiles" in which he "ministered in sacrifice" the gospel of God, "in the power of signs and wonders, in the power of the Holy Spirit: ... glorying in Christ Jesus in things pertaining to God."

Things pertaining to God: What were these things in Hebrews 2:17?

1. Things which were necessary for Christ to do (that is to die) for us as sinners.

2. His presenting Himself Risen before the face of God for us, giving us thus a place in Him in Heaven, and rights and privileges of worship in God's immediate presence--at the "throne of Grace."

3. His Divine intelligence, and priestly sympathy unlimited, concerning our needs, temptations and trials; and constant unwearied attendance thereunto, obtaining help for us from God; for, although all blessing is through Christ, "all things are of God (Ro 11:36).

4. Finally, that adoration of God in which Christ the Son Himself delights, and in which He will eternally lead His redeemed "brethren," "the congregation" of redeemed ones. All this, at least, is included in this word, things pertaining to God. "In the midst of the congregation will I sing Thy praise!"

* Distinguish carefully between the result of accepted propitiation and the thing itself. Note that things pertaining to God just precedes to make propitiation for the sins of the people. We must learn and believe in our very hearts that this task of making propitiation for the sins of the people was a transaction between Christ, as Sin-offering, and God, as God.

Comparing the frequency of use in Scripture of a word, fact, or doctrine is often the best means of arriving at the truth set forth. Let us note in Hebrews, twenty or more statements referring to our Lord's propitiatory death: (We quote the most telling words only, to conserve space; hunt them out in Heb 1, 2, 5, 7, 9, 12, 13.

When He had made purification of sins (Heb 1:3).

Because of the suffering of death crowned ... that He should taste of death for every man (2:9).

Made perfect through sufferings (Heb2:10).

Through death He might bring to nought him that had the power of death (2:14).

To make propitiation (2:17).

Every high priest ... is appointed ... that he may offer ...sacrifices for sins (Heb 5:1).

Prayers and supplications unto Him that was able to save Him out of death (Heb 5:7).

He (offered up sacrifices) once for all, when He offered up Himself (Heb 7:27).

Christ ... through His own blood, entered into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption (Heb 9:12).

The blood of Christ, Who through the Eternal Spirit offered Himself unto God (9:14).

He is the Mediator of a New Covenant, a death having taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant. (Heb 9:15).

Once at the end of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Heb 9:26).

Christ ... once offered to bear the sins of many (Heb 9:28).

By one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified (Heb 10:14).

He ... offered one sacrifice for sins forever (Heb 10:12).

Enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus ... through the veil, that is to say, His flesh (Heb 10:19, 20).

Jesus endured the Cross, despising shame (Heb 12:2).

Jesus, that He might sanctify the people also through His own blood, suffered without the gate (Heb 13:12).

The God of peace ... brought again from the dead the Great
Shepherd of the sheep In the blood of a covenant eternal (Heb 13:20).

Read and re-read these wondrous passages concerning the death of Christ. They draw out our hearts.

Concerning this eternal worship, we repeat over and over that it will be the supreme delight of the redeemed. For they will be brought to apprehend more and more, forever, of the "kindness of God," Whose Name is Love, and Who is in every attribute infinite in perfection! In His presence there is fullness of joy; in His right hand there are pleasures for evermore. Sin and self left behind, with our former limited apprehension while on earth, we shall throughout the endless ages of eternity find ever new delight in Him Who through and in His blessed Son is "our Portion forever."

And even today, we draw near in our Lord Jesus Christ, our Great High Priest, and come by the power of the blessed Spirit to

"the Throne of Grace," and enter upon that blessed and glorious worship which will have its consummation in eternity. This worship is set before us in Hebrews!

Heb 2:18: For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.

What a marvel is here! Isaiah calls Him "Immanuel, God with us"; and "Wonderful, Counsellor, Mighty God, Father of Eternity"! But when He was on earth, He was tempted: He suffered, being tempted. As the Holy One, He loved righteousness and hated iniquity, so that even the presence of evil caused Him suffering. Having then been, through the appointed sufferings, perfected, He becomes a High Priest Who is able to succor them that are tempted.

Dear friend, you and I might be in the presence of someone who is suffering peculiar and agonizing temptation. But, poor things that we are, we would not know it; and did we know it, who has the power to deliver another soul? Christ, having Himself suffered being tempted, is able to succor them that are tempted.

Rely on this Great High Priest of Whom we are reading in this book of Hebrews. Thank God, He is "a Priest forever," as we shall see! There is one God, one Mediator between God and men, the Man Christ Jesus! Rely upon His past work and His present priestly work in your behalf, and go directly by Him to God; knowing first, that "God is for us" (Rom. 8:31); and that Christ Jesus "is at the right hand of God--Who also maketh intercession for us" (Rom. 8:34); and that our Great High Priest is merciful and faithful ... for in that He Himself hath suffered, being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted. Thank God!

We shall learn much more in Hebrews of this Great High Priest!

Hebrews 3

1 WHEREFORE, holy brethren, partakers of a heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus;

2 Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also was Moses in all His (God's) house.

3 For He hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as He that built the house hath more honor than the house.

4 For every house is builded by some one; but He that built all things is God.

5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His (God's) house as a ministering servant for a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken;

6 but Christ as a Son, over His (God's) house; Whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end.

Hebrews 3:1: WHEREFORE--GOD'S WORD is INSPIRED! So we do well to weigh every term He uses. This "wherefore" is like, for example, the "therefore" of Romans 5:12. It means that what has already been written in Hebrews calls us to consider Christ as God (Heb 1); and as Man (Heb 2); especially in His willingness "to be made in all things like unto His brethren" (Heb 2:17).

Holy brethren--The apostles addressed the Jews generally as "brethren" (Acts 2:29; 13:38); as indeed, Paul and Barnabas were addressed by the Jews (before they understood the message of grace: Acts 1:15). But this address, holy brethren, in this verse, is not a reference to brethren by race, but to those believing on Christ--which is very far different! They are "brethren" in the sense of Hebrews 2:11, 17; and they are "holy brethren" not because of their holy walk (though they may have had a good walk), but because they were in Christ--"sanctified in Christ Jesus."

Partakers of a heavenly calling–Here are indeed great words! words which connect this epistle with the prayer our Lord made in John 17:14, 16, 21-24, and with His coming for His heavenly saints as He promised in John 14:2, 3; and shown by Paul in 1 Corinthians 15:50-57; Ephesians 1:3; 2:5, 6; 5:30, 32; 1Th 4:16, 17. "**Calling**" here, as always in the epistles, has reference not to an invitation to go to Heaven, but to a present heavenly state, and manner of being. For Christians, according to Colossians 1:12, have already by Christ's work, been made "meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light," and their citizenship is in Heaven (Philippians 3:20). The Hebrews naturally had an earthly calling.

The fearful plight of "Israel after the flesh" is brought to mind by the fact that saved Hebrews no longer partake even of the earthly calling of Israel! Language almost fails us here! It is deeply impressive that this epistle is addressed not to "Jews" or "Israel," but to Hebrews.

In unfathomable grace, God presented His Son as "born King of the Jews," partaking of "blood and flesh." National Israel, led on by blind priests and Pharisees, despised and rejected their only true Messiah. They poured out His life-blood, and thus "Israel after

the flesh" forever lost their Messiah. For God had said "the life of the flesh was all one with the blood thereof." Christ poured out His soul (Lev. 17:11) unto death, laying down His life. He was not coming back into the blood-and-flesh life. When he was raised from the dead, it was in "newness of life"; life out of death; resurrection life; of which "Israel after the flesh" knew nothing.

Therefore, at that time, Israel was lost; and as it was then, when they said, "Crucify Him!"--so it is today.

When a Hebrew is "**enlightened**" and saved now, it is as a common sinner. God has declared "There is no distinction between Jew and Greek"; for all sinned. There are no "Hebrew-Christians"; they are just pardoned sinners.

For the fact that God has today an elect "**Remnant**" of Israel whom He will by and by save by Sovereign mercy and grace, just as He does Gentiles now, brings no hope to the present national "Israel after the flesh." Today they build their synagogues and have their "religious" teachings. Tomorrow, after the Church is raptured, they will have their temple in Jerusalem, and there again begin their sacrifices--though in utter unbelief! Concerning that temple God has said:

"What manner of house will ye build unto Me? He that killeth an ox is as he that slayeth a man; he that sacrificeth a lamb, as he that breaketh a dog's neck; he that offereth an oblation as he that offereth swine's blood: he that burneth frankincense, as he that blesseth an idol" (Isa. 66:1, 3).

It will be in this temple, soon to be built by the Jews, that Paul writes, "The man of sin, the son of perdition ...sitteth in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God" (2Thess. 2:3, 4). This is the Antichrist, the "abomination of desolation" referred to by our Lord (Matt. 24:15; John 5:43).

The Jews today are carrying on their synagogue ceremonies in darkness, having slain their Messiah, Who has been raised from the dead and seated at the right hand of the Majesty on high; and is over the true "house of God," which does not at all contain the "fleshly" nation of the Jews!

Of mercy, this Jewish nation knows nothing yet, nationally. And when the fearful "Tribulation" arises to its height and they are about to be "cut off from being a nation" (Ps. 83:4) at Armageddon, and there is poured upon the Remnant the "spirit of grace and supplication" and they look, by Divine illumination, "unto Him Whom they have pierced" (Zech. 12:10), there will be "a very great mourning!" That Remnant will see what they have done and what God has done in opening a door of faith to the Gentiles. They will see, by the "mercy" shown toward us, Gentiles, that they must be cast upon the same sovereign mercy (Rom. 11:30-32). "For God hath shut up all unto disobedience, that He might have mercy upon all!" Let both Jew and Gentile ponder that!

To them (Israel) was given an earthly land, with earthly blessings wonderful indeed, with Jehovah's dwelling in their midst, in His temple in Jerusalem! But their sin drove Jehovah from that temple. It was destroyed, the city taken, the people placed under Gentile rule. And, though they rebuilt their temple, and, at the time of this epistle worshiped there, they were under the Romans, so that, although never to be nationally forsaken of God, they were not yet nationally forgiven! But these individual believing Hebrews, addressed in Hebrews 3:1, had been transferred from an earthly to a heavenly calling and destiny, an entirely different "calling," ending their fleshly hopes; called to a rejected Saviour--and lo! a priesthood announced on high, at God's right hand: for those who believed and left all earthly hopes--who were willing to be "without the camp" (of earthly religious things) and to be the earth-rejected but Heaven-received worshipers "within the veil" above! On earth they would be persecuted, despised. In Heaven they were received, welcomed, invited to "the throne of Grace," of which, alas, the Jewish nation knew nothing!

Remove from your mind the idea of any difference before God between these Hebrews and anyone else who comes to God by Jesus Christ. For (we say it over and over), although God had given these Hebrews a "religion," the book of Hebrews sees God taking it all away! The Hebrews were indeed to learn lessons from their former history, and God will exercise great gentleness and grace now toward them. But Aaron disappears; yea, Moses disappears; yea, the Law is "disannulled--the priesthood being changed"; the scene is changed from earth to Heaven! And these Hebrew believers are saluted as "partakers of a heavenly calling." In this "calling" there are no Hebrew or Jewish things, which distinctions belong wholly to earth! (Col. 2:16, 17; Heb. 8:5).

It will be found difficult to view a Hebrew believer as "having nothing"; and most difficult to the Hebrew believer himself! (Let us Gentiles reflect that with God there are no "Episcopalians," "Presbyterians," "Methodists," "Baptists." It was the writer's great privilege in the Moody Church in Chicago to teach a Bible class in which one night at my request they all wrote down the "churches" they came from, and the "denominations" or "sects" they represented. There proved to be over two hundred churches, or assemblies; for Chicago is a large city. But they called themselves by forty-one different denominational names! Yet with God they were simply believers. We are not "fighting denominations, having the gospel to preach! We allude to those things only to illustrate how difficult it is to hold only heavenly things, as partakers of a heavenly calling. It is so easy to say, "I am of Paul; and I of Apollos!")

Union with Christ, resurrection, heavenly position, this was the "heavenly calling." They are no longer Hebrews, no longer Gentiles, for they are "new creatures in Christ." New creatures are no more Hebrews than new Englishmen or new Chinese. Creation is creation, not change! (1 Cor. 7:19; Gal. 6:15).

There is but one heavenly calling revealed. Those to whom Hebrews 3:1 was addressed were "partakers" of it. They were in a Risen, heavenly Christ. It matters not whether or not they fully realized these glorious facts, or whether or not they enjoyed them. The word kaleo, "I call," and its noun, klesis, calling, are used in the N.T. over 50 times, as, Rom. 1:1, 7; 8:28, 30; 1Cor. 1:2, 9, 24; Jude 1; Rev. 17:14.

THE CALLING

The "**calling**" of God is a sovereign act, which determined the position and privileges of these believers:

1. It is the description both of the order of life and being into which God has created a creature, and also of that order of life befitting such creation. Angels, for example, were created into the angelic state and mode of being. Certain of them "kept not their first principality but left their proper habitation" (Jude 6).

2. of them who are "saints" by calling, Rom. 8:30 says that they were foreordained before this calling.

3. Scripture also asserts that these were "called with a holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before times of ages" (2 Tim. 1:9, literally).

4. It is written of the Corinthians, who at that time were "babes in Christ," that they were "sanctified in Christ Jesus, called saints"; and that God, "Who is faithful," would also "confirm them unto the end," that they might be "unreprovable in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1 Cor. 1:2, 8).

5. While the saints are exhorted to "walk worthily of the calling wherewith they were called" (Eph. 4:1; 2 Thess. 1:11, 12) yet note, they did not obtain the "calling" by excellent behavior, nor lose it by failure, but enjoyed it in a faithful walk. Note also the same in 2 Peter 1:5-11: the great exhortation to diligence on our part, by such diligence making "our calling and election sure" (which is the great exhortation in Hebrews, is it not?), God guarding us against stumbling, and guaranteeing assurance of an "entrance richly supplied ... into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

6. See also 2 Pet. 3:17, 18: It was not the intention of God, in revealing to us a marvellous "calling" into which He had foreordained us, to have us become negligent. Peter exhorts us to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ" (not grow "in grace," as Often wrongly quoted, but grow in the grace and experimental favor and acquaintanceship of our Lord Jesus Christ Himself).

7. Finally, those believers who have been most quietly certain of their own heavenly calling have most constantly given God praise for their own election! For they know Whom they have trusted! In view of the unutterable Grace that had formed such purposes toward their unworthy selves they are filled with rapturous thanksgiving!

The writer of Hebrews, indeed, here defines their heavenly calling, (as is done in Ephesians). But he does assert that they, being partakers of a heavenly calling, are through with earthly things, not having here on earth even an abiding city! They are to be approached as those who once had such a city, and temple, and sacrifices, but are now without them, without any earthly religion whatever. And they are called to come boldly to the throne of grace in Heaven, by the blood of Jesus; having Him as Great High Priest! In short, the object of Hebrews is to call to a heavenly worship, people who now have a heavenly calling!

Of course to think that the apostle in thus lovingly exhorting the Hebrew believers, is admitting any "special character" of theirs, would be to deny other Scriptures. Unless we keep in mind the great facts revealed in Paul's epistles, we shall not, in our study of Hebrews, be ready at its great exhortation in Hebrews 13, to go forth to our rejected Lord "without the camp" (which is not only Judaism, but all human "religion" as such), "bearing His reproach." (The Hebrews had had a Divinely given religion, Judiasinos, which we translate "Judaism" (Gal. 1:13, 14); which Paul, as a Jew, also calls "our religion" (threskeia, Acts 26:5).) We all know, if we are honest with ourselves, that to glory in a despised, rejected, crucified Christ is not the message Christendom honors or will bear with. "Without the camp" below; "within the veil" above: what does the world know of that?

The very name "Christians"--whence came it? From the world, not from God! It was a taunt. In Antioch of Syria, a city with a reputation for cynicism and human "Smartness," the disciples "were called Christians first" (Acts 11:26). "Christian"—a remarkable word! A Hebrew idea (Messiah, Anointed), expressed in Greek (Christos) with a Latin ending anos: thus worldwide! See also 1 Pet. 4:16: "If any man suffer as a Christian, let him not be ashamed; but let him glorify God in this name." We might translate "Christians" "Christ-ones"; compare "Jesus-men," as true believers were mockingly called by unbelieving Chinese. It is the world's name, not God's. God's name for His saints with respect to His truth, is "believers." "Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 5:14). The characteristic of believers is bowing to God's Word, believing it just as it stands.

How many of God's saints do you know who habitually think of themselves as simply believers? There has been a mighty work at Calvary; they have a Risen Lord and a heavenly calling which they, as believers, entered. The world, in its Satan-ruled ignorance, calls them "Christians," Christ-ones, as over against the Jews. The "Christian religion" has supplanted, in that they call "Christendom," the Jews' religion! But saints are simply "believers."

No, there was no "other gospel" for Hebrews. The Lord told Ananias that Saul was to bear His name "before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel." (Acts 9:15). Peter says Paul wrote "Scriptures" unto the Jews who were of the Diaspora, the "Dispersion" (1 Pet. 1:1). See also 2 Peter 3:1, 15-16: "Our beloved brother Paul ... wrote unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of those things; wherein are some things hard to be understood, which the ignorant and unsteadfast wrest, as they do also the other Scriptures, unto their own destruction."

Doubtless, having had a Divinely given religion, they were, as are all having a "religion," slow to apprehend the break, the end of all "religion" at the Cross, with the end of alt Levitical things, of all earthly things; and their place "without the camp," and the present worship "within the veil" in Heaven. Furthermore, Paul is not "the apostle to the circumcision" (Gal 2:8, 9). Even James, writing to "The Twelve Tribes which were of the Dispersion," describes "pure religion and undefiled before our God and Father" to be visiting the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and keeping oneself unspotted from the world (Jas. 1:27). How about this, Jew?

Romanist? Denominationalist? Reformed theologian? Any place left for the Mosaic economy? Furthermore, religionist: have you been visiting the fatherless and widows? Are you "unspotted from the world"?

Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus–

While the word "our" here is directed to Hebrew believers, it includes all believers, all partakers of a "heavenly calling."

Each of the four Gospels ends the account of the despising and rejection and crucifixion by national Israel of that Messiah Whom God had sent to them--for it is evident that He was first sent, not to the Gentiles, but to the Jews. He said, (Matt.15:24): "I was not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." In the sending forth of the twelve, He charged them, "Go not into any way of the Gentiles, and enter not into any city of the Samaritans: but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5). In the words of John, "They that were His own received Him not" (Jn 1: 11).

Remember Matthew 21:43: "The kingdom of God shall be taken away from you, and shall be given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof." This coming "nation" is not the Church, nor Gentiles, but that nation described in Isaiah 66:7-9, to be "brought forth at once": that is, the national Israel, which, though "a very small Remnant" (Isa. 1:9; 10:20-22; 11:11, 16; 37:31, 32; 46:3 marg.; Dan. 12:1), "shall look unto Him Whom they have pierced."

That day has not yet come, and although God does, in this epistle, explain to these Hebrews their past history, we find Christ as set forth here, not belonging to the Hebrews as such, but on the contrary, to Heaven itself! with a heavenly life, and carrying on a worship altogether heavenly!

Therefore when we read, Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession--we must not think in Jewish terms. And High Priest--For fifteen centuries, from Moses to Christ, God taught the Hebrew nation to depend on their high priest, upon his work, and upon his year by year acceptability to God. This was especially true on the Great Day of Atonement, once a year, when, in the wilderness, the nation would gather round the tabernacle, waiting, while the high priest went in with the blood of the slain goat, to see him reappear. Their hopes (before their idolatry and apostasy) were based on this: that the high priest would come out from the Holy of Holies, place his hands upon the head of the live goat, and confess over its head all the iniquities and sins of the nation, and send it away into an uninhabited land, never to be found. (For the slain goat, and that "sent away," together are the type of shed blood bringing man into God's presence, and also dismissing forever their sins.) Read Leviticus 16 again--unless you remember well all facts of the Great Day of Atonement.

Of course, most of my readers will be Gentiles, and concerning the priestly work of Christ there has been a lamentable lack of teaching. Would that all of us, Hebrew or Gentile believers, were alike fully instructed in the Old Testament setting forth of the office and ministry of the high priest. For these men, types as they were, become in their ministry a wonderful help to appreciate this book of Hebrews, which deals with that Great High Priest, "Who ever liveth to make intercession for us."

It was Divinely intended that the result of the reading of the book of Hebrews would be that these Hebrews should

(a) abandon all reliance on the old Covenant, or Levitical things; and

(b) know that the New Covenant with the house of Judah and Israel lies in the future--is not yet made--so that they shall not attach their hopes to it.

(c) That they should know that Christ was "another Priest ... not after the order of Aaron"--but of an order Israel had never known, even that of Melchizedek, who preceded Abraham, the patriarch, therefore indescribably greater than Abraham; and that Christ was after Melchizedek's order of never-ending priesthood, established by Divine oath.

(d) And know that the only worship God is now accepting is heavenly and unseen, not connected at all with earthly things, whether buildings, forms, or ordinances.

(e) And that inasmuch as Christ, rejected by the world and particularly by human "religion," suffered "without the gate," fulfilling the type of the body of the sin-offering; we whose hopes are in Heaven, should "go forth unto Him without the camp" of human religion "bearing His reproach."

(f) That such believers should know their sins forgiven forever!

Of our confession--The word "confession," (Gr. homologia) is used six times in the New Testament, three of which are in Hebrews. It is unfortunately, in this text, in the King James Version, rendered "profession." (Its use in 1 Timothy 6:12, 13, shows how inadequate this translation is.) Christ before Pilate did not make a "profession," but confessed: "Pilate said unto Him, 'Art Thou a king, then?' Jesus answered, 'Thou sayest that I am--a king!" See John 18:37. Our Lord's "Thou sayest" was the most emphatic "YES!" The Apostle and High Priest of our confession, then, is One Whom you have confessed, One with Whom your relationship is personal, as connected with His Lordship: as Paul says: "If thou shalt confess with thy mouth Jesus as Lord." See verbal form in Matthew 10:32; Luke 12:8, etc.

"Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus." In this verse every word needs comment! "Consider the Apostle." When we note Whom we are to "consider," and what He is here, we are convicted of neglect at once! The word "consider" means to fix the mind with all attention. Here, as we see, it is upon the person of our Lord. We are asked to fix our attention on Jesus in the double character of Apostle and High Priest. We may say that perhaps Christians have "considered" these two

characters of our Lord less than any others!

Now an "**apostle**" was one sent. Here our Lord is called "the Apostle of our confession." Who sent Him forth? The Father, certainly!--as He so constantly told the Jews, to whom He was sent first (Matt. 15:24); and then to all (1 John 4:10, 14). Were there other "apostles?" Certainly--but Christ sent them forth. And people who heard them were to believe on Christ, and confess not any earthly apostle, but Christ Himself!--"the Saviour of the world." In our confession, we are constantly to remember that He is the Apostle sent forth to us from the Father, and that He is to be confessed by us constantly before the world. What could be meant by the words "our confession?" First, it acknowledges Jesus as Son of God, Creator, Upholder; second, the reality of His humanity; third, the infinite efficacy of His atoning work; fourth, the marvelous union which enables Him to call believers "brethren"; fifth, the new and eternal priestly "order" of Melchizedek--as we shall see in Hebrews Seven.

In short, the book of Hebrews is given to "our confession" of Him, "Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him."

Jesus--HOW wonderful that God had known Him in His conception by this precious, personal name, Jesus! (Matt. 1:21; Lk. 1:31). Therefore let us not fear, but have this name, "Jesus," ever in our hearts, as we go through Hebrews. We saw Him in Hebrews 1 as Son, Heir, Creator, high above even heavenly creatures; and then in Hebrews 2 we saw Him just as truly Man! "He is not ashamed to call us brethren"! So let us hold fast that tender name, Jesus! We shall find Him in Hebrews 6 called Christ. Let us remember what is written in Hebrews 13: "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and unto the ages" (13:8).

Heb 3:2: : Who was faithful to Him that appointed Him, as also was Moses in all His (God's) house:

This faithfulness to the God Who appointed Him "the Apostle and High Priest of our confession," should be the subject of our most attentive consideration. While not developed fully here as later in the book, God's appointing Jesus our High Priest in Heaven must claim our first attention. You may have noticed that the Gospel of John, taking for granted our Lord's rejection by Israel (John 1:11 previously quoted), proceeds to develop His Deity, and the fact that anyone believing may have life in His Name; and gives again and again our Lord's word as to whence He came: "Him Whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world"; "He that honoreth not the Son, honoreth not the Father that sent Him"; "I seek not Mine own will, but the will of Him that sent Me"; Whom He sent, Him ye believe not"; "My teaching is not mine but His that sent Me"; "I am not come of Myself, but He that sent Me is true"; and many other like statements. (It will profit you greatly to mark throughout John this appointment by God of Jesus to be "The Saviour of the world.")

This earnest word, "Consider Him," must apply, first, to His appointment by God; and second, to His faithfulness to Him that appointed Him. Even in Gethsemane His prayer was, "My Father, if this (cup) cannot pass away, except I drink it, Thy will be done" (Matt. 26:42). Faithful unto death was He!

Heb 3:3: For He hath been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, by so much as he that built the house hath more honor than the house:

Jehovah testified to Miriam and Aaron, who claimed revelations from God equally with Moses, "My servant Moses is faithful in all My house: with him will I speak" (Nu 12:7, 8). When we consider the "ten thousand things of God's Law" with which Moses had to deal, we see a little of the vast administration of what God calls His "house." Even the little household affairs of bits of dust like us need faithful servants. Such a servant in God's house was Moses! And he indeed was honored of God, and had glory, and shall have it. He and Elijah appeared "in glory" on the Mount of Transfiguration. Yet Moses was not, and no creature could be, the builder of God's house. His offices, and the glory due him, even to his being "king in Jeshurun," were all from God.

Westcott well says, "The point of comparison lies in the fact that Moses and Christ were both engaged, not, as other Divine messengers, with a part, but with the whole of the Divine economy. The prophets dealt severally with this or that aspect of truth; the kings with another region of life; the priests with another. But Moses and Christ dealt with the whole house of God."

Heb 3:4: For every house is builded by some one; but He that built all things is God:

We have seen that God has a "house" in human affairs, with which "house" all that faithfully confess Christ's name are connected. This is to be borne in mind by every Christian. The Builder of the house, therefore, is God. As Paul says of the present saints, "Ye are God's building" (1 Cor. 3:9). And Peter: "Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5). And Paul directs Timothy: "That thou mayest know how men ought to behave themselves in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth" (1 Tim. 3:15).

Heb 3:5: And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a ministering-servant--

What a great testimony, this! God loves to record the devotion to His will exhibited by His servant* Moses, as we have seen. The following note on Greek terms for various orders of servants, from Vine's Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words is excellent:

"Diakonos views a servant in relation to big work; doulos, a bondservant, slave, views him in relationship to his master.

"As to synonymous terms, leitourgos denotes one who performs public duties; misthios and misthotos, a hired servant; oiketes, a household servant; huperetes, a subordinate
official waiting on his superior ... therapon, one whose service is that of freedom and dignity."

It is this last word, therapon, that God uses to describe Moses in Hebrews 3:5: his service was "that of freedom and dignity."

We have rendered therapon "ministering-servant." (See Nu 12:7, 8.)

But notice that concerning Moses, the preposition is "in"; not "over"--as we read concerning Christ. Moreover, Moses was in God's house as a ministering-servant, not as a son. (You cannot perhaps better see the spirit in which Moses wrought than in the last chapter of Exodus. He had built the tabernacle, according to the pattern shown him in the mount. And then follow the words, "Thou shalt," twenty times in the first fifteen verses, and then: "Thus did Moses: according to all that Jehovah commanded him, so did he" (Ex. 40:16). "As Jehovah commanded Moses" is written eight times in this chapter, 22 times in the account of the work Ex 35-40!)

We must pause and trace more fully the subject of "God's house" in Scripture. What this expression means will be perhaps best seen in God's command to Moses in the wilderness: "Speak unto the children of Israel ... and let them make Me a sanctuary, that I may dwell among them." Never had God dwelt among men before. He had visited, even walked with and talked with such men as Enoch, Noah, and Abraham; but there had been never a hint of God's coming to live among them! We become familiar with marvelous heavenly truth, yet many never really consider deeply the meaning thereof. Did not God have Heaven and the Heaven of heavens? Did He not say through Isaiah, "I dwell in the high and holy place"? That God should desire to dwell with men, we do not fully consider, perhaps do not really believe.

God dwelt first in the midst of Israel in the wilderness, in the tabernacle; second, afterwards, in the temple of Solomon, until the idolatry and sin of that nation drove Him away (Ezek. 8:24). Third after the seventy years captivity, the glory having departed, and the ark having been lost at the burning of the temple by Nebuchadnezzar, He dwelt in the similar, restored temple, where, although the glory did not return, and there was no ark, yet God said, "Build the house; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified ... For I am with you, saith Jehovah of hosts" (Hag. 1:8; 2:4. See also Mal. 3:10.) Fourth, however obscure God's manifestation there, yet the temple in the days of the Maccabees (second century before Christ) is called "the sanctuary" (Dan. 11:31). Fifth, after many years again of man's unfaithfulness, even to their allowing Herod the Edomite to enlarge the temple, so that the carnal Jews boasted, "Forty and six years was this temple in building," Christ came to it, and in astonishing grace, still called it, "My Father's house"! This at the beginning of His ministry! While at the end of His ministry, at the second cleansing of the temple, again driving out the profiteers, He still said, "Is it not written, My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations?"

The week of His crucifixion, He announced to the apostate nation, "Behold, your house is left unto you desolate"! (Mt 23:38). And Matthew 24 begins, "And Jesus went out from the temple." All this was two days before the Passover.

Thus ended for the time the dwelling of God with national Israel.

Sixth, the real "temple" where God dwelt when Christ was here, was the temple of Christ's body--His own Person (John 2:21). "He spake of the temple of His body." And John 14:10: "The Father abiding in Me doeth His works." The deluded, priest ridden nation crucified Him, and lo, on the day of Pentecost, came the Holy Ghost to the upper room, to dwell within the believers in that distinct-from-Israel form of the "House of God," the Assembly of the Living God--the Church! Note that our Lord had looked forward to this in Matthew 16:18, prophesying that He would build it. And He had prophesied that the Comforter would "come unto you ... abide with you ... shall be in you." In the book of Acts from Pentecost on, and in the epistles, this blessed abiding Presence is before us. And today as then, the Assembly of God, administered by the double-indwelling of the Holy Ghost in the individual believer and in the Assembly, is "the house of God."

Again, at the prophetic end of the Church's history in Laodicea, our Lord, on the outside, says "Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if any man hear My voice and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me." Then comes the judgment of the Apocalypse, (the Church having been raptured at the end of Revelation 3). And finally comes the Last Judgment, and the New Creation--with what announcement?

"Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He shall dwell with them, and they shall be His people (note plural, R.V.) and God Himself shall be with them, and be their God" (Rev 21:3).

There is no accounting for God's desiring to dwell with men, except His love!

For a testimony of those things which were afterward to be spoken. What "things" are these? We know that Moses was himself a type of Christ (Deut. 18:15, 18). We also know that the things that happened to Israel "happened unto them by way of example; and were written for our admonition" (1 Cor. 10:11)! But we must see that the "things spoken" which the Mosaic economy witnessed to in its offerings, feasts, and prophetic features, looked forward not only to the time of Christ, but further on, to the time of Christ's second coming, Israel's redemption, "the good things to come."

Heb 3:6: But Christ as a son, over His house; Whose house are we, if we hold fast our boldness and the glorying of our hope firm unto the end.

This "house," as we have seen, is constantly called in Scripture "the house of God," but over this house of God is Christ, viewed not

only as the Head of the Body, the Church, but also as Himself actively building.

If we hold fast--The aversion which many have to Hebrews arises from the "ifs"--that is, from the warnings. And many say, "These warnings are not for us, because this epistle was written to the Hebrews, not to us Gentiles; they were 'under Law'; we are not."

But Hebrews 3 and 4 do not touch the question of being under the Law, but the question of personal attitude toward God and His Word! (The word "law" does not occur in Hebrews 3, 4: but the words "His Voice," (Heb 3:15); "a promise," (Heb 4:1); "the word of God," (Heb 4:12); "the Holy Spirit saith," (Heb 3:7); are found.)

Our boldness and the glorying of our hope--That hope which belongs to our salvation in Christ was to be held fast ... firm unto the end, by these Hebrew believers. The danger was that of turning back to that Judaism, that religion, which their friends, relatives, and prominent Hebrew ecclesiastics held, and which, originally given of God, was now superseded by the Son of God—a Priest not even of Aaron's "order," and not of, or on earth!

*"**Boldness**" (parrhesia = lit., all-spokenness--a spirit of utter, confident openness), is taken from two Greek words pan, meaning all; and hrema, meaning speech. We have a similar meaning in our term, "speak out." The Apostle John uses it over and over: "If our heart condemn us not, we have boldness (same Gr. word) toward God." "Herein is love made perfect, that we may have boldness in the day of judgment; because as He is, so are we in this world." "This is the boldness which we have toward Him, that, if we ask anything according to His will, He heareth us." "Abide in Him, that, if He shall be manifested, we may have boldness and not be ashamed before Him at his coming" (1 John 2:28; 3:21; 4:17; 5:14). The verb is also illustrated in Eph. 6:20; 1 Thess. 2:2; Acts 13:46; 14:3, 18:26 and other places. It means to speak out all the heart, without fear or reserve.

If Hebrew believers, who had had a God-given religion, were not to glory, except in a heavenly hope, and "go forth unto Jesus without the camp" (of human religion), how much more Gentiles, to whom God had never given either the ten commandments or any "religion" whatever!*

The exact truth of such a passage as Psalm 147:19-20 must be received and home in mind. Let us read it:

"He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them. Praise ye Jehovah."

Not to the Egyptians, the mightiest nation of that day, did God reveal Himself. He testified, by Moses; and upon Egypt's proud rebellion He sent plagues and brought His people out.

Not to Babylon, the great royal empire: He testified to Nebuchadnezzar and to Belshazzar, but did not reveal Himself nor His ordinances.

Not to Persia, which replaced Babylon: Cyrus and Darius acknowledged Jehovah's direction, but they did not have the ordinances.

Not to Greece, brilliant-minded, courageous: God did not make known Himself or His ordinances to Greece.

Nor to all-conquering Rome: they were as ignorant of God as the others. Pilate crucified Christ, and Nero martyred Paul and Peter:--which was but the beginning, as read church history.

Psalm 147 also reads in Ps 147:12, 13, "Praise Jehovah, O Jerusalem; Praise thy God, O Zion. For He hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; He hath blessed thy children within thee."

Then note again the verses with which we begin. Paul indeed writes concerning Israel in Romans 9:4, 5:

"Whose is the adoption, and the glory, and the covenants, and the giving of the Law and the religious-service of God, and the promises; whose are the fathers, and of whom is Christ as concerning the flesh, Who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen."

It is good that the apostle immediately explained, "They are not all Israel, that are of Israel: ... That is, it is not the children of the flesh that are children of God; but the children of the promise are reckoned for a seed" (Ro 9:6, 8).

And why? We know why. Not only did this nation Israel rebel against Jehovah's Law and ordinances but they rejected and horribly slew their Messiah; and their house is left to them "desolate."

Nevertheless, here is this great epistle, directed--to whom? To Hebrews. No, not to Judah nor Israel, nor to the nation as such. But the title is, to Hebrews; and in Hebrews 3:1 we see what Hebrews; those who in Divine sovereignty had been enlightened as to Christ, and had confessed His name in salvation.

Alas, how few Gentile "professing Christians" do we know who really constitute God's House, glorying only in Christ, worshiping only by the Spirit!--the true "circumcision", whose citizenship is in Heaven; whence also they wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ": who "have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3, 20), or in earthly things, whether creeds, "standards," denominational "programs," "church work," or great buildings! These things become a deadly snare, so that many no longer hold fast their "boldness" toward God, or the "glorying of their hope" in a heavenly Christ--and especially in His speedy coming! (See 1 Thess. 4:13-18.)

Remember that in the last chapter of The Revelation, our Lord three times repeated,

"Behold I come quickly!" Meanwhile, Paul says, "Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died and your life is hid with Christ in God. When Christ, (Who is) our life, shall be manifested, then shall ye also be manifested with Him in glory" (Col. 3:2, 3). How closely these Scriptures connect themselves with the exhortations in Hebrews!

There are those who have true faith, represented by the good ground in the parable of the Sower: "These are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the Word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience." But our Lord in the same Parable

said concerning the rocky ground hearers, "These have no root, who for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away." These warnings of Hebrews are not given to create uncertainty, but to avoid presumption and carelessness. At the Last Supper, when He had announced that one of them would betray Him, each of the true disciples said, "Is it I, Lord?" Note that it was our Lord Himself Who had caused this question. So here in Hebrews.

Notice that the Israelites had not what is here called "boldness toward God." This was the very opposite of that which they knew under Law, with the veil unrent. Only the priests of the tribe of Levi were permitted to come even past the first veil; and the high priest alone, once a year only, came past the second, into God's immediate presence. Behaving was the consciousness toward God under Law; believing-freedom, unreserve, "boldness," came only through Christ's work. Now the believer comes into the presence of God, gladly resting in Christ's blood, with which (blood) Christ "entered into the holy place—into Heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us." There was nothing for sinners to hide but sin; and sin had been put away by the blood of Christ; which was now trusted in! Satan's continual effort is to obscure the work of Christ, and bring sins to remembrance; and thus "put (us) in fear by ...terror," as Peter says (1 Pet. 3:6).

Under the Old Covenant no one had nor could have, the consciousness that his sin was forever and entirely put away. But God has provided us a "better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God"! Indeed, the exhortation to "hold fast our boldness and the glorying in our hope," of Heb 3:6, runs right through the book of Hebrews: "Having then a Great High Priest, who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession" (Heb 4:14). "Be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb 6:12). "Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holy place by the blood of Jesus" (Heb 10:19), and then the great exhortation (Heb 10:23): "Let us hold fast the confession of our hope that it waver not; for He is faithful that promised."

In Heb 3:6 (and also Heb 3:14), we find expressed by God a definite condition of blessing--nay, of salvation itself: which we must study with great care.

It will not do to wave away, with the ultra-Calvinist, honest considerations of these "if" conditions upon the ground that they are inconsistent with God's sovereign election. Reader, God is not here speaking of His sovereign election. And it is sheer evasion not to receive the truth as here spoken because "God has His elect to whom conditions do not apply." That is God's business, and He will speak of it when He pleases. He does not please to speak of election in the verses we are considering.

Nor will it do, with the Arminians, to base God's operations upon the actions and choices of the human will--and to ignore His Sovereignty.

It is our duty to find, if we are able, what God says here, and the exact meaning thereof.

Heb 3:7 Wherefore, even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear His voice,
8 Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, Like as in the day of the trial in the wilderness,
9 Where your fathers tried Me by proving Me And saw My works forty years.
10 Wherefore I was displeased with this generation, And said, they do always err in their heart: But they did not know my ways;
11 As I sware in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest.

Heb 3:7: Even as the Holy Spirit saith, Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts-

TODAY! Mark its repetition five times over: Heb 3:7, 13, 15; and twice in Heb 4:7. Speak it over, and then write it: Today! Today! Today! Today! Today! and let the conscience and heart feel its full effect. How infinitely solemn it is! As Paul says to the Corinthians: "We entreat also that ye receive not the grace of God in vain (for He saith, At an acceptable time I hearkened unto thee, And in a day of salvation did I succor thee: Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of Salvation)" (2 Cor. 6:1-2).

It is the Holy Spirit that saith "**Today**." Our Lord wept over Jerusalem, saying, "O that thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace! but now are they hid from thine eyes ... because thou knewest not the time of thy visitation!" (Lk. 19:42, 44). Note that present tense, "Saith." These third and fourth chapters of Hebrews are no mere historical narration, but an exhortation to those who in Heb 3:1 are said to be "partakers of a heavenly calling"--partakers of the presence of and speaking by the Holy Spirit in the Word!

We may note seven mentions of the Holy Spirit in Hebrews:

(1) "Gifts (distributions) of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 2:4);

(2) "As the Holy Spirit saith" (Heb 3:7);

(3) "Made partakers of the Holy Spirit" (Heb 6:4);

(4) "The Holy Spirit this signifying" (Heb 9:8);

(5) "Through the eternal Spirit offered Himself" (Heb 9:14);

(6) "The Holy Spirit also beareth witness" (Heb 10:15); (7) "Done despite unto the Spirit of grace" (Heb 10:29).

The careful believer will notice that those operations of the Holy Spirit which are involved in our conviction of sin, new birth, sealing and witness to sonship, His guidance; and "the sanctification of the Spirit" (2Thess. 2:13) and "renewing" (Tit. 3:5) are not once referred to in the seven passages quoted above! Speaking with the utmost reverence, we must say, "God ... hath spoken to us in a Son," in Hebrews. There are in the New Testament accurate and intimate accounts of the Spirit's coming and operations, as Ro 8, Gal. 4:4-6, 1 Cor. 12-14, John 14-16; but not so in Hebrews, though He is present, jealously present, for it is His unwearied desire to "take the things of Christ and show them unto us."

But even sanctification, in Hebrews, is not seen as the work of the Spirit, but as that separation unto God effected by the death of Christ. (For example, Heb 10:10; 10:14; 13:12.) Heb 12:14 is seen not to be an exception--in view of Hebrews 10:29, where sanctification to God, though "tasted," entered upon, was finally refused rather than "followed after."

Now, as we have said, these Hebrews had had a past history with God. Therefore both they and we must learn, as God applies the lesson of that history, what the Holy Spirit is now saying.

Heb 3:8: The words the Holy Spirit here quotes, Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation--were spoken nearly a thousand years before Hebrews was written, to David (Ps. 95:7, ff). But God makes them live, not in Hebrew believers' ears only, but in our hearts, your heart and mine, if we are true believers, and wise. Does anyone deny the possibility of a Gentile's hardening his heart and closing his ears? Then, let every one pay attention to what the Holy Spirit here SAITH, Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts. Daily, hourly, to all His saints God speaks, by His Spirit.

"This word 'Today' is the expression of the patient activity of God's grace toward Israel even unto the end. The people were unbelieving; they have hardened their hearts; they have done so, and will, alas! do so to the end, until judgment come in the Person of the Messiah-Jehovah, Whom they have despised. But until then God loves to reiterate. 'Today if ye will hear My voice.' It may be that only a few will hearken; it may be that the nation is judicially hardened, in order to admit the Gentiles; but the word 'Today' still resounds for every one among them who had ears to hear, until the Lord shall appear in judgment ... For the Remnant who had believed, it was an especial warning not to walk in the ways of the hardened people who had refused to hearken--not to turn back to them, as Israel did in the wilderness.

"As long as the 'Today' of the call of grace should continue. they were to exhort one another, lest unbelief should glide into their hearts through the subtlety of sin."--J.N. Darby, Synopsis, pp. 261-2.

Heb 3:9 : Where your fathers tried Me by proving Me—At Massah and Meribah, "The people murmured against Moses, and said, Wherefore hast Thou brought us up out of Egypt, to kill us and our children and our cattle with thirst? ... And he called the name of the place Massah (margin, that is, Tempting, or Proving), and Meribah (that is, Chiding, or Strife), because of the striving of the children of Israel, and because they tempted Jehovah, saying, Is Jehovah among us, or not?" (Ex. 17:3, 7). Yet God had brought them out from Pharaoh's bondage, through the Red Sea, and was giving them manna from Heaven daily for their needs! To "try" God by "proving" Him is to say, deep in the heart, "I am going to do such and such things, which He has forbidden and threatened against, and see whether anything will overtake me!" Thus a lad might say, "Father has forbidden the very thing I want to do, and says he will whip me if I disobey. But I do not believe he will punish me: I'll do what he forbade, and see if he will." So he disobeys, and such disobedience is "trying by proving."

And saw My works forty years: In Moses's great discourse in Deuteronomy, we read, "It is eleven days' journey from Horeb by the way of Mount Seir unto Kadesh-Barnea." But we read "And it came to pass in the fortieth year, in the eleventh month, on the first day of the month, that Moses spake unto the children of Israel, according unto all that Jehovah had given him in commandment unto them." Forty years to make an eleven days' journey! Why? The awful, presumptuous wickedness is described in our verse in Hebrews 3: Your fathers tried Me by proving Me. God had commanded Israel to go into the land of Canaan. Forgetting all His goodness and the displays of the resistless might of His power, they listened at Kadesh-Barnea to the cowardly report of the unfaithful spies, with the marvelous fruit of Canaan before their eyes at the time. Read Numbers 13 and 14--astonishing! (Note Heb 3:8-12 (1) The state of heart Israel was in. (2) God's gracious voice, which if heard, would bring blessing. (3) Their attitude: hardening their hearts, by "proving" God wilfully, and thus "trying" Him. (The word "try" or "tempt," of their presumption toward God, is the same word used concerning Satan's tempting man to do evil). (4) The arousing of God's settled wrath, causing His oath to exclude them from that "rest" into which He would have led them. (5) The possibility of a like "evil heart of unbelief" today. (6) The sign of it, falling away from a Living God, whether to a life of sin, or to a life of "religion" which walks in forms, merely, shutting out God's fellowship.)

Paul, Peter, and Jude all warn us against the sin of testing God's judgments: (1 Cor. 10:5, 10; 2 Pet. 2:4, 7; Jude 5, 7). Hear Jude's solemn words: "Now I desire to put you in remembrance, though ye know all things once for all, that the Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." Our Lord said, "Remember Lot's wife." Meditate on some of the terrible words used in the texts above, of God's judgments on the Israelites who believed not: "overthrown," "destroyed," "bodies (Gr., limbs) strewn down along [Vincent's translation] in the wilderness."

This generation does not believe in a God of judgment! And the lack of assurance of eternal salvation in Christendom today springs naturally from lack of preaching the truth about Divine judgment at the Cross! But we beg of you to remember that it is written of God that He "spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all." Behold Christ, the sinless One--forsaken, spared not, when our iniquities were laid on Him! There we see what sin deserves and must surely have, at the hands of a holy God!

Heb 3:10, 11: Wherefore I was displeased with this generation, And said, they do always err in their heart: But they did not know My ways; So I sware in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest.

Heb 3:8, 9, 10, 11 speak directly to these Hebrew believers it is the story of the trial of God by their fathers, and their displeasing Him and erring in their heart, ignorant of His ways: with the result that He sware they should not enter into His rest. What that means, we shall consider. But remember here the reasons God gives. People, alas, accustomed from old days to hand over searching passages "to the Jews," say, "That does not apply to us." Dear friend, "As face answers to face in water, so the heart of man to man." Profit by God's loving warning to these Hebrew believers! Ah, the possibilities of sin and rebellion in any human heart! Men say, "I have my personal opinion." "He that trusteth in his own heart is a fool," God says.

God pays no attention to what you have in your head of so-called "education." His eyes are upon the heart. Our Lord removed its cover: and lo, we read: "From within, out of the heart of men, evil thoughts proceed, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, railing, covetings, pride, foolishness: all these evil things proceed from within, and defile the man" (Mk. 7:21-23).

And the Holy Spirit said through the prophet of old, "The heart is deceitful above all things, and it is exceedingly corrupt: who can know it? I, Jehovah, search the mind, I try the heart" (Jer. 17:9, 10). Note that God speaks here of all human hearts--not those of Jews only. Remember 1 Corinthians 10:5, 6, 12, written to Gentile believers: "With most of them (Israel in the wilderness, as here in Hebrews) God was not well pleased: for they were overthrown in the wilderness. Now in these things they became figures (or types, R.V., margin), of us to the intent we should not lust after evil things, as they ... Wherefore let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall."

All this said to Gentile believers!--1 Corinthians 10:6. To return to verses 10-11, God said of the Israelites, They do always err in their heart: But they did not know My ways; As I sware in My wrath, they shall not enter into My rest. They erred in their hearts, not their heads. You remember Psalm 103: "He made known His ways unto Moses, His doings unto the children of Israel." Why did He make known His ways to Moses? Hearken to Moses' prayer (Ex. 33:13), pleading alone with God at Sinai after the calf-worship: "Now therefore, I pray Thee, if I have found favor in Thy sight, show me Thy ways, that I may know Thee"! (See also Ps. 25:4; 86:11; and Hos. 14:9.) Consequently, God made known His ways unto Moses. But unto the children of Israel* He made known only "His doings." Now it is of our personal friends that we say, "I know his or her ways." A person's "ways" arise from and express his personality. It is one's delight to be acquainted with the "ways" of our friends, of those we love; to understand their feelings toward us, and to be able in general to predict what their opinions, actions, or reactions, will be. But how many among Israel cried to God when Moses did, to know HIS "ways"--to be acquainted with HIM?

Israel had been in the midst of Egypt--a most idolatrous people. And they had never given up the idols of Mesopotamia. Remember Stephen's terrible charge: "But God turned and gave them up to serve the host of heaven; as it is written in the book of the prophets, Did Ye offer unto Me slain beasts and sacrifices Forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? And ye took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of the god Rephan, The figures which ye made to worship them: And I will carry you away beyond Babylon" (Acts 7:42, 43).

In view of the fearful idolatry of both Israel and Judah in the past (2 Chron. 33, 2 Ki. 17:9-18), we tremble to read (Matt. 12:43-45) that seven demons of idolatry worse than the former will come into them when they (except the Remnant) shall worship the Antichrist, knowing and triumphing in the fact that he is from a lost world (Isa. 28:14, 15). And the ... prince that shall come (the Antichrist) ... shall make a firm covenant with the many for one week" (heptad, seven, i.e., 7 Years--Dan. 9:26, 27). Jehovah had come on Sinai and delivered to Israel a religious system; and after they had completed the tabernacle He asked them to make, He Himself abode in the Holy of Holies--screened, indeed, from their curious sight by the veil. His presence, nevertheless, was there. The vast multitude of Israelites were content to have the Levitical system: but did they ever inquire concerning the Person Who dwelt among them? They became accustomed to calling themselves (as they do today), "The Chosen People." But become personally an hungered for His fellowship--they did not.

Most professing Christians today are quite content to belong to some association of Christians, and be known by its name, and to hold a credal form which relates the doings of God and Christ. But do they know His ways? Do they desire a personal relationship and walk with their God? Are they eager to know the ways of the blessed Spirit Whom God has sent to take charge of things till our Lord's return? Judge if a godly preacher, filled with the Spirit and urging to a life of devotion to God, comes among you: how large a hearing will he have? Judge honestly, and do not forget! Let none of Baal's lying prophets tell you that "things are going well," when, God having revealed Himself as Love and in the sacrifice of His dear Son, professing Christians are content to remain ignorant of His ways!

You ask, "What do you mean by knowing God's ways?" Well, listen to His friend Abraham, pleading for Lot in Sodom: "That be far from Thee, to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked, that so the righteous should be as the wicked."

Or Moses, on Sinai, when God said, "Let Me alone ... that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation." And Moses' answer: "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, saying, For evil did He bring them forth?" And at Paran: Jehovah said unto Moses, "I will smite them with the Pestilence, and disinherit them, and will make of thee a nation greater and mightier than they. And Moses said unto Jehovah, Then the Egyptians will hear it ... and they will tell it to the inhabitants of this land ... The nations which have heard the fame of Thee will speak, saying ... Jehovah was not able to bring this people into the land which He sware unto them." How often was it recorded of God, "I have pardoned according to thy word"--Moses' word! Elijah and Elisha also walked in such fellowship with God that they would say, and expect God to do! So was Joseph in Egypt, Joshua at Gibeon, Samuel the prophet--indeed all the prophets--and David.

Jonah desired Nineveh, Israel's, rising enemy, to be destroyed. You know his story. When God repented of the judgment of that city and did it not, Jonah cried, "I pray Thee, O Jehovah, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I hasted to flee unto Tarshish; for I knew that Thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and repentest Thee of the evil." Jonah knew God's ways so well that he feared to preach in Nineveh lest it repent: for Israel feared Assyria, and its capital, Nineveh.

The wicked say to God, "We desire not the knowledge of Thy ways" (job 21:14). The angel said to Daniel, "The people that know their God shall be strong, and do exploits." Since not knowing God's ways is shown as the vital lack in Israel of old, and assured their failing to enter God's rest, let us ask, How shall we know the ways of God? Mark it well: do as Moses did. Ask, and seek to have His ways shown to you. Or, with David, plead Psalm 27:11, and the like. We must know our God and His ways. Otherwise, we shall be mere "professing" Christians.

Heb 3:12 Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the Living God:

13 but exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin:

14 for we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end: 15 while it is said, Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

Heb 3:12: Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away from the living God:

It is "the Living God" by whom these Hebrew believers were warned that "falling away" from Him was a danger. This must be noted and remembered.

1. It was the Living God, the Father, who gave His Son. It was the Living God, the Son, who bore our sins, and returned to the Father's right hand. It was the Living God, the Holy Spirit, who came at Pentecost and is here now, to indwell every believer, to be the conscious Leader and Power in every spiritual activity! "It seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to us" (Acts 1:28) were the words of the apostles in those days when they were dealing with God, conscious of His presence and power!

2. Note, these Hebrews were not warned of any danger of falling away from "religion." just so, today, people are "Methodists," "Baptists," "Presbyterians," and so regard themselves. They never think of "falling away" from a religious Profession any more than the Roman Catholics. But as to the Living God--having to do with Him daily, hourly, yea, moment by moment--they may have never thought of that, either!

3. Now think of a God who knows our every thought, and who has loved us all along the way--who gave His Son in His love for us, Who finds those who professed His name and confessed His Son, so indifferent to His constant overtures of love, as to fall away from the Living God! Note this does not say, or mean, fall into sin, merely: but to fall away from a Person, "the Living God!" Have you ever had any one whom you valued and loved fall into utter neglect of you? Nothing wounds so deeply.

4. Note that it is an EVIL heart of unbelief, that falls away from the Living God. As we have noted in Mark 9:24, the man desiring the Lord's blessing cried, "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" We may have much consciousness of, and struggle with, unbelief, but could our hearts be described as evil hearts of unbelief--that is, hearts willfully inclined to a state of unbelief and rejection of the fellowship of the "Living God"?

5. Now this awful state was national Israel's. They heard God's voice, but they hardened their heart against hearing, knowing, and obeying, this "living" and loving God!

6. For this reason, we believe God does not set forth in the book of Hebrews, the doctrines of Christianity (for this had already been done by Paul and the other apostles, both by preaching and epistles), but it is God's person and His Way that are in question here. People are afraid of the ifs of Hebrews--foolishly thinking that it is the conduct of professing Christians that endangers them. No! It is their attitude toward "The Living God"!

7. Over against that "hardening through deceitfulness of sin" of Hebrews 3:13 is set forth in Hebrews, the blessed person of a Great High Priest, in Heaven, perfected down here through sufferings, filled with every knowledge of our need of unmeasured sympathy and eternal constancy; infinitely ready to see us through all difficulties, trials and temptations. Ah, if we could all learn to

keep considering Him! God wants us in Heaven. He is not willing that any should perish. Thus viewed as the great and constant picture of God's tender love, Christ in His high-priestly ministry in Heaven, based on His all-atoning work
on Calvary, draws the heart toward God and away from the hardness that a "religion," a sense of "duty," may beget.

8. For it must be constantly remembered that the Hebrews had a God-given religion, that they had a religious history of which they were proud, and in which they were confident. Now to bring "the Living God" into an already "religious" though ceremonial scene--how shall we describe it? Ah, we do not need to describe it! For the history of this exact thing is written in the four Gospels. "The Father, abiding in Me is doing His works." "I and the Father are one." "He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father."

"The Word was God." And what did man's "religion" do? Behold the marks in Christ's hands and feet and side! Therefore, hardening, in the sense the book of Hebrews uses it, is against God, "The Living God"--His presence, His holiness, His control of sinful man's will.

The hardening was against a Person--even "The Living God." No one is a compelled victim to such hardening!

This is no earnest heart-struggle with unbelief, such as the father of the demoniac boy had (Mk. 9:24): "Straightway the father of the child cried out, and said, "I believe; help Thou mine unbelief!" He bowed to the Lord's word, and put as it were his believing foot forward, though tremblingly! His was not an evil heart of unbelief. That spoken of in Hebrews 3:12 is a heart that abides in unbelief because it desires to retain its evil! "And this is the judgment, that the light is come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the light; for their works were evil" (John 3:19).

And what is the result? Falling away from the Living God. Little by little, day by day, from God, Whose presence and power had been known, they "fall away." Satan once "walked up and down in the midst of the stones of fire" of God's presence (Ezek 28:14), but chose sin, and fell "as lightning from Heaven" (Lk 10:18). Slowly, but not less surely, do these fall! Our Lord describes them in Luke 8:13: "Those on the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away." How awful!

That generation of Israelites spoken of in Hebrews 3:12 "tried God by proving him," and their carcasses fell in the wilderness "forty years." They did not desire to deal with the LIVING GOD. Forms and ceremonies they might endure, though never enjoy. The gods (demons) they had served in Egypt were represented by inanimate idols: "Neither is there any breath in their mouths." (Probably it is given, that is, allowed of God, to the terrible trinity of evil at the close of this age (Satan, Antichrist, and his false prophet) to give breath to the image of Rev. 13:15, as a final, inescapable, "strong delusion" (2Thess.2:11), that the unbelieving world in that day may believe the devil's lie (John 5:43).)

All through Scripture, from Deuteronomy to The Revelation (28 times, seven, multiplied by the earth number, four), is found this blessed but awful name THE LIVING GOD. Perhaps the thing above all others that makes the book of Hebrews so solemn is that in it we are dealing with a Living God. It is no matter here of "creed" or "church connection," but of reality. Four times in this great epistle these words, the Living God, are used concerning Him: twice in connection with those finally lost (Heb 3:12; 10:31), twice in connection with the saints (Heb 9:14; 12:22), as we shall see.

The fearful thing is that, with a soul falling away from the living God, there is the certainty of a future meeting with a disobeyed--yea, despised God, "the judge of all"! A human bit of dust with no help, with no Intercessor, and a nature eternally alienated from all that God is! If you say that you believe in "eternal security," thank God if you have it! But you have solemn need of all the warnings God is giving in Hebrews. Remember the words, "Elect ... according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you and peace be multiplied" (1 Pet. 1:1, 2).

Heb 3:13: But exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called Today; lest anyone of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin:

Here is set before us a Christian service quite uncommon--unless in times of real revival. (Jonathan Edwards described the great revival at Northampton as follows: "There were remarkable tokens of God's presence in almost every house ... Our public assemblies were then beautiful. The congregation was alive in God's service--every one earnestly intent upon the public worship; every hearer eager to drink in the words of the minister as they came from his mouth ... The assembly in general were from time to time in tears, while the Word was preached; some weeping in sorrow and distress, others with joy and love, others with pity and concern for neighbors ...We have kept from year to year days of public confessing and prayer to God, to acknowledge our backsliding and humble ourselves for our sins, and to seek of God forgiveness and reformation.")

The duty of exhorting one another is, alas, neglected by most of us. We judge, and criticize others, but do not faithfully exhort and rebuke. Some professing Christians never mention to others the things of the Lord, though eternity lies right ahead! Instead, we should have our fellow Christians upon our hearts constantly, in solicitous love, so that we would have tender boldness to "exhort" them if we saw them going astray or tempted to turn aside. Instead of criticizing one another, we should care for one another: "Brethren, even if a man be overtaken in any trespass, ye who are spiritual, restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness; looking to thyself, lest thou also be tempted" (Gal. 6:1). Read also Leviticus 19:17 in the Revised Version "Thou shalt surely rebuke thy neighbor, and not bear sin because of him." This shows that failure directly to exhort a brother is a guilt-bringing neglect on our part.

We know from Heb 13:22 that Hebrews is an epistle, and the whole epistle is an "exhortation." But the writer could not himself be present day by day with each of them, so that this most solemn duty of caring for one another is laid upon each and every one of them. Believers are of course supposed to be assembling as believers: Heb 10:25: "Not forsaking our own assembling together." But in both that verse and the one preceding, there is the exhortation to "consider one another," and "keep exhorting one another." Assemblies of believers find their patterns, for example, in the assemblies at Jerusalem (Acts 2:42, 46, 47), and at Troas (Acts 20:7), and at Ephesus (Acts 20:17,25). Gatherings indeed of joy they were-but of holy fear, for God the Holy Spirit was there, and Christ Himself was constantly recognized--the Center of all. Therefore this solemn, blessed duty and privilege of exhorting one another was laid upon them all. They were to care for each other, as the members of one body as, for example, one hand cares for the other (1Cor. 12:12, 13, 27).

Alas, it is often the consciousness of our own weakness and failures that makes us fail to exhort others. We say, Did not Jesus warn us against casting out motes from others' eyes while having a beam in our own? Certainly. But He went further: He said, "Cast out first the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye" (Matt. 7:5). The duty toward the brother remains!

Lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin--Three great questions are before us here: (1) What is sin? (2) How does sin deceive? (3) How does the deceitfulness of sin harden?

Concerning sin, note these things:

Sin brings guilt, sin defiles, sin enslaves.

Sin's guilt: God created us and sustains our being. He is the absolute sovereign of this creation. Independency is not only the act of a traitor, but God being a holy God, it is the choice of evil--a choice of all that God's holiness infinitely abhors, and His government forbids. Therefore the least sin brings guilt on the sinner, on account which God Must settle according to Himself and the infinite demands of His own throne. Even conceive the act or thought of lawlessness to be a single act, and not to become a habit (which is impossible)--the guilt, the liability to Divine punishment would be the same: just as one proven treachery to his country in time of war by a traitor, condemns him to judgment.

Sin defiles. While guilt is the result of lawlessness toward God's throne, and courts judgment, defilement is that state abhorrent to God's holy nature, into which sin brings the creature: "Thou art of purer eyes than to behold evil" (Hab 1:13). To one first studying carefully God's use in His Word of the terms "clean" and "unclean," and the teachings on impurity, defilement, and the necessity for cleansing, there comes astonishment! Leprosy was Jehovah's type of sin's defilement. Lepers had to be cleansed, not cured. This offended men (2 Ki 5:11) who dreamed of "recovering" the leper instead of cleansing. But cleansing from sin's defilement is just as impossible to the sinner as pardoning his own sin's guilt!

Sin enslaves, as we have said before. Man dreams of delivering himself from sin's slavery by an act of his will. But Jesus said, "If the Son shall make you free, ye shall be free indeed" (John 8:36). Reflect, then, reader, on the three-fold fact that man can neither pardon, cleanse, nor deliver himself. For you are surrounded by a world deceived by Satan, its prince, into believing man can do all three--by good works! Damning delusion!

1. What is sin?

(a) "Sin is lawlessness" (anomia). This is a state of refusal to be controlled by God. The Authorized Version here (1 John 3:4), "Sin is transgression of the Law," is inadequate and misleading. The Greek word anomia means lawlessness. Transgression of the Law would be parabasis nomou, an action, but **anomia**, lawlessness, is a state. Again, the translation is misleading, because it puts all the race under the Ten Commandments, which were given to Israel only (Ps. 147:19, 20; Mal. 4:4; Rom. 9:4): and for life on earth. "Do not commit adultery, steal, kill ... covet" do not pertain to life in heaven! The translation is inadequate--utterly so! For when God said, "Sin is anomia--lawlessness," He spake of the creature's inner refusal to Divine control. Sin is that departure from the Creator which follows a will of its own. So it was with Satan (Ezek. 28). The end of such a course is seen in Isaiah 14:12 ff., in the Antichrist's (figured by the king of Babylon) saying, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14).

* The Ten Commandments, "holy, just and good," were fitted to the life of an earthly nation. Paul could get on with them till he came to the tenth--"Thou shalt not covet" (lit., desire). This slew him; or rather, indwelling sin, obtaining this means, "beguiled" him. "Through the commandment," as he says, "sin became exceedingly sinful." This was God's object: "The Law was given that the trespass might abound." Mr. Darby well says:

"Sin is equivalent to the spirit of self-will and unrestrainedness, whether man's will or not. When there was Law, its acts were actual transgressions; but without this, sin was there, though there were no such actual transgressions till Law entered ... There can be no transgressions when there is no law. What is there to transgress? But self-will and lust, lawlessness, there may be. It is the state of fallen man: only the Law made it 'exceedingly sinful.'"

When Adam willed to eat the fruit, he departed from God into what is called sin.

Scripture says:

(b) "Whatsoever is not of faith is sin."

(c) "The thought of foolishness is sin."

(d) "All unrighteousness is sin."

Sin is an entity, a power! It is a thing, having energy!

2. How does sin "deceive"? Sin deceives in many ways. It has every advantage. (a) It has "pleasures." It invites with charms, false glamor. (b) Sin is a great promiser--of all earthly successes. It blinds the eyes, stifles the conscience, hardens the heart, and says all shall be well. Its prophets keep promising sinners liberty--"promising them liberty, while they themselves are bondservants of corruption" (2 Peter 2:19—a solemn chapter, which please read). Most of the People you meet are hardened and blinded by some form of sin--terrible thought! (c) The creature is most forgetful of unpleasant warnings. (d) The creature has self-confidence--unlimited! "I can quit" (some habit) is in his heart, and how often in his mouth! But our Lord warned, "Everyone that committeth sin is the bondservant of sin" (John 8:34).

3. How does the deceitfulness of sin harden?

(a) Because of delayed judgment. "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil" (Eccl. 8:11). God's long suffering is therefore despised. Thousands around about the sinner keep sinning and are not immediately stricken: thus comes false peace!

(b) Sin deceives by appearing harmless, promising good or enjoyment; by the fact that its victims think, "Others are doing it"; by taking advantage of ignorance of the Word of God: so that the victim listens to the voice of false teachers, who say, "You are all right if you are sincere!" Millions are thus being sincerely lost, like those who sailed sincerely on the Lusitania, and sailed to their death. Sin looks so fair--before it is committed! And after one has committed it, it so deceives and hardens that at the worst, like Adam and Eve, we try to shield ourselves from the consequences of our nakedness till GOD comes upon the scene.

(c) Conscience unheeded is Slowly stupefied--finally "seared as with a hot iron." Unless God sends immediate poignant conviction, it is more easyto sin the second time than the first. At last comes the fearful state described to Moses by Jehovah:

"Lest there should be among you man, or woman, or family, or tribe, whose heart turneth away this day from Jehovah our God, to go to serve the gods of those nations; lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood; and it come to pass, when he heareth the words of this curse, that he bless himself in his heart, saying, I shall have peace, though I walk in the stubbornness of my heart, to destroy the moist with the dry" (Deut. 29:18, 19).

No wonder we read after this last state, "Then the anger of Jehovah, and His jealousy will smoke against that man, and all the curse that is written in this book shall lie upon him"! (Dt 29:20).

Heb 3:14: For we are become partakers of Christ, if we hold fast the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end:

For these Hebrew believers, what was the "**beginning of their confidence**"? Without doubt, their first faith in Christ, accompanied by the "**confidence**" that faith begot. This word "**confidence**" (Gr., **hupostasis**) is used five times, always by Paul. In its use in 2Co 11:17, it is accompanied by boasting: "confidence of boasting." That is, Paul, hearing the good report of the Corinthian believers, was filled with confidence in his boasting of their faith. The Hebrew believers could not have been believers unless there had been such a revelation of Christ and His work to their hearts that a state of joyful confidence had been entered into! This "confidence" was to be held fast. That argued satanic, worldly, and "religious" opposition, certainly. But the redeeming Saviour was not to be abandoned, but "confidence" in Him held firm to the end. The "end" was when they should enter upon their life above. Meanwhile, "faith" would be a "confidence" (Heb. 11:1, this same word hupostasis) of the "things hoped for."

Thus they would become partakers of Christ. The translation of this word "partakers" (metochoi) must be governed by its use. In Luke 5:7 it is merely "partners." In Hebrews 3:1, "partakers of a heavenly calling," it indicates the "calling" of all true believers in this dispensation; and again in Heb 12:8, "chastening, whereof all (sons) have been made partakers." But on the other hand, in Heb 6:4, certain were made "partakers (metochoi) of the Holy Spirit," who afterwards fell away and were lost. There was, as we shall find, a presence and an operation of the Holy Spirit short of final sealing and salvation. Certainly Hebrews 1:9 finds our blessed Lord at His glorious second coming accompanied by "partakers" (metochoi), or "fellows." But the path to that day is no careless one, as Hebrews 3:14, and, indeed, most of both Hebrews 3 and 4 solemnly warn. "I suppose it has been true of us all that there was a time when we shrank from all Scriptures that spoke of conditions. Well can many of us remember when we looked with fear and trembling upon this chapter, or at the sixth chapter, or the closing portion of the tenth chapter."--Ridout, Lectures on The Hebrews, p. 61 (an excellent book) Loizeaux, N. Y.

Heb 3:15 While it is said, Today, if ye shall hear His voice, Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

16 For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses?

17 And with whom was He displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?

18 And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were disobedient?

19 And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

Hebrews 4:1: LET US FEAR, THEREFORE, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.

2 For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard.

3 For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as He hath said, As I sware in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

4 For He hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all His works;

5 and in this place again, They shall not enter into My rest.

6 Seeing therefore that it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience,

7 He again defineth a certain day, TODAY, saying in David so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before), TODAY if ye shall hear His voice, Harden not your hearts.

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day.

9 There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into His rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

11 Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.

12 For the word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.

We have printed the Scripture above, making no division between the close of Hebrews 3 and the beginning of Hebrews 4, so that there may be no interruption of our study of the great subject of the "rest" of God. Going back, now, to Hebrews 3:15, let us note in the following verses, that the opposite of holding fast the "beginning of their confidence" (Heb 3:6, 14) was "hardening their hearts" (Heb 3:8, 15), "provoking" God (Heb 3:8, 15, 16), and "displeasing" Him (Heb 3:10, 17); thus coming short of entering His rest (Heb 3:11, 18; 4:1). The solemn fact is that in this book of Hebrews eternal salvation is constantly contrasted with "neglect," "sluggishness," "falling short" of a promise; mere "tasting" of the heavenly gift" (eternal life), sinning "willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth," and afterward "falling away," "treading under foot the Son of God ... counting the blood of the covenant a common thing"! It could not be otherwise, for God in Hebrews is speaking unto us in His Son! (Heb 1:2).

What God in sovereign grace may do (as in the case of the man in 1Cor 5:1-5, and in 1Cor 11:29-33), is God's affair. But the book of Hebrews is not the place in which He sets it forth. Hebrews, unlike Romans, does not proclaim the way of Salvation; but places before us the Person of Christ, Son of God, Son of Man; His oneness with His saints, His victory over Satan; His one offering for sin; His blessed heavenly priesthood; His headship as Son over the house of God: and God sets before us all these in view of the holy walk on earth they involve in true saints!

Heb 3:7, 15 say: TODAY if ye shall hear His voice!--Three times are these words quoted in Heb 3, 4; and of course they are always connected with the very voice of God: the Holy Spirit saith, (Heb 3:7); while it is said, (Heb 3:15); as hath been said before, (Heb 4:7).

Furthermore, in Heb 4:7 occur the words, He again defineth a certain day, TODAY, saying in David so long a time afterward--We learn then immediately, that the sovereign God speaks in special ways and at times chosen by Him. Five times in Heb 3, 4, the Hebrew believers to whom Paul wrote are addressed with the solemn word "TODAY." Blessing is conditioned in Heb 3:6 on "their holding fast their boldness and the glorying of their hope firm unto the end"; and in Heb 3:14, on "holding fast the beginning of their confidence firm unto the end." That the present dispensation is indicated, is plain from Heb 3:13: "Exhort one another day by day, so long as it is called TODAY." There is present, then, the danger of "falling away from the Living God," and of being "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin" (Heb 3:12, 13).

To individuals, therefore, "Today" would cover all that time in which "a promise is left" of entering into "His rest" (Heb 4:1)--that is, all the season of the Spirit's gracious wooing. Some would indeed become "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin," and "fall away." If that were not a possibility, these Scriptures would be causeless. God does not speak in vain! This whole dispensation, ending with the rapture of the church, is called "TODAY." Sinners are being welcomed; Grace is reigning. The word is, "He that will, let him take the water of life freely."

"'Today' is whilst the Spirit invites, and continues to this present time. It is always 'today' until we enter the bright 'tomorrow' that is before us; and 'while it is called Today' we are to exhort one another lest any of us should be 'hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.'"--Ridout.

Heb 3:16 For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses?
17 And with whom was He displeased forty years? was it not with them that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?
18 And to whom sware He that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that were disobedient?
19 And we see that they were not able to enter in because of unbelief.

Heb 3:16: For who, when they heard, did provoke? nay, did not all they that came out of Egypt by Moses?

As to Israel, "Even so then at this present time also there is a remnant according to the election of grace" (Ro 11:5). But they are received by grace alone, as sinners only! As to this word, "TODAY," let Israel be our warning! Israel came to Kadesh-Barnea, and being permitted (let Deuteronomy 1:22 interpret Numbers 13:1) to send spies into the good land God's word had vouchsafed them, they hearkened to the evil report of the ten unbelieving spies: "It is a good land ... but the giants are there, and cities walled up to heaven." No attention was given to the testimony of Joshua and Caleb: "The land is an exceeding good land ... Rebel not against Jehovah, neither fear ye the people of the land ... Jehovah is with us: fear them not." Nay! "All the congregation bade stone them with stones"! "'Let us make us a captain,' said they, 'and let us return into Egypt.'" (Nu 14:4-10). This was "the provocation" of our text. Then the glory of Jehovah appeared; and but for the intercession of Moses they would have been smitten with pestilence and disinherited, and Moses alone would have taken their place. (Read again, we beg you, Nu 13, 14, and Deut. 1)

Heb 3:17: And with whom was He displeased forty years? Was it not with them that sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness?--

The question arises concerning the "forty years" in the wilderness, in this verse in Hebrews 3, and 1Corinthians 10:1-5: Were all these with whom He was displeased eternally lost? Were any of the Israelites whose carcasses fell in the wilderness saved? The same question arises concerning professing believers today. Are those like the Corinthians (1 Cor. 11:30-32) who fail to judge their own lives, to be accounted rejected by God? In this latter case, No! For God here says, "When we are judged (by sickness or death), we are chastened of the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world." (Note verse 32.) God's grace prevailed even in the case in Corinth of the man who had his own father's wife (1Cor. 5, 2 Cor. 2:5-11). Salvation is by God's grace always!

These Hebrews, as we have said, belonged to a nation concerning which God says, "He showeth His word unto Jacob, His statutes and His ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; And as for His ordinances, they have not known them" (Ps. 147:19-20).

They were "near unto Him" (Ps. 148:14; Deut. 4:7), as compared with the Gentiles, who were "far off" (Eph. 2:12, 13, 17). But who shall say how many of that nation had or had not personal faith in the God Who had given His statutes and ordinances unto Israel? We may speak of three points here:

First, in reading Scripture, we must constantly use spiritual discernment. Our verse speaks of them that sinned. Paul says, "All sinned"; but there (Ro 3:23), he is opening up to sinners the glorious news of justification through Christ's blood. But "sinned" in Hebrews 3:17 has no reference to man's general state; but to conscious, willful rebellion, persisted in.

Second, the Israelites were perpetually conscious of what their leader, Moses, expresses in the great 90th Psalm entitled: "A Prayer of Moses the man of God": "Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee, our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance.
Being under the Law, the more sincere they were, the greater their consciousness of failure. See Paul's own experience under the Law even after his salvation, Romans 7:7-24.

Anyone desirous of finding God's way of grace can see what the Law will do, the ministration of death and condemnation (2Cor. 3:7, 9). Study the 90th psalm further: Moses' prayer: "Return, O Jehovah, how long? and let it repent Thee concerning Thy servants." And His words, "Make us glad according to the days wherein Thou hast afflicted us, And the years wherein we have seen evil" (Ps 90:13, 15).

Moses had been constituted "mediator" for Israel (Gal. 3:19), and had been identified with them by God. They were all sharing the afflictions and the wilderness wanderings, and seeing the "evil." He says further, "For we are consumed in Thine anger, and in Thy wrath are we troubled ... All our days are passed away in Thy wrath: We bring our years to an end as a sigh" (Ps 90:7-9).

We learn, therefore, if we are willing to learn, that not under an admixture of Law and Grace can there be real Divine perfecting. (For Moses' heart was right with God; but Christ had not yet died, putting sin out of God's sight!)

Third, the word "sinned" of Hebrews 3:17 has a peculiar and terrible meaning. There are acts of willfullness and rebellion, the effects of which will go on forever. Sweet is the message, "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:9). But John in the same epistle declares, "There is a sin unto death: not concerning this do I say that he should make request" (1 John 5:16).

Moses and Aaron at Kadesh (Nu 20:9, 11, 12, 24) acted in such unbelief (Moses using his own rod instead of Aaron's) that both he and Aaron were shut out of the land, despite Moses' pleadings. Thus also David, concerning the child of his sin, was forgiven, as

he celebrates in Psalm 32; but the governmental judgment remained, and the child died (2Sa 12:1-31).

Owen, the great Puritan commentator, well says: "There is a repentance and humiliation that may free the soul from eternal ruin, and yet not remove a temporal judgment threatened against it. Such was the repentance of David upon his adultery. The Lord put away the guilt of his sin, and told him that he should not die penally, but would not be entreated to spare the life of the child, nor David in those other sore afflictions which afterward befell him on the same account. And thus it might be with some, yea, with many of those Israelites. God might give them repentance to make way for the pardon and forgiveness of their persons; nevertheless, He would so far take vengeance on their inventions as to cause their carcass's to fall in the wilderness.

"But yet this must be acknowledged, that their punishment was a great representation of the future judgment, wherein ungodly believers shall be cast off forever, for, as they fell visibly under the wrath and displeasure of God, and their carcasses were cast out in the wilderness as a loathsome abomination, so their judgment overtook them under this formal consideration, that they were excluded out of the rest of God. And these things together gave an excellent resemblance of the judgment to come, when sinners shall perish eternally under the wrath of God and be forever excluded out of His rest."--com. On Hebrews.

Read Moses' supplication for these wilderness rebels, and God's immeasurably gracious answer: "Pardon, I pray Thee, the iniquity of this people according unto the greatness of Thy loving kindness, and according as Thou hast forgiven this people, from Egypt even until now." "And Jehovah said, I have pardoned, according to thy word" (Nu 14:19, 20).

"So in Exodus: when God threatened to destroy all the people, He recalled His threat when Moses pleaded His promises, and sent His angel to guide them, but declared, Nevertheless in the day when I visit I will visit their sin upon them. And Jehovah plagued the people, because they made the calf, which Aaron made. (Ex. 32:34, 35). But their falling in the wilderness had nothing to do with the saving of their souls: Moses and Aaron died in the wilderness too, and we know they were saints of Jehovah."--J.N. Darby.

Here we see the Divine purpose of eternal mercy towards anyone that should desire it of Him; the while His governmental glory demanded that they should not reach God's "rest"--which to them was the promised Canaan (Deut. 12:9; 25:19). For whatever we find revealed further upon God's "rest" in Hebrews, it is evident that, first of all, for Israel, it was their getting into the land that Jehovah had promised to their fathers. This "rest" must not be confused with their eternal salvation. Moses, indeed, yes, and Miriam and Aaron, as we have said, all failed to enter the promised "rest". Yet Moses was with the Lord on the Mount of transfiguration! We dare not say, therefore, that Caleb and Joshua were the only ones in whom saving faith dwelt! They were the only ones that entered the land and attained unto the "rest" (so far as it was then attained).

Jude indeed says, "The Lord, having saved a people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." And he associates them with the fallen angels that "kept not their own principality" (Gen. 6), and are "kept in everlasting bonds under darkness unto the judgment of the great day"; and with Sodom and Gomorrah, which are "set forth as an example, suffering the punishment of eternal fire" (Jude 5-7). But who would dare to assert of believers today that only those Christians who were fully surrendered to the Lord and were filled with the Holy Spirit, were to be saved? There are in Hebrews a number of profoundly difficult questions--this one as to the destiny of those who fell in the wilderness, being one of the most serious of them!

God hates the self-imagined "charity" which refuses to believe His words concerning His wrath, yea, His eternal wrath, upon the finally impenitent; and it is frightful how ready people are to follow this deathful teaching! To believe the letter of all of God's words concerning "the eternal fire prepared for the devil and His angels," of which our Lord spoke (Matt. 25:41); into which the wicked will be sent forever; and yet, on the other hand, to follow with equal fidelity His revelations of sovereign grace toward those whom we would naturally deem should be condemned, is a work of faith which only those can do who in their measure can say with Paul, We have "obtained mercy of the Lord to be faithful."

The great lesson for us today--what is it? Compare our state with that of the believers of the early church. it is true that many Christians are wilderness Christians and will be so to the end--as to this experience of the rest of faith? This is a most solemn question!

Victory in the Risen Christ, the infilling of the Spirit, power for service, unselfish love toward everybody, especially toward all Christians--if this is your yearning desire, if you thirst after these things, thank God!

Heb 3:18: And to whom did He swear that they should not enter His rest, but to those who were disobedient?
19 And so we see that they were not able to enter because of unbelief.

The question at once arises, How could God expect man to rest in a creation which had already been judged on account of man's sin, a creation in which God no longer rested? The answer is, as it seems to me, simple. It was none of man's business, none of Israel's business in the wilderness, to inquire about the permanence or otherwise of the first creation. Their business was to exercise faith in and obedience to the merciful Jehovah-God who had not only brought them out of Egypt's bondage by blood redemption, and brought them through the Red Sea, swallowing up their enemies, but had sustained them right up to the border of Canaan, defending them, despite their murmurings, from Amalek and from all their enemies.

Their business, I repeat, was to go forward gladly in faith. Caleb and Joshua did this, and entered Canaan. Others entered not into God's rest. They were disobedient (Heb 3:19): They were not able to enter in because of unbelief. "TODAY" for them, is over. The ten evil spies, leaders in unbelief and rebellion, died of the plague, and the people were told they must go back into the

wilderness, where their dead bodies should fall. Presumption, the next day, was not faith. They were not able to enter in. To multitudes of those whose bodies fell in the wilderness, the solemn words of A.B. Simpson apply:

"They came to the gates of Canaan,
But they never entered in.
They came to the land of promise,
But they perished in their sin.
And so we are ever coming
To the place where two ways part:
One leads to the land of promise,
And one to a hardened heart".

"**Unbelief**" is an attitude of the heart, not of the mind. So we read an "evil heart of unbelief" (Heb 3:12). And in Heb 3:19, unbelief" lies at the root--is the cause of that "disobedience" which brings on Divine judgment. Unbelief is not inability to understand, but unwillingness to trust, for trusting God puts the creature into God's hands. It is the will, not the intelligence, that is involved. The unbeliever chooses to remain in his own hands. Also, the unsurrendered unspiritual believer will suffer great loss--though he may be saved. He would like eternal bliss, of course. But God hath made Jesus both Lord and Christ—whereas the unbeliever chooses to remain lord of his own life.

It is not for lack of evidence that unbelief exists. Every heart beat, every breath, tells man he is nothing but a creature--utterly insufficient in himself for a moment's existence. And his conscience says there is a God; and the creation under his feet and above him witness it. But "an evil heart of unbelief" says, I want to live for myself, which is the essence of evil, of sin.

There is a character of "unbelief," an essential character, not always emphasized: that is, the attitude of neglect or forgetfulness of God, a treating of the ever-present gracious One as if He did not exist; a forgetfulness of past blessing that is inexplicably fathomless. The attitude of the disciples in Mark 8:1-4 will illustrate. Some little time before (Mk. 6), Christ had fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fishes, and they had been rewarded with a basketful of fragments apiece. But when a great multitude came together again, and had nothing to eat, and the Lord said, "I have compassion on the multitude, because they ... have nothing to eat," His disciples answered Him, "Whence shall one be able to fill these men with bread here in a desert place?" (Mk. 8:4).

Exactly the same circumstances; precisely the same need; and the Lord of glory taking them into partnership with His infinite power: For "He asked them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven." But utter blindness on their part.

"He took the seven loaves, and having given thanks, He brake ... and they set them before the multitude. And they had a few small fishes: and having blessed them, He commanded to set these also before them." And four thousand men were filled, and seven baskets of fragments taken up. No wonder our Lord "sighed deeply in His spirit," and asked the searching questions, "Have ye (the disciples) your heart hardened? Having eyes see ye not? and having ears, hear ye not? and do ye not remember?"--"Do ye not yet understand?"

God is present now with you, believer, wherever and whoever you are. Are you able, are you willing, to reckon on His presence and His help? This is faith. Unbelief sees nothing, learns nothing, gets nothing, is not able to enter in.

Hebrews 4

Heb 4:1 LET US FEAR therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.
2 For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they: but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith with them that heard.
3 For we who have believed do enter into that rest; even as He hath said, As I sware in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.
4 For He hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all His works;
5 and in this place again, They shall not enter into My rest.

THOUSANDS UPON THOUSANDS of earnest souls have misread Hebrews, and have fallen into doubt, darkness, and even despair. The reason was, their failure to read aright these great warnings which Hebrews holds.

There are indeed in Hebrews constant and solemn warnings against inattention towards God's message; "neglect" of God's Son and His "so great salvation"; spiritual sluggishness and sloth. These states of soul, all, are shown to tend to final apostasy and eternal woe. Neglecters easily become rejecters; unbelief hardens; and shallow dealing with Divine things becomes despairing of Divine things.

But on the other hand--according to' God's Word, "Ye have grieved the heart of the righteous, whom I have not made sad" (Ezek. 13:22). There are honest hearts of the family of "Little faith" who have applied to themselves, with terrible self-accusation, words intended for others than themselves. Satan delights to roar continuously in the ears of a trembling soul: "You have trampled under foot the Son of God, you have 'done despite to the Spirit of grace'! You have been 'hardened by the deceitfulness of sin.' It is 'impossible to renew you to repentance!'"

Let such timid souls remember and reflect upon God's past ways with them, His graciousness, His long-suffering, His goodness. And even in their state of trembling let them read such a verse as Hebrews 4:1; Let us fear, therefore, lest haply, a promise being left of entering into His rest. Let them dwell upon these latter words, a promise being left. Let them cast themselves upon the mercy of God, and look, even in their fearfulness, for this promise that is "left"! For this verse does indeed apply, first of all, to those who may have sorely neglected God's promises and providences. Yet even for such, the words are: a promise being left. Let them take up Bunyan's Pilgrim's Progress (which God has so blessed to souls), and in the second part become acquainted with "Mr. Ready-to-halt," "Mr Fearing," yea, with "Mercy," and, as we have said, with all whose name may be called "Little faith." One has well said, "Little faith brings the soul to Heaven, while great faith brings Heaven into the soul!"

In all their soul-exercising also, let them remember that "Mr. Legality" is their great enemy! It was from "dead works" that the consciences of these Hebrew saints were delivered by the blood of Christ to serve the Living God. Let them stay within sight of Calvary, and not be driven by the enemy to undertake to get deliverance through "serving" God.

Yes, God, being infinitely loving and long-suffering, constantly "leaves" for the believer some promise which he may lay hold of by faith, if he will. The warning here, however, is that such a gracious promise may be neglected, overlooked, come short of.

Now you may have failed to lay hold of one promise after another; and your life may have become more and more perplexed. But do not despair! For it is God's habit to "leave" a promise! There is such a one for you! Search for it prayerfully, carefully, humbly. And when you find your heart drawn out to any Scripture, thank God for that, praying that there may be in your heart a "mixture of faith," graciously given by Him.

For we see Heb 4:2: For indeed we have had good tidings preached unto us, even as also they (Israel of old): but the word of hearing did not profit them, because it was not united by faith ("mixed with faith", A.V.) with them that heard.

Faith, reading a promise, says, "This means me!"

I remember a meeting many years ago, where presents were being given out to poor children. From a great heap of presents on the table, the leader would read out names of those who were to receive gifts, and such ones were expected to come forward and receive them thankfully. There came the reading of the name of a certain boy, and no one came forward. Someone sitting beside me said, "There's that boy, over there by the aisle."

I watched him. His name was repeated several times. At first he looked forward at the announcer; then, as his name was repeated, he looked to the right and to the left; and then stood half up and looked all around over the back part of the building, expecting to see the favored one. But someone near him called out, "He means you, Jimmy!"

Jimmy kept his seat, clutching the chair in front of him. He was not used to receiving presents! Not until the speaker looked right at him, reading his name, and asked, "Is that your named" did he tremblingly get up and go forward and accept his present!

Thus we act toward God. We quote promises--never really claiming them. Do not forget that the last word in Hebrews 3 is "unbelief." We have seen that Israel lost their promised land (Num. 14) through simply not believing! just as they fell short of Canaan, so many professing Christians today, though a promise is left them of entering into His rest, fail of it:--of that spiritual "rest" which belongs to all who hear and believe that Christ has borne their sin; that He made peace by the blood of His Cross.

(The most of the nation of Israel in the future will not "profit" by the voice of the two witnesses of Revelation 11:3-12, warning them of the fearful results of worshiping the Antichrist and his image. Most of them will not attend to the voices of the three angels who warn in Revelation 14:6, 8, 9. A "Remnant" shall indeed "return to the mighty God," but it will be a "very small Remnant" that shall be saved (Isa. 1:9; cf. 2-6; Rom. 9:27, 28). It will (Isa. 66:8) be with this Remnant, called "a nation brought forth at once," that God will make His future covenant "with the House of Israel and with the House of Judah," as we shall find in Heb. 8, He will do.)

Heb 4:3: But God says, We who have believed do enter into that rest.

Dear brother, it is of infinite importance to you and to me just to BELIEVE!--to believe God's "promises" that are "left" us! The work was finished on the Cross, and our Lord is in the glory on the ground of that perfect work for sinners. Do not try to become worthy by any works, or change of your "character," but just believe. And do not rest upon any "church" forms or ceremonies: for God does not rest there, but in Christ alone!

Heb 4:3 (continued.): Even as He hath said, As I sware in My wrath, They shall not enter into My rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

As we continue to take up the great subject of what God calls "My rest" (brought before us by the Spirit from Hebrews 3:11 to 4:11), let us consider what this "rest" of God is, and what it is not.

God Himself entered upon rest after the seven days of creation:

"For in six days Jehovah made Heaven and earth, and on the seventh day He rested, and was refreshed" (Ex. 31:17).

Let these words mean precisely what they say: Jehovah rested. Jehovah was refreshed. Let none dare to object that God, being

infinite and almighty, could not be "refreshed." God's word is, that He was!

"And God saw everything that He had made, and behold, it was very good ... And on the seventh day God finished His work which He had made. And He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had made." Note, "He rested on the seventh day." So also state the next verses in Hebrews 4:

Heb 4:4 For He hath said somewhere of the seventh day on this wise, And God rested on the seventh day from all His works;

5 and in this place again, They shall not enter into My rest.

See Genesis 1:31 to 2:3. Sin entered; God's rest was broken. All creation was subjected to "vanity." God could not rest where sin was. For it is well to reflect that there is in God, from all eternity unto all eternity, the infinite complacency which belongs to the Absolute Good. (All our human restlessness, our incapacity for rest, arises from sin: "The wicked are like the troubled sea; for it cannot rest, and its waters cast up mire and dirt". (Isa. 57:20). "The sea is no more" in John's vision (Rev 21:1), for the sea could not rest! All is REST in the New Creation; all is absent that suggests unrest.)

Therefore there was creation, and, in order that His creatures might know Him, to man was given free will. When sin entered God's creation (though not from Him Who "cannot be tempted with evil, and Himself tempteth no man"), there resulted a necessity and an opportunity. The necessity was judgment: God sparing not angels when they sinned! The opportunity was love: God so loved that He gave His Son. Consequently, there is the exhibition of the nature of God Himself: "Herein is love." (Not that when sin entered, God's purposes or counsels failed: for these were all connected with Christ, and His redemptive work to come.) Therefore He began working toward redemption. (This is what our Lord meant when He said: "My Father worketh even until now, and I work"--John 5:17.) (The Jews, like the present "Seventh Day Adventists," sticklers for the seventh day observance, said of Christ, "This man keepeth not the Sabbath." They, like the Adventists today, chose to remain under the Law that God says condemned them! (Gal. 3:10).)

Indeed, from the time that Adam sinned, God had prophesied (Gen. 3:15) a great struggle between the woman's Seed (Christ) and the seed of the serpent, in which the Seed of the woman (Christ) should "bruise the serpent's head": a struggle not over until Satan is cast into the lake of fire forever! (Rev. 20:10).

And so we come to the Cross. In Christ crucified we find God's holiness and righteousness that could not spare His well-beloved Son, sin being laid upon Him; and also that fathomless love that reached us in redeeming power. You and I may not yet have found full rest or constant rest in the work of the Cross. God has! May His grace enable us so to "rest" in what was done at the Cross and in resurrection, as to glorify God in finding peace (Col. 1:20).

Our blessed Lord on the Cross cried, "It is finished!" Sin had been laid upon Him; He had been forsaken, smitten by God's hand as a Substitute for our sin, the wages of which was death. His death met that penalty perfectly and forever! "Through His own blood" as our Great High Priest "He entered in once for all into the Holies (Heaven), having obtained eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:12). "He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God" (Hebrew 10:12).

Now becomes possible the first phase of God's "rest" for the believer: we rest where God rests, in the shed blood of Christ! This spiritual rest arises from accepting God's announcement of Christ's finished work on our behalf. Hezekiah spake to his people when the Assyrians came against them:

"With him is an arm of flesh: but with us is Jehovah our God to help us, and to fight our battles. And the people rested themselves upon the words of Hezekiah king of Judah" (2 Chr 32:8).

Let Hezekiah's subjects be a lesson to us!

The tenth verse of Hebrews 4 also has a reference to this spiritual rest: For he that is entered into His rest hath himself also rested from his works as God did from His. (a) There is a time when spiritual anxiety ceases in view of the work of the Cross; (b) and also (generally some time later, when struggle to live a holy life in one's own strength ceases: and a "Thanks be to God, Who giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ!" rises from the heart), there is ever-deepening "rest," as His Yoke is fully accepted by the believer: as the Lord Jesus said (Matt. 11:28, 29), "Take My yoke upon you, and learn of Me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls--rest from self, from anxiety, from depending on one's own planning. Sad to say (c) there are, as we shall see, many who do not go on with God, who remain "babes." (See Heb. 5:12.)

This is the present rest of faith, the found rest of Matthew 11:29. This is a subjective state called "the peace of God" (Phil. 4:6, 7), the believer already, through faith in Christ's shed blood, having "peace with God" (Rom. 5:1; 8:1).

There is a second phase of rest, set forth by Paul in 2Thessalonians 1:6-10. The Thessalonian Christians were being afflicted by persecution and every earthly wrong. They were still in the trials of this world, and the enemy was tempting and opposing them. So Paul writes that, consequent upon the second coming of Christ, "If so be that it be a righteous thing with God to recompense affliction to them that afflict you, and to you that are afflicted rest with us, at the revelation of the Lord Jesus from Heaven with the angels of His power in flaming fire."

Here will be a cessation of temptation, trial, and all infirmity. Satan having been cast down to earth, there will also be rest from conflict with him.

But we must note further here, for there are those who claim (most earnestly) that the rest into which believers enter is only the

"rest of faith" in believing on Christ (Heb. 4:3), and so beholding His blood as to have the conscience "cleansed from dead works to serve the living God," thus having rested from their works as God did from His (Heb 4:10; 9:14). To this I would say, while deeply appreciating the high and holy purpose, yea, and walk, of such dear saints, that our chapters state over and over (Heb 3:11-4:11) that it is God's rest into which believers are to enter. Now God does indeed rest, in a sense none of us fully appreciate, in the work of His beloved Son at Calvary. Yet, to carry out the figure of Hebrews 3 and 4 (which is Israel's entering Canaan): let us suppose we have come up out of the wilderness, and crossed over Jordan in the power of the death of Christ, as the ark brought Israel over (josh. 3). What about the "Canaanites"? the "inhabitants of the land"? Israel's "rest" involved the conquest of these possessing enemies! But the book of judges is the record of their failure through unbelief, compromise, and even, in the case of Dan, rebellion and idolatry! In Judges 2:20-23, we read that on account of this failure, this disobedience of unbelief: "Jehovah left those nations, without driving them out hastily; neither delivered He them into the hand of Joshua."

Indeed in Joshua's old age Jehovah said to him: "Thou art old and well stricken in years, and there remaineth yet very much land to be possessed" (Josh. 13:1).

And although later we read:

"So Jehovah gave unto Israel all the land which He sware unto their fathers; and they possessed it and dwelt therein. And Jehovah gave them rest round about, according to all that He sware unto their fathers: and there stood not a man of all their enemies before them; Jehovah delivered all their enemies into their hand. There failed not aught of any good thing which Jehovah had spoken unto the house of Israel; all came to pass" (Josh. 21:43-45), yet the emphasis here is upon Jehovah's faithfulness when Israel pressed on against their enemies. In the very last chapter of Joshua we find Joshua gathering all the tribes of Israel to Shechem, and solemnly enjoining "the elders ... their heads ... their judges ... and their officers ... Put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River, and in Egypt; and serve ye Jehovah" (vs. 14).

But the declaration of the Spirit in Hebrews 4:6, 7, 8 is:

Heb 4:6 Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience,

7 He again defineth a certain day, Today, saying in David so long a time afterward (hundreds of years afterward) (even as hath been said before), Today if ye shall hear His voice, Harden not your hearts.

8 For if Joshua had given them rest, He would not have spoken afterward of another day--of the rest as still future.

So, still carrying out the figure of Hebrewss 3, 4, our rest, like that of Israel, involves the conquest of enemies. However deep and abiding our rest in Christ's work on the Cross and His priesthood in Heaven, the conflict with the hosts of darkness is still on, and will be on till Christ comes for us--for His Church! Even then, though (as we have seen) those "afflicted" by the enemy will have rest--the rest of the Millennial Kingdom--yet God's final REST awaits the last overthrow of Satan, who is to be released after the 1000 years and lead those who come to his banner from the four corners of the earth, in the greatest rebellion earth has ever seen, at the close of the Millennium (Rev. 20:7-10).

The Millennium in a vast degree illustrates the rest of God's people, both of those of the heavenly calling, and of redeemed national Israel. As we know, "They that are Christ's" are taken up in the Church's Rapture, at the first phase of His coming. Then after the Antichrist's covenant with Israel (Da 9:2) (Daniel's seventieth week of years), occurs the revelation or manifestation to earth (Rotherham: "forthshining") of Christ's coming--the second phase. The event makes possible rest, both for the spared remnant of Israel and, of course, for the Church. All the enemies of God's saints must be disposed of if those saints are to have rest! Satan is cast into the abyss in the center of the earth, and it is sealed over him for one thousand years. Of Satan's host of angels (evidently one-third of the angels of God), we read in Isaiah:

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that Jehovah will punish the host of the high ones on high, and the kings of the earth upon the earth. And they shall be gathered together as prisoners are gathered in the pit (margin, dungeon), and they (Satin's host) shall be shut up in the prison; and after many days (that is, after the Millennium) shall they be visited" (Isa 24:21, 22).

"That day" is the day of Christ's coming in wrath. If anyone is ignorant of the time that this will occur, let him read the next verse:

"Then the moon shall be confounded, and the sun ashamed; for Jehovah of hosts will reign in mount Zion, and in Jerusalem; and before His elders shall be glory"--that is, at the beginning of the Millennium.

Lastly, as to evil men: they will be dealt with by the Lord at that time, and during the Millennium. Even one who slanders in secret will be "cut off" with "all the wicked of the land ... all the workers of iniquity" (Ps. 101:5, 8); for our Lord will rule with a rod of iron, in the 1000 years!

After the Millennium, Satan will be cast forever into the "lake of fire and brimstone," where the Antichrist and the false prophet shall have been during the Millennium; and the last judgment (that of the Great White Throne) and the final eternal separation of the wicked from among the righteous will take place.

Revelation 21:3-4 will then describe one company: "God Himself shall be with them, their God: and He shall wipe away every tear

from their eyes; and death shall be no more; neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more: the first things are passed away."

And Revelation 21:8 describes the other: "But for the fearful, and unbelieving, and abominable, and murderers, and fornicators, and sorcerers, and idolaters, and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire and brimstone; which is the second death." For, concerning the New Jerusalem: "And there shall in no wise enter into it anything unclean, or he that maketh an abomination and a lie; but only they that are written in the Lamb's book of life" (Rev. 21:27). So the "rest of God" into which His saints shall finally enter, and unto which He directs them, is that state of things in which God Himself is at rest, and in which He takes delight! This can only be at the New Creation, as Peter says: "According to His promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, wherein dwelleth righteousness' (2 Pet. 3:13). (Or, we may paraphrase: "Wherein righteousness is at home." Thayer says, "In the Septuagint the rendering of the Greek word for dwelleth (katoikeo), meaning to settle, to dwell, differs from paroikeo, meaning to sojourn, as the Permanent differs from the transitory."

(1) To rehearse then, what has been said: The believer should rest fully in Christ's work for him, with a conscience cleansed by Christ's blood from dead legal works, or from hoping anything from the flesh. He should come to say with Paul, "I know that in me, that is, in my flesh, dwelleth no good thing" (Ro 7); and should see the deliverance, saying also with Paul, "I thank God through Jesus Christ my Lord!" and so recognizing the work of the Spirit as to say: "The law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death" (Ro 8:2).

These present elements--rest from guilt in the blood of Christ, and deliverance from the power of sin and the Law through identification with Christ in His death and burial, should be shared by every believer. Thus only doth he press on to full growth. (there is also another phase not often thought of: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord from henceforth: yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours; for their works follow with then," (Rev, 14:13, see author's book The Revelation, p. 225). This is a vivid example of the ending of our work for God, called by Paul "accomplishing our course". Our Lord Jesus Himself said to the Father, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given me to do." There comes time when earthly labor for God ends, and the heavenly state is begun.)

(2) Believers should expect (and that at any moment, for there is no unfulfilled condition), being caught up to meet the Lord in the air, and transformed into His likeness, receiving our resurrection bodies. Thus the present conflict with the devil, the world, and the flesh, will be over forever.

But (3) we must also look forward, and that with a sure hope, away beyond the Millennium, to the eternal state, unto which we already belong ("If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation":) but for which an outward Heaven and earth remain to be created! How comfortable were God's closing words by His angel to Daniel: "But go thou thy way till the end be; for thou shalt rest, and shalt stand in thy lot, at the end of the days"! (Dan. 12:1). Whatever God does in the "ages to come," there will be no longer necessary any dispensational revealing of Himself, and unfolding to all holy creatures of His nature as Love! That was done once for all at the Cross, and is being continued now in Christ's tender sympathetic priesthood in Heaven. There will be no longer need for warning against enemies, eternal separation from them having then taken place. There will be no longer need of preaching or prophesying that the will of God is the creature's true bliss; the praises of those blessed holy ones who by Divine grace have chosen God's will, will be proof that the creature's only true happiness is to know and serve the God Whose name is Love. As for God, the following beautiful words from Zephaniah express His "rest" of the ages to come, do they not? "He will rejoice over thee with joy; He will rest in His love; He will joy over thee with singing" (Zeph. 3:17).

As long as there is a problem unsettled, a saint not yet glorified, transformed into Christ's image; as long as God's enemies are permitted to "destroy the earth," even to use His blessings of light, air, food, health--God's "rest" will not, cannot, be completed. Concerning the present earth, God says, "The heavens are the heavens of Jehovah; but the earth hath He given to the children of men" (Ps. 115:16). But the "New Creation," the "New Heavens and the New Earth," are absolutely according to God--not in any sense an "adjustment" of the old, but entirely new, with Sin, and Trial, banished forever!

God says: "Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former things shall not be remembered, nor come into mind" (Isa. 65:17).

"The first heaven and the first earth are passed away," (Rev. 21:1): "every tear ... death ... mourning ... crying ...pain ... passed away" (Rev 21:4).

"The new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me" (Isa. 66:22).

What is wrapped up in the marvelous words, "He that sitteth on the throne saith, Behold I make all things new" (Rev. 21:5), we cannot even feebly grasp: any More than we can fully understand the new birth--so puzzling to Nicodemus, "the teacher of Israel." New creatures are those in Christ. But while we already belong to the New Creation, how little we know of it! "All things new": a new nature, a new kind of existence of what we call material things; new laws of being of which men know nothing. Did not our Risen Lord come and "stand in the midst," "when the doors were shut," and say, "Handle Me, and see; for a spirit hath not flesh and bones, as ye behold Me having"? The New Creation, though material and tangible as was our Lord's resurrection body, will evidently bear a relation to the old, as we read:

"The first man is of the earth, earthly; the second Man is of Heaven ... If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body" (1 Cor. 15:47, 44). (A "natural" body: literally, a body adapted for the soul--psychikos; and also "a spiritual body,"--that is, a body adapted for the spirit--pneumatikos.)

This New Creation is founded upon the blood of the Cross, as we read in Colossians 1:20. In the New Jerusalem the Lamb is the light. They shall see God's face: (no temple-worship: no distance from God). "His name shall be in their foreheads," ... and they shall reign forever and ever (Rev. 22:4-5). How wonderful! (There are two great amazements when we think of God: first, He is infinite; second, He loves US!)

From this study of God's "rest," let us return to take up more particularly Heb 4:6ff: Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience--The Hebrew Christians addressed in this epistle had been brought up to reverence their national election--just as "Presbyterians" and other sects do their history and "standards." But such reverence blinds men to the facts. The Israelites failed to enter in through unbelief and hardness of heart. God's mercy had spared the nation; but only Caleb and Joshua, as we have seen, entered Canaan! This awful failure would be the very things never mentioned in the talks of their rabbis!

But since these Hebrew Christians were now dealing directly, by Christ, with God, their true history as a nation must be shown to them. As a nation, they had failed to enter in. (Imagine any synagogue today teaching this national failure: the rest of the Jews would mob such a synagogue! Yet such teaching would be the truth.) Israel has failed to enter in, and the kingdom of God has been "taken away" from that nation, to be given to the coming Remnant of it--to "a nation bringing forth the fruits" of God's kingdom (Matt. 21:43)--a nation not yet born, but which "shall be born in a day"! (Isa. 66:8; Zech. 12:10-13:6).

It is striking in Hebrews, and also characteristic of the book, that the sin called to the attention of these believers is not that of the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, but the national attitude of unbelief shown by them at the first offer of "rest" in the land Jehovah had promised them in their early national history!

Christ was now in Heaven over God's house as a Son—with rights even the faithful servant Moses had never known. Thus to take their minds back to that great outburst of unbelief against God's servant Moses would indeed show up their own history to their hearts! Would these Hebrew Christians hold fast their "boldness," and the "glorying" of their hope in Christ—thus obeying the voice of the blessed Spirit not to harden their hearts? Or would they treat the Son as their fathers had treated the servant Moses--and rebel?

(Yet God had dealt with them in utter grace each time. He had brought them to Sinai, and said to them, "If ye will ... keep My covenant, then ye shall be mine own possession from among all peoples: for all the earth is Mine." And in supreme self-confidence they had promised, "All that Jehovah hath spoken, we will do." And so at Sinai they had signed, by note of hand as it were, a covenant, to which God will yet hold them--when in the last days He brings them "into the bond of the covenant." (See Ezek. 20:33-38.) For the fulfillment of this prophecy lies in the immediate future, when the nations shall turn against Israel, and become toward them "the wilderness of the peoples." This is the universal anti-Semitism that is already arising!)

It was not because they were under an imperfect covenant that Israel failed to enter in. It was because their hearts were bent to evil, and thus to unbelief. They did not desire the acquaintance of the God Who had opened the door to the promised land for them. "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt," they said. So at Sinai, when Moses was upon the mountain they had said to Aaron:

"Up, make us gods, which shall go before us; 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"! (Ex. 32:1).

It is this frightful readiness, yea, eagerness, to do without God--not, indeed, without "religion"--forms, ordinances, and the like; but without the Living God, that is the mark of the Laodicean stage of the Church's history, also--just as of that failing, unbelieving generation of Israel whose "limbs" were "strewn down along in the wilderness" (Heb. 3:17). If people, being what are called "church-members," find themselves able and quite willing to do without the fellowship of God and Jesus Christ His Son day by day; if people do not know what it is to be "led of the Spirit," it may be a dream that they are sons of God!

Hell will be filled with false professors,
those who deceived themselves.

I tell you, beloved, the story of "the day of the trial in the wilderness," "the provocation," needs to be laid to heart by you and me! Let no one dare to say that the great warnings of Hebrews 3 and 4 do not concern, and directly, every believer today! Shall these Hebrew believers be solemnly warned by recalling their own history of unbelief and failure to enter in, and Gentile believers have no such heart-dangers to be warned of? Where should God go for warnings for all believers, if not to the history of His dealings with the children of men?

You say, "Since Christ died and rose and is gone to Heaven, things are entirely different." We grant at once that sin has been put away, and Christ is indeed in Heaven. But Peter warned those to whom he wrote (the "elect ... of the Dispersion," surely) to make their "calling and election sure"--not to God, but to themselves! "Watch ye," also pleads Paul with the Ephesian elders (Acts 20:31); and, "I know that after my departing grievous wolves shall enter in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them" (Acts 20:29, 30).

"In the last days grievous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, haughty ... lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; holding a form of godliness, but having denied the power thereof" (2 Tim. 3:1-5).

Again, "But shun profane babblings: for they will proceed further in ungodliness, and their word will eat as doth a gangrene: of

whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; men who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already, and overthrow the faith of some" (2 Tim. 2:16-18).

Paul also told Timothy, "The time will come when they will not endure the sound doctrine." And (2 Tim. 1:15) "This thou knowest, that all that are in Asia (Ephesus being the center) turned away from me; of whom are Phygelus and Hermogenes." These turned away, not necessarily from all Christian profession, but at least from that heavenly doctrine, "the mystery," committed to Paul, which is the only truth that establishes and protects saints. (Notice how Paul tells out the names of false or dangerous teachers. No other practice is safe in protecting the saints! The saints know the names of Jones or Smith, though they may not yet have Scripturally discerned the evils that Smith or Jones may be teaching. It is my business (and it is yours and Paul made it his), if we are teaching the saints, to warn them of dangerous men. It is reported that someone asked John Darby what books he had in his library. He replied, "I have the Bible, and bad books." I do not report this story as a fact; but I can understand from his own writings Mr. Darby's concern about all books that he read! I do not know anyone more zealous, or jealous, for truth, Biblically set forth, since the days of Paul. You say, "It got Mr. Darby hated." Certainly! What of that? So was Paul!)

So now there is set before our eyes, in this great book of Hebrews, all the frightful scene of Divine judgments. For Israel (though nationally pardoned in answer to Moses' prayers) turned back into the wilderness, knowing that they would never see the land of milk and honey!

How solemn, then, the warnings of Hebrews 3, 4! You who say so glibly, "This story of failing to enter into Canaan belongs to the Jews, not to us"--wait! You and I were told, since the Spirit came at Pentecost, to be filled with the Spirit (Eph 5:18). Have we been? Again,

"Now the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that ye may abound in hope, in the power of the Holy Spirit" (Rom. 15:13). Are you filled with all joy and peace, abounding in hope, walking in the power of the Holy Spirit? If so, thank God! If not, be still and hearken to the Spirit's searching words concerning Israel's failure to enter in--and
learn of what your heart, like theirs, is capable.

God has promised, when He saves national Israel, to "take away the stony heart out of their flesh, and give them a heart of flesh" (Ezek. 36:26). With us Christians, Christ is to be
received into the heart, and dwell there by faith. Mark, that only is a normal Christian condition. Paul is praying for it for the Ephesians, even though they had been "sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise" (Eph. 1:13). Still "he bows his knees unto the Father ... that He would grant them ... that Christ might dwell in their hearts through faith"--a definite thing; only upon condition of which could they be "filled unto all the fullness of God" (Eph. 3:14-19).

Be reasonable! To whom could God speak with unavoidable plainness and warning except to the Hebrews? There is one Body: we know that. Before God since Calvary there is no difference between Jew and Greek; all are sinners. But God, Who has declared all human hearts alike, had already for over 1500 years had direct dealings with Hebrew hearts, even the hearts of those who had received promises, and had had many blessings and deliverances. And the record of it is already written in the Old Testament. It would be pride and self-importance, yea, presumption, for a Gentile professing Christian to say, "Inasmuch as this epistle is addressed to Hebrews, it is not addressed to me." But have you not seen from this very book of Hebrews that it lifts hearers completely away from earth into a heavenly calling? Just as you, Gentile believer, though a "sinner of the Gentiles," have by unexpected, limitless grace been sought, and brought into the same calling.

For you or me to pass this epistle over "to the Jews," is to blind ourselves to, and deny, its whole message. A Hebrew believer, reading it and from the heart believing it, would become as free as Paul, and could say, along with that great apostle (to the Gentile Galatian believers), "I beseech you, brethren, become as I am, for I also am become as ye are." He was wholly a heavenly man, and no racial or religious distinctions were left in his heart or life!

Frankly speaking, brother, if after reading Hebrews you say, "That epistle is written to the HEBREWS," and you keep Hebrew believers as a distinct class in your heart, it is you that have missed the great Divinely intended effect of Hebrews. You are the loser. You do not believe that all are one in Christ! Also, you have missed the joy of being enlightened by the blessed Holy Spirit concerning God's past ways on earth.

We now come again to one Scripture quoted and re-quoted three times in these chapters: Psalm 95:7:

Heb 4:7: Today if ye shall hear His voice, Harden not your hearts.

The argument for the present, peculiar attention of the Hebrew believers is, that Today if ye shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts, was said in David so long a time afterward: that is, after the sad events of the wilderness forty years. So that, if the Spirit took the wilderness overthrow as a warning for those who should read David's writings hundreds of years later--with how much force should the warning come to believers today--a warning of the treachery of the human heart. We have been examining the "rest" of God, together with such facts as that Joshua did not give them rest, or God (vs. 8) would not have spoken afterward of another day.

As for Joshua himself, his words in Joshua 24:15, "As for me and my house we will serve Jehovah," summarize his wonderful life. But concerning Israel, read Joshua 23:1-4:

"And it came to pass after many days, when Jehovah had given rest unto Israel from all their enemies round about, and Joshua was old and well stricken in years, that Joshua called for all Israel, for their elders and for their heads, and for their judges and for

their officers, and said unto them, "I am old and well stricken in years: and ye have seen all that Jehovah your God hath done unto all these nations because of you; for Jehovah your God, He it is that hath fought for you. Behold, I have allotted unto you these nations that remain."

But alas, in the book of Judges, after Joshua's death, we read,

"Manasseh did not drive out the inhabitants of Beth-shean ... Ephraim drove not out the Canaanites ... Zebulun drove not out ... Asher drove not out ... Naphtali drove not out the
inhabitants ... but he dwelt among the Canaanites ... The Amorites forced the children of Dan into the hill-country" (Jdg 1:27-34), and the like.

Then comes the heart-breaking message from the angel of Jehovah: (Heb 2:1-23).

"Ye have not hearkened unto My voice: why have ye done this?... I will not drive them out from before you; but they shall be as thorns in your sides, and their gods shall be a snare unto you."

And then:

"And also all that generation were gathered unto their fathers: and there arose another generation after them, that knew not Jehovah, nor yet the work which He had wrought for Israel.

"And the children of Israel did ... evil in the sight of Jehovah, and served the Baalim; And they forsook Jehovah ...followed other gods ... provoked Jehovah to anger ... forsook Jehovah and served Baal and the Ashtaroth. And the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and He delivered them into the hands of spoilers ... sold them into the hands of their enemies ... The hand of Jehovah was against them for evil ...they were sore distressed."

Graciously, "Jehovah raised up judges ... Yet they hearkened not unto their judges ... they turned back, and dealt more corruptly than their fathers ... they ceased not from their doings, nor from their stubborn way" (Heb 2:16-19).

What a sad history!

Now let us take moral warning of this oft repeated word, TODAY. The writer himself testifies, as he has heard others testify, to the losing of years by the failure to hear some Spirit-spoken "TODAY" message, either from the Word directly, or from some faithful messenger, or from what we call "circumstances." May I speak humbly and reverently here? But is not God's long-suffering from the very manner of His dealing with Israel, even now saying again and again, "Today"? This is a word of patient, tender Divine love. Creatures of the dust that we are, we should spring to obey the voice of the heavenly glory! Some, indeed, have, like Israel, "fallen," "hardened by the deceitfulness of sin"--Yea, by that self-deceiving which makes promises to self of a future hearkening or obedience, while living in present disobedience. I would to God that both you and I and all of us could read Hebrews 3-6 with that testimony in our own hearts that God gave to His servant Moses, "My servant Moses--is faithful in all My house"!

We are more and more impressed that the book of Hebrews stands between that salvation set forth in Romans, and the judgment depicted in the book of The Revelation. For the Judge in The Revelation is our blessed Lord Himself (Rev. 1). He stands as Priest-Judge among the seven assemblies called by His name on earth. Then, Hebrews 5, He takes the seven-sealed book of universal judgment from God's hand in Heaven. And finally, He comes in Person in the Great Day of the wrath of God the Almighty (Rev. 19). God does not want us in the judgment, my friend. Judgment is His "strange work" (Isa. 28:21). And He says, "As I live ... I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth ...Wherefore turn yourselves and live"! (Ezek. 33:11; 18:32).

Do you remember our Saviour's great words in John 5:24?

"Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth My word, and believeth Him that sent Me, hath eternal life, and cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life."

And His great closing public message in John 12:47: "If any man hear My sayings and keep them not, I judge him not: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world."

(Christ will be Judge at last! But now: "The Father hath given Me a commandment what I should say ... and His commandment is Life Eternal"!)

Therefore after those blessed epistles, that proclaim the way of Salvation, and before The Revelation, the book of judgment, comes this wonderful exhortation--epistle of Hebrews. In it God sets His Son and His priestly work before us, and the heavenly worship which alone is real, and in which God yearns that we should join. No wonder, therefore, if He warns us again and again of the treachery of the human heart. "Let us take heed," as we are exhorted in Hebrews--for eternity is at stake!

Heb 4:9 There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God.

10 For he that is entered into his rest hath himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.

11 Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.

12 For the Word of God is living, and active, and sharper than any two-edged sword, and piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow, and quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart.

13 And there is no creature that is not manifest in His sight: but all things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do.

Heb 4:9: There remaineth therefore a Sabbath rest (sabbatismos) for the people of God:

Note (1) that this "rest" is for "the people of God"--here meaning especially the Christ-confessing Hebrews, in view of the past history of their nation. But of course including all "partakers of the heavenly calling." Note (2) this rest "remaineth": that is, it is future--not present rest in Christ's work, blessed as that is. For rest in Christ's atoning work for us is constantly attacked by Satan; and often also by reproofs and disturbing of conscience. There must also, as we have seen, be watchfulness against "an evil heart of unbelief." And real rest in Christ's atoning work is accompanied by a godly walk; where the enemy's "devices" must be watched against.

The "rest" itself is here called sabbatismos, a "state-of-rest" (cessation from labor or employment). Not in the sense of a weekly occurrence, but in the sense of that eternal state entered into by those who, already new creatures in Christ, enter that New Creation of Revelation 21-22; to which they already belong, where all things are according to God, where God Himself is at rest: For this is what is meant by God's rest!

"The Sabbath was made for man." that is, as a mercy to his body, which is part of the old creation.

"The Sabbath-rest (sabbatismos) is the consummation of the New Creation in Christ, through whose priestly mediation reconciliation with God will come to pass--the rest of perfect adjustment of all things to God."--Vincent, p. 424.

-Into God's rest, Hebrews 4 teaches us, man in creation never entered. Such natural Peacefulness without combat as he may have had then for a moment, cannot be on earth now ... The rest of God, after the first creation, was short. The rest of men with God Passed away like a morning dream.

"God's rest will have its sabbath in the Millennium ... What is the rest of the New Creation, to which I belong as having died and risen, Christ being my life, the heavenly rest of the Lord's day is the intimation, the day of Christ's resurrection ... The Lord's day is the happy witness, as far as a day can be, of a better and perfect rest.--J.N.D., Vol. X.

Excellent! But the "rest of God" is in the New Creation (Rev. 21-22), where all is of God, where all not of Him is banished forever, from this NEW CREATION in which those in Christ already are!

Heb 4:10: See preceding (pages 119-123).

Heb 4:11: Let us therefore give diligence to enter into that (His) rest-

For to these Hebrew believers and to us, God has told how the nation which He brought out of Egypt fell short of even the rest of Canaan. "Diligence" is opposed to that lack of "earnest heed" with its consequent "neglect" (Hebrews 2:1-3); and of course to the lack of use of the spiritual "senses" of Hebrews 5:14; and that state of dullness into which their negligence and spiritual sloth, that lack of energy in appropriating Divine grace, had brought them. See 2 Peter 1:5, 10; and 2 Corinthians 7:11-12, where the same word is translated "earnest care." Here the Corinthians were aroused from a state of puffed-up self-satisfaction, to what God calls "godly sorrow," which wrought "earnest care" in them. Read this passage, and note the wonderful seven, fold change in them, which brought the apostle to say that he was "comforted and of good courage" toward them. This meaning must be brought into Hebrews 4:11, 6:11.

("This word 'diligence' indicates universal earnestness in accomplishing, promoting, or striving after anything."--Thayer). The translation in the old version, Let us labor therefore to enter into that rest, is not exact. The true meaning is, to be roused from sloth, and give all attention.)

We shall find that this "universal earnestness" is a great secret of progress, and the great guardian against the sad condition of the Hebrew believers; who, we are to see in Hebrews 5, became "needers of milk, and not of solid food ... without experience of the word of righteousness," instead of teachers of others. Remember, believer, that this world is an "Enchanted Ground." Here again Pilgrim's Progress, which astonishes us by its pictures of spiritual facts and folks, illustrates the danger of lack of diligence in our Christian path. See note below!

"I saw then in my dream that they went till they came into a certain country, whose air naturally tended to make one drowsy, if one came a stranger into it. And here Hopeful began to be very dull and heavy of sleep. Wherefore he said unto Christian, 'I now begin to grow so drowsy that I can scarcely hold up mine eyes; let us lie down here and take on nap.'

"'By no means,' said the other, 'lest sleeping, we never wake more.'

"Hopeful. 'Why, my brother? Sleep is sweet to the laboring man: we may be refreshed if we take a nap.'

"Christian. 'Do you not remember that one of the shepherds bid us beware of the Enchanted Ground? He meant by that, that we should beware of sleeping; 'Wherefore let us not sleep as do others, but let us watch and be sober' (1 Thess. 5:6).

"Hopeful. 'I acknowledge myself in a fault; and, had I been here alone, I had by sleeping run the danger of death!'"

To enter into that rest--Here "that rest" is seen to be a spiritual thing, a Divine return for "diligence" toward the things of God. Then we have, that no man fall--Let me quote here Charles Hodge, the Calvinistic theologian: I copy from his Commentary on Romans, p. 422, published in Edinburgh, 1875--valued highly in Britain:

"Believers (the elect) are constantly spoken of (in Scripture) as in danger of perdition. They are saved only if they continue steadfast (in faith). if they apostatize, they perish. If the Scriptures tell the people of God what is the tendency of their sins as to

themselves, they may tell them what is the tendency of such sins as to others. Saints are preserved not in spite of apostasy, but from apostasy."

After the same example of disobedience: The last word in Hebrews 3, "unbelief," or want of faith, described a condition of heart--not having God and His power and former blessing in view. "Disobedience" is the action of the natural heart in this condition. Compare verse 6, in our present chapter. "Lord, increase our faith," was the apostles' prayer. Their Lord rebuked often their lack of faith: "Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith?" And, "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe in all that the prophets have spoken!" Nevertheless, none but Judas had an "evil heart of unbelief." Analyze this carefully. All unbelief is evil; but an "evil heart of unbelief" is that set over, in the parable of the sower, against the good-ground hearers: "These are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast and bring forth fruit." An evil heart of unbelief is one that holds fast to sin, and tries to believe at the same time! But this terrible state Paul shows up, in the words, "Holding faith and a good conscience; which some having thrust from them made shipwreck concerning the faith" (1 Tim. 1:19).

You cannot ride two horses going in different directions; YOU must let one go. So "an evil heart of unbelief" has chosen evil. Let us remember that Paul says an apostate is not a backslider: an apostate is one who has, by his own will, turned his back on Christ and Christianity. Having "tasted" all things, he has "fallen away," as we show elsewhere (Hebrews 6:4-8).

Whatever God's rest may be, and however we consider it, all who read Hebrews 3:17 to 4:13 honestly, will consent, as we have said, that the prevailing spirit of it is warning:

"If we hold fast our boldness ... Harden not your hearts ...Take heed ... Not able to enter in because of disobedience ...Let us fear ... lest any one of you should seem to have come short of it" ... Let us give diligence to enter into that rest, that no man fall after the same example of disobedience.

The very vision of Israel today, a people without a land, and a land without a people, should warn every believer. Let those who take trips to Palestine, go to the Jews' Wailing-Wall, and listen and take heed!

God is the same God in this day of grace that He was with them under the Law. Then He saved people in mercy: today He does likewise. Then he rejoiced in and blessed men of faith; today He does likewise. The Joshuas, Samuels, Davids, Hezekiahs, Jehoiadas and Josiahs; with the Sarahs, Rahabs, Ruths, Hannahs, and Shunammite women--all who really loved Him and sought His face, He brought into peculiar blessing: just as He does today.

You who have been troubled by your lack of inward rest; who are worried about your failures and your sins, and are tempted to say, "This passage in Hebrews convicts me: I am not one of those who shall 'enter into rest.'" Let me ask you: Who were those who displeased God? Were they not saying, in rebellion, "Let us make a captain, and let us return into Egypt"? Were they not refusing even to face the path of faith, God being their mighty Leader, before Whom giants and walled cities are nothing? Did they not talk of stoning Caleb and Joshua?

Now let us compare your condition. Are you saying, "The Christian path is too irksome for me; the difficulties and trials are too great: I am going back into the world"?

You know you are not saying that! The thought fills you with horror. Satan is the prince of this world--this world which crucified the Son of God!

Do not, therefore, I beg you, misuse this passage of Scripture. (confessedly difficult though it be). You belong to Christ: Your very horror at the thought of relinquishing the Christian path and returning to the world, proves that.

But take heed that your bones do not fall in the wilderness! The early church, as pictured in the book of Acts--are you of it?

"Continuing steadfastly with one accord ... breaking bread at home, they took their food with gladness and singleness of heart, praising God ... And the Lord added to them day by day those that were being saved ... Believers were the more added to the Lord, multitudes both of men and women" (Acts 2:46, 47; 5:14).

And remember our Lord's words, "They (His disciples) are not of the world, even as I am not of the world." And Paul, to the Colossians: "If then ye were raised together with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is, seated on the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things that are above, not on the things that are upon the earth. For ye died, and your life is hid with Christ in God" (Col 3:1-3).

A Chicago preacher, a godly man, told me an experience of his:

He said, "Brother Newell, last Sunday morning, I announced my text. 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature: the old things are passed away; behold, they are become ew!' The church, holding about 1000, was full. I said, 'How many of you are Christians? Please rise.' The audience rose, in the main floor and gallery. I said, 'Please be seated.' Now I will read my text again: 'If any man be in Christ, he is a new creature.' Will all the new creatures please rise? Here and there, some arose; a few, quite readily; more, hesitantly; and most of the audience, not at all."

I have never forgotten that incident, the more so that I have seen it corroborated through many years.

Unless a man walks with a tender conscience, he does not want to be warned or rebuked. To be told, "Give diligence," hints that he is slothful; "Take heed," that he is thoughtless, if not reckless; "Let us fear," that he has false confidence; "Harden not your heart," that he is capable of that. Most Christians are content with "church membership," general approval of pastor and people, and such "church duties" as are requested of them.

But will you please tell me how, with only these things, they differ from the Jew, with his synagogue, rabbi, observances, and

approvals?

You may answer, "I hold orthodox Christian teachings concerning the Scriptures and the Person and atoning work of Christ." But this, my friend, will not satisfy the book of Hebrews; and this, too, is the reason that very many Christians are not satisfied with the book of Hebrews----'Written to the Jews," they say!

One of the most solemn passages of the whole Bible follows:

Heb 4:12: For the word of God is living, and active—

Remark that they of old, as well as we, have to do with His Word—that which God has magnified above all His Name (Ps. 138:2). For those having to do with God, have to do with that Word! All His being and attributes are behind it. It is of eternal consequence that we should have a right perception of the Word of God! It is not merely a book of 66 books, bound between two covers, which you may pick up and lay down as you might any writing of man. Our Lord Jesus said of His own words, "The words that I have spoken unto you are spirit, and are life." It will be impossible in the compass of this comment to trace all that God says of the Scripture that "cannot be broken." Notice that the word "For" begins the verse, because Heb 4:12 and 13 give the great reason why there must be earnest diligence in this matter of entering into the rest of faith, and going on with God. It might be supposed that the "diligence" in Heb 4:11 concerns man's activity only--diligence in prayer, or any special activity. But this word, "For," brings in God. And how, God? you ask. The answer is astonishing: For the word of God is living, and active. (The A.V.rendering, "quick and powerful," is doubly unfortunate. First, "quick," as meaning living, is an old word not now commonly used or understood. Second, "powerful" is not a good translation of the Greek word, energes. Thayer renders it, "that which is at work.") God deals with men not by mere "influences," nor through human "thinking," but through His word, whether written or
preached. Compare verse 2.

First, it is "**living**." That is an amazing statement. It may be beyond our grasp to know just in what manner the Word of God is "**living**," except to remind ourselves:

a. That it is the word of God, not of a creature. Therefore it can never pass away: "Forever, O Jehovah, Thy word is settled in Heaven" (Ps. 119:89).

b. That the Word of God, being the utterance of living Deity, and as we have seen, not passing away, must abide perpetually in the same vitality and energy as when first spoken, because the Spirit of God Who inspired the words, does not leave them: "The Word of God, which liveth and abideth" (1 Pet. 1:23.) This is why believers grow: they feed upon the words that "are life"; and why unbelievers, modernists, who actively reject the Bible as "God spake all these words," find it "a savor of death unto death." For the Holy Spirit, Who alone can impart life, lives in the words they reject!

While the Word of God is for life, thousands are slain by it; while sadly few hearken and live. The same Word was preached in the parable of the Sower (Matt. 13) to the wayside hearer, the rocky ground hearer, and the thorny ground hearer--that was preached to the good ground hearer. But only the last, "in an honest and good heart," received it. It were better for the others had they never heard.

c. Being the Word of God, it is the utterance of infinite wisdom. Here is no chaff, no possible element of decay. it will be as fresh a billion ages from this moment as now. Spurgeon said, "If, when I go to Heaven, God should say, 'Spurgeon, I want you to preach for all eternity,' I would simply say, 'Give me a Bible, Lord; this is all I shall need.'" Let everyone who has a Bible in his house remember that he has a living book there! Being the logos (Word) of God, it becomes the hrema (saying) of God,--by the quickening power of the Holy Spirit Who inspired it and indwells it.

Second, it is "**active**." There are things alive that are not active. I saw a large tortoise at a neighboring zoo the other day. It had life, but hardly activity. Near it was a cage of golden eagles, whose very existence was activity. But the Word of God is not only living, but active. This, people will not believe. But concerning this word, our Lord said, "Take heed how ye hear." That is, the Word of God is always doing something to those who hear or read it! When Jonah cried out to that great city of Nineveh, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" how active God's word through His prophet became! "The people of Nineveh believed God; and they proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. And the tidings reached the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes. And he made proclamation ... Let neither man nor beast, herd nor flock... feed nor drink water; but let them be covered with sackcloth, both man and beast, and let them cry mightily unto God: yea, let them turn every one from his evil way, and from the violence that is in his hands ... And God saw their works. that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil ... and He did it not" (Jonah 3:5-10).

We emphasize this example of the activity of the Word of God. It is the word of God that has gone forth and searched them out, the activity of the word of God only.

And sharper than any two-edged sword--Paul must have been familiar with the sight of the bronze Roman sword of the first century: "Among early double-edged swords, the Roman pattern stands out as a workmanlike and formidable weapon for a close fight," the Encyclopaedia Britannica tells us. But how much sharper is the Word of God than any man-made weapon!

And piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit–At a great camp-meeting I attended many years ago, there was a great deal of prayer. Some 1500 Christians had come together from all over the United States and Canada. I remember Fanny Crosby sitting in the second seat from the front, a dear saint, with Heaven upon her face. One day some one had preached the Word with power in the afternoon, and the people were dispersing. But a Negro came running up to the altar, dropped on his knees, and began to cry mightily to God. I truly believe his voice could have been heard a mile. We gathered around him to comfort him, but it was as if we were not in existence. The Word of God had pierced even to the dividing of soul and spirit. Our singing, our talk, meant nothing to the man. He had been a backslidden church member, and as he afterwards told it, "I saw myself before God's judgment bar! yea, slipping into hell, and the voices of earth meant nothing."

Alas, we forget that many come to meetings, enjoy the singing and the organ, yea, the eloquence of the preacher; but never experience dividing of soul and spirit. All is "soulical"
to, them. There is no direct dealing with God.

Here is a church "service": in comes the "choir," who, with "most acceptable performance," and "skillful accompaniment," "render" a musical "number," which, using probably Bible words, brings the audience under a religious spell. But is it spiritual--of the Holy Spirit? Hear one of them earnestly describe it:

"Hearing God's message while the organ rolls It's mighty message to our very souls." Certainly, it is to their souls, not to their spirits!

Then (let us hope), comes a godly preacher, who uses "the sword of the Spirit, the Word of God." He calls sinners to "flee from the wrath to come," to the Cross, where judgment on sin has already fallen. Men, women and even children fall under the power of the Holy Spirit, so that God becomes a living Person with Whom they have to deal. Real conviction has seized them. They have no peace until they are led by the Spirit of God to rest in the blood of Jesus, shed for them. Those who believe God (and none others are ever saved), flock forward, entirely forgetting their "religious" condition of awhile ago, when "the organ rolled," and concerned only with their spiritual state before God. The Word of God, living and active, has pierced to the dividing of soul and spirit. Men deal with God, and God deals with men, not in "soulical" music and eloquence, but in SPIRIT. Those saved have dealt with God as spirits, and will worship Him in their spirits. "God is my witness," cries Paul, "Whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son!" "The Spirit of God" is said to "bear witness with our spirits that we are born-ones of God"--not with our soulical faculties, which may hear the organ roll, feel religious, and go to hell!

We repeat, soul and spirit, Heb. 4:12, is one of the Scripture proofs that soul and spirit are not one and the same. Another is 1 Thess. 5:23: "May your spirit and soul and body be preserved entire." Man is here seen as a tripartite being, not merely body and soul. (See author's book, Romans Verse By Verse, pp. 11, 211, 306-8.) This comes out first in Eden: "Jehovah God formed man of the dust of the ground"--there is the body; "and breathed into his nostrils the breath (Heb., ruach spirit) of lives; and man became a living soul." There is the being, or mode of life, formed by the combination of spirit with body, and the spirit could now look forth upon the creation and take part in its activities. "Mind," as we call it, found its activity in the soul-life, as we read in Gen. 2:19, that "Jehovah God formed every beast ... every bird ... and brought them unto the man to see what he would call them." Man had a perception of the respective places in creation assigned to the creatures by their Creator, with Whom he was at that time in blessed relationship.

The doctrine that man is only "body and soul" has enabled fallen man to exalt this "mentality" of his, and to dream that it is the spirit. So there are theological seminaries today that claim to "prepare men for the ministry" by a course of mental exercises in theological lessons in "church history," and other studies. But this leaves out the Holy Ghost Who came at Pentecost! It does not treat man as a spirit, which spirit alone has communion with God. A theological "training" that leaves out the Holy Ghost, is a daily insult to the God of Pentecost!

So in this dividing of soul and spirit by the living and active Word of God, people become, praise God, spiritual Christians! In 1 Corinthians 2:12 to 3:3, there are seen three classes: (1) natural men, not born of God; (2) babes in Christ, born of God, but still carnal, under prevailing fleshly impulses; and (3) spiritual, that is, those controlled in mind and life by the blessed Spirit of God, toward Whom, by us, account must be rendered. The Holy Spirit does not present the truth to the soul, to the sensibilities, or to the reason, but directly to the human spirit.

Of both joints and marrow--The opposite effect from dividing and judging is seen in Ephesians 4:16 and Colossians 2:19: "From Whom all the Body fitly framed and knit together through that which every joint supplieth, according to the working in due measure of each several part, maketh the increase of the Body unto the building up of itself in love." "The Head, from Whom all the Body, being supplied and knit together through the joints and bands, increaseth with the increase of God."

Physicians have long known that the purpose of the marrow "appears to be to increase the red corpuscles." In the joints is no life: in the marrow, there is. But here in Hebrews 4:12, it is a work of searching out (even for judgment) and for ultimate salvation. It is no mere figure of speech, but just as soul and spirit of this verse denote different parts of man, so the body is, as it were, opened up, even in both joints and marrow, by the judging, living Word of God.

Many years ago, I was called to the home of a beloved and very prominent Christian worker to talk to his daughter, it being hoped that I might lead her out of her attitude of despair of salvation. Both she and her father told me her story.

She had engaged in Christian service in another land along with her parents, and had become deeply infatuated with a Christian

writer known the world over. When assurance of her own salvation began to fail her, she saw this man as her idol. As I quoted to her several Scriptures which spoke of God's sovereignty in grace, and His willingness to receive any, and reminded her that His Word is living, and active ... piercing even to the dividing of soul and spirit, of both joints and marrow; and said that we may throw ourselves completely upon His mercy, she suddenly screamed to her father:

"Do you not see? I am dying!" She stretched forth her arms: "See! they are dead! My bones are drying up! God has forsaken me, and I know it!"

No persuasion of either her father or myself availed in the least.

"I am nothing but soul--I'm all soul! My spirit is dead!" she would scream.

I kept in touch with her father. He wrote me that she died, despairing!

And quick to discern the thoughts and intents of the heart: We have known people suddenly arrested in their deepest being by reading a verse of Scripture. The thoughts, and necessarily, the intents of the heart, they found discerned, and themselves the object of an infinite Intelligence, but yet an Intelligence not like that at Sinai, when the glory and power and majesty of God were openly displayed; but in the written Word of God, which, being "living and active," had pierced them. This piercing may have resulted in their conviction of sin, and accepting Christ and salvation; or it may have been resisted. Nevertheless, the power of the Word of God is here seen, and we greatly need to meditate upon it in these days.

Heb 4:13: The Word of God brings everything out into the light: All things are naked and laid open before the eyes of Him with Whom we have to do. As David said to Solomon, "Know thou the God of thy father, and serve Him with a perfect heart and with a willing mind; for Jehovah searcheth all hearts, and understandeth all the imaginations of the thoughts" (1 Chron. 28:9). And Hannah, in her great prayer: "Jehovah is a God of knowledge, and by Him actions are weighed." And Solomon, in his prayer of dedication: "Render unto every man according to all his ways, whose heart Thou knowest (for Thou, even Thou only, knowest the hearts of all the children of men)."

Heb 4:14 Having then a Great High Priest, Who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession.

15 For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart.

16 Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy, and may find grace to help us in time of need.

Heb 4:14: These Hebrew believers are here exhorted to "hold fast" their confession. "Confession" of what? First, that Jesus is the Son of God; second, that as the Son of God He is our Great High Priest; and, third, that He has put away, at the Cross, all our sins forever; and fourth, that, raised from the dead, He passed through the heavens. The connection of this last clause with Hebrews 7:26, "Such a High Priest became us, holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and made higher
than the heavens," is very manifest.

Now what does passed through the heavens, mean? It means that all earthly priesthood and ceremony and temple are abandoned by God during this dispensation, and that worship is carried on in Heaven alone! It was one thing for Jesus to be born King of the Jews and to go about "doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil," God manifestly with Him, calling Israel to receive their Messiah: they refused—they crucified Him.

It is another thing that now He has been "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the Spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." The "mystery of godliness" written by the Spirit through Paul in 1 Timothy 3:16 is "without controversy great." But its first term reads, "He Who was manifested in the flesh"; its fourth, "preached among the nations"; and its sixth, "received up in glory."

We repeat, worship is now carried on in Heaven alone, for since Christ's death, the worshiper is nigh to God. That is, he is to go into the holiest of all, "by the blood of Jesus, by the way, a new and living way, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh," as we shall see in Hebrews 10:19ff, the great exhortation passage of Hebrews. "We (believers)" says Paul, "are the (real) circumcision, (those identified in death with Christ, Who was cut
off out of the land of the living) who worship by the Spirit of God, and glory in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3).

We cannot therefore state too strongly that there is no earthly worship now; that true worship is in the Spirit, Who, blessed be God, is here with us, but is also in Heaven, He acts in, for, and through believers wholly and only on the ground of Christ's accomplished work, and of His being received up in glory, and of His having passed through the heavens. The believer has the same blessed rights in the presence of the Father as belong to the Son in Whom he is, and Who "appears before the face of God" for him.

Certain further conclusions follow the fact that our Great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, hath passed through the Heavens:

1. All worship or pretended connection with God by men calling themselves "priests" on earth, whether Romish priests or pagan priests, involves sin and rebellion far more blasphemous than that of Korah, Dathan, and Abiram, whom the earth, opening, swallowed up. For by this pretension the Son of God and His one sufficient sacrifice of Himself are despised; and the Most High God is openly insulted by profane wretches.

2. Such worship as is fully pleasing to God is patterned in the book of Acts where the constant presence, superintendence, and guidance of the Holy Spirit are openly confessed by all believers. In those days there were no great "cathedrals," no "ecclesiastical" edifices or titles or forms; but believers went in to God, glorying in Him through Christ their Great High Priest. Any variation from this, or from Paul's description in his epistles of the heavenly calling, character, and ministry of the Church of God, must be finally rejected of God, although in His long suffering and grace He may deign for awhile to allow earnest believers to make use of means and methods not set forth in His Word. The believer will be rewarded for all really done in the name of the Lord Jesus; yet all not set forth in the Scriptures must finally be rejected by a Holy God. Wise Christians will ever be most careful, therefore, to "prove all things; hold fast that which is good"--that is, according to the Scriptures.

3. Since the world has crucified the Son of God, who hath passed through the heavens, and is awaiting His own return in glory (Hebrews 10:13), we well know that no kingdom, no state, will be "conquered by the gospel," but the very contrary! Believers are termed by our Lord in His absence a "little flock." Christendom and the world are fast preparing to bow to Satan's Christ: "All that dwell on the earth shall worship him" (Rev 13:8). This is no "failure of the gospel," or of the Church, as some, arguing in the flesh, assume! But it is God's permitting man to show what he really is, and on whose side he is. "Popular" religious movements will be judged by the wise believer in the light of all Scripture. Let us take heed, brethren, lest in our heart of hearts we be found "building up a work," rather than waiting for our Lord from Heaven. One of the articles in the ritual of the Moravians--godly and missionary saints--reads thus: "From the unhappy desire of becoming great, Gracious Lord, deliver us!"

We might illustrate the indifference of Christendom to our Great High Priest Who hath passed through the heavens, and to the worship now going on in Heaven, by an imagined visit to the camp of Israel of old.

Every Israelite knew that a morning and an evening lamb were offered daily as burnt offerings to Jehovah; and that four other great sacrifices (two of them having to do with the forgiveness of sin) had been provided, and minutely described by God to Moses and Aaron; in addition to the Great Day of Atonement once a year, the great yearly feasts, the weekly Sabbath, and other celebrations. They had been told to teach their children the meaning of these things, especially of the Passover, by which they had been delivered from Egypt by the shedding of the lamb's blood.

Let us in imagination step up to this man calling himself an Israelite, and hold converse with him.

"No," he says, "I don't give any thought to the daily offerings. The priest is supposed to attend to all that! I do not see anything in it anyhow but a form. And so with the Great Day of Atonement. As for the Passover feast, and the others, I meet my friends there. But as for remembering that the blood of the lamb down in Egypt long ago kept the destroyer from smiting the Israelites whose tents were marked with it--I rather regard that as a fable. The weekly Sabbath also, frankly, would get to be a burden to me were it not for the social feature--meeting friends and acquaintances."

"Yet you call yourself an Israelite?" we ask. "Oh, yes, certainly!" Here then is a man who does not regard the presence of the Creator God in yonder tabernacle, though he owes life, breath, and all things to Him. Furthermore, all the priestly functions going on there, meant to teach him deep truths, and draw him close to the God of Israel, mean nothing to him!

Alas, it is so in the professing church! There is a great priesthood being exercised in Heaven. Sacrifices are not now being offered up, because the Son of God and Son of Man offered Himself once for all, at infinite cost, to put away man's sin. But there is a worship going on in Heaven: the Holy Ghost has come. The saints delight to remember Him Who died for them--not only on the Lord's Day, at the Lord's table, in remembrance of Him, but every day! Christ is for them, as it were, the "morning and evening sacrifice." The value, power and infinite blessedness of this acceptance before God in their behalf is ever before them. These are the saints of God.

But, alas, there are those who "go to church," and "sit ...as My people," as God said to Ezekiel; and sing the songs, hear the sermon, greet their friends, praise the preacher, then go home, to feast at dinner, and "enjoy themselves," as best they may.

But where is God, where is Christ, where is the Holy Spirit in all this? The Living God, they know not. The Great High Priest, and the worship belonging to the heavenly calling, they care not for. The Holy Ghost, they have not.

Alas, if it were only one here and there! But there are thousands upon thousands, to whom the sense of the fearful need of the shed blood of Christ on their behalf has never come; to whom the unutterable rest of faith in that blood, and the ecstatic sweetness of a purged conscience have never come; to whom the "entering in by the new and living way," and the "drawing near to God" by the blood of Christ, with Him as a Great High Priest Who hath passed through the heavens, mean nothing; to whom the glad singing that has begun in Heaven to go on for all eternity, has never opened on their ears! "Church membership," the selection of a "denomination," the following of some petty "program," even jealousy for certain "standards,"--that is all there is to it.

Once in awhile, in marvellous mercy, God puts forth a hand in sovereign grace and rescues some soul from this unconscious death and damnation, and there is joy in Heaven!

In contrast to cold, indifferent, professing Christians, neglectful of the priesthood and worship in Heaven, there are earnest, gracious souls who find hindrances and difficulties in laying hold of Christ's benefit to us as Priest. For to those who have heard and believed the true gospel of Christ's having fully settled their account, actually borne their judgment, and put away their sin by His

blood at the Cross, unless the doctrine of Christ's priesthood in Heaven has been thoroughly explained, there will arise perplexity and self-condemnation, when assaults and accusations of Satan are made upon the soul, and experimental peace is destroyed.

For the question arises in such a heart: "Since Christ 'made peace by the blood of His Cross,' why do I not experience peace?" And further, when God's providence permits to arise circumstances which, looked at in themselves, test the faith and seem to hide His face; and most especially when upon searching their hearts they can find no cause for such Divine withdrawal of comfort; and even earnest supplication seems to avail nothing; I say, unless the true doctrine of Christ's work as Priest on our behalf in Heaven be diligently taught and received, there will be much spiritual trouble.

For almost universally the human heart expects a priest to do something God-ward. The thought that all has been done, that Christ at God's right hand is NOT making propitiation for us, but is acting upon the basis of propitiation already made--His work God-ward having been finished; that He has entered in, "having obtained eternal redemption"; that there is "no more offering for sin"--this great fact tests the reality of our faith in Christ's work to the very utmost.

I have met thousands upon thousands of Christians, but, as I look back, I can remember few indeed whose presence gave one a consciousness that they had untroubled rest. Many, of course, were relying upon Christ and His work and had learned to view their own righteousnesses as filthy rags. But among even the most earnest and "consecrated" of these, the majority seemed yet to be engaged in what one might call an inward struggle, or were at least longing after a "higher state of grace" in themselves.

Yet there have been souls who have come into an unbroken abiding in God according to 1 John 4:16: "He that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him." I remember in particular many years ago sitting on the bank of the Hudson, above New York, having a long talk with a Christian gentleman from England. In this man I found no vestige whatever of struggle or aspiration. The very atmosphere of his presence was one of quietness, of satisfaction, of utter absence of all apprehension, or creature-fear. Rest, depth, devotion--all these breathed forth from him, quite unknown to himself. For I found, as we talked and talked, that rest in Christ was perfected in him to a degree I had never thought possible! Faith with him was no effort: was not Christ God the Son? Had not Christ put away sin for ever on the Cross? Did Christ not live at God's right hand, and live for him and in him as "the hope of glory?" Whatever struggles over these matters he may have had, they were all past. The verse that seemed to sum up his life was the third verse of our present chapter in Hebrews: "We who have believed do enter into that rest." The influence of that conversation was to me a revelation--became to me a voice.

You may say, Among all the twelve there was only one such disciple. Yes, I know it. And the others recognized it (John 13:23-26). But did not John's attitude of simplicity of faith make true in his experience, "We know and have believed the love which God hath in our case"? And see Stephen in Acts 7. it is hard indeed for our poor legal hearts to surrender to this mighty fact: that not our devotion or consecration, or will to serve or suffer, but our FAITH is addressed, when our Lord says, "All things are possible to him that believeth" (Mk. 9:23); and, "As therefore ye received Christ Jesus the Lord (by simple faith), so keep walking in Him" (Col. 2:6).

And who, I pray you, has the right to believe? Well, Paul wrote, in the Spirit, "sinners; of whom I am chief" (1 Ti 1:15); and, "The life that I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, Who loved me and gave Himself for me."

"Thou sayest, Fit me, fashion me for Thee.
Stretch forth thine empty hands, and be thou still:
O restless soul thou dost but hinder Me
By valiant purpose and by steadfast will.
Behold the summer flowers beneath the sun,
In stillness His great glory they behold;
And sweetly thus His mighty work is done,
And resting in His gladness they unfold.
So are the sweetness and the joy Divine
Thine, O beloved, and the work is Mine."
--Ter Steegen.

Now tell me why all the mighty Priestly work of Christ in Heaven should not be made good in your case. Do you plead you are unworthy? That is a plea of one who does not yet know grace. Grace is for the unworthy! As long as you and I are disappointed in ourselves, we show that we have been hoping in ourselves. When we have failed, it is our own strength we have, in our folly, leaned upon. If you are one of "them that are tempted" (Heb 2:18), one of the "ignorant and erring" (Heb 5:2), you are one of those to whom our Great High Priest freely affords His infinite blessing, as our next verse reads:

Heb 4:15: For we have not a High Priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, without sin.

"May God in His mercy give us a true insight into the glory of what is offered us in these words--even this, that our High Priest, Whom we have in heaven, is One Who is able to sympathize with us, because He knows, from personal experience, exactly what we feel! 'For we have not a high priest who is not able to sympathize with our weaknesses.' The writer uses the two negatives to

indicate how common the thought is which he wishes to combat. A rich king, who lives every day in luxury,--can he, even though he hear of it,--can he fully realize what it means for the poor sick man, from year to year, never to know where his daily bread is to come from? Hardly! And God, the glorious and ever-blessed, can He truly feel what a poor sinner experiences in his daily struggle with the weakness and temptations of the flesh? God be praised! Jesus knows, and is able to sympathize. He is one who hath been in all things tempted like as we are, without sin." And He is God the Son!--Murray, "The Holiest of All." p. 168.

This is what we longed for! You remember how old Eli, the high priest of Israel, misjudged Hannah, who was in deep affliction and earnest prayer. As she prayed, he "marked her mouth ... and thought she had been drunken." Not so with our High Priest! He never misjudges, always understands. How tenderly He restored Peter after his denial. What a blessed comfort, in our weakness and infirmities, to know that we have a Great High Priest able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmity!" No matter how weak and failing we realize ourselves to be, our position in Him never changes. No matter what the darkness may be, our Great High Priest ever appears before the face of God for us; and He is the same yesterday and today and unto the ages, able as when on earth to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities--yea, all the infirmities of His own!

I recently had a talk with a dear friend who has had much infirmity of body, but who was at this time deeply concerned with another phase of infirmity. "So often," he said, "for days at a time, I do not seem to be able to get hold of anything. Even my hold on God seems gone, and a sense of weakness which is indescribable overwhelms me. Whether it is nervous weakness, or mental collapse, or a direct attack of the enemy, I do not know. What shall I do?"

I read to this friend Paul's words in 2 Corinthians 12:9-10, with the Lord's answer to his three times beseeching that his "thorn in the flesh" might be removed--(a physical infirmity, but a "messenger of Satan" to keep "buffeting" him: that he "might not be exalted overmuch"): "He hath said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee"; and Paul's wonderful response: "Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may rest upon me. Wherefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distress, for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong."

I rejoice to say that my friend seemed comforted. He had never thought of glorying in weaknesses, taking pleasure in infirmities. It is for such cases as this that our Great High Priest, the Forerunner for us, has entered in, and supplies to us His strength--HIS--His OWN strength!

"**Touched**"--what a beautiful word! What a continual tenderness! And it is not the emotion of pity here, nor feeling for us, as of one far off from us, but of feeling with us--sympathy. For we read further, but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are. Tempted directly by Satan, assailed by all the wiles of our great enemy, passing sinless and holy through all; tempted by circumstances so adverse as to seem as if God had forgotten Him: no place to lay His head. Tempted by the continual unbelief of the Jews, and of His mother's children; tempted and tried constantly by the little faith and slowness of heart of His own disciples, for whom He cared as the very children of the bridechamber. We praise God for this word, in all points tempted like as we, sin apart.

The word "**yet**" inserted in both the Authorized and the Revised versions here, "yet without sin," is an utter hindrance, instead of a true translation. The Greek reads, "tempted like as we, without sin," or, "sin apart." The Greek word for without, choris, signifies having no connection with, no relationship to. Temptation does not involve sin. Twice in this epistle, here and at Hebrews 9:28, occurs this remarkable expression, choris hamartias, apart from sin.

It may throw light on the first occurrence to look at the other, where we read that Christ, "having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation" (Hebrews 9:28). Every thoughtful reader will at once see the meaning of choris hamartias here, for we know that our Great High Priest, Jesus the Son of God, hath been "manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself" (9:26), so that, having been thus "once offered to bear the sins of many," when He appears the second time, it will be apart from sin. Clearly, whether we read here the expression choris hamartias, apart from sin, as referring to Christ Himself or to us, whose sins He bore, the sin question will not come up for the saints at His coming. Therefore the phrase, choris hamartias, denotes an entire absence of sin, in Hebrews 4:15, as in Hebrews 9:28.

Our Lord was tempted by Satan to fall down and worship Him. Does this mean that there was an inclination in Christ to do such a thing? What folly to think of it! He was the "True Light" which shone in the darkness, and the darkness "overcame it not." This is the testimony of the Spirit in John 1:5, 9. There was nothing of the inward struggle that we know when tempted. It is a Satanic delusion, and next door to blasphemy, to assert that in order to be in all points tempted like as we, Christ must have had an inward inclination to the evil! There are two great truths you must hold fast; the truth about our Lord's Person, the truth about His Work. In all His temptations--and He endured them all--He was God, Who had spoken the word of creation of the worlds, and upholds them "by the word of His power" (Heb. 1:2-3).

Though our Great High Priest is man, it is blessed indeed to have Him called in this great passage Jesus the Son of God, able to be touched with the feeling of our infirmities, having passed through the path of temptation--suffering therein because He was the infinitely Holy One, loving righteousness and hating iniquity, and being, of course apart from, without, sin. Even in our little life on earth we know of temptations of virtuous, high-minded persons who have been approached by those who would ensnare them; and the very suggestion of the evil they abhorred has made them suffer, for they hated the evil. Now One infinitely above us, our blessed Lord, has this testimony borne to Him as man: "Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity" (Hebrews 1:9).

The perpetual object of the devil is to malign Christ to every believer, and to deny His work. But "Jesus Christ is the same

yesterday and today, yea and forever"--the Jehovah character. Loving righteousness and hating evil marked every moment of our Lord's existence on earth, as well as before He came. Therefore leave out the dishonoring "yet" of the translations of Hebrews 4:15; and behold your Lord, assaulted by every evil which Satan, or the world of evil men, or poor faltering disciples could bring to bear upon Him, going steadily on, delighting to do the will of God. Such is the Captain of your salvation!

Heb 4:16:Let us therefore draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace--

This is the throne of God in all His holiness, righteousness, and truth. It is to Him we come. The word "Therefore" refers us to Heb 4:14, 15, which we have just studied. Our Great High Priest is there, at God's right hand, and of course believers are in Him, as brethren. (See Hebrews 2:11.) Thence our boldness. "He appears before the face of God for us," and "ever liveth to make intercession for us." Our Priest does not stand between us and God, as did Israel's; but He is Head over the house of God, of which we are a part; and in the midst of the saints He leads our worship and our praise.

But note that it is not to Him we are told to draw near, but unto the throne, unto God:

1. God must be on His throne.
2. God's name is not mentioned here, but the throne only.

The whole passage (Heb 4:14-16) is filled with the presence of our Great High Priest, and it is His presence there that gives us boldness.

3. But it is a throne of Grace. Here is an amazing word, for Grace means favor, and a throne of grace is dispensing favor. It is in the value of the finished work of Christ on our own behalf that the believer is welcomed to the throne of Grace. It is the throne of the infinitely holy God, twice in this epistle called "the throne of the Majesty in the heavens," where is the blessed and only Potentate, the only God, called in Hebrews 12 "the judge of all," Who has judged our sin in His own Son and has chosen to place believers in Christ Risen, making them thus the righteousness of God Himself, in Christ. This is immeasurable, yea, unutterable grace. Grace is always sovereign. There are only two principles: grace and "merit," as it is called. But of merit we have none: "There is none righteous." We must not, cannot avoid this, that we, no matter what we have been or what we have done, are being received (by Divine sovereign grace) as Christ our Lord was received. There are no degrees of acceptability or acceptance before God. Every believer is received according to the full, finished work of Christ!

This is without doubt the hardest (though most simple and most insisted upon) truth for believers to grasp, in all the book of Hebrews.

But we must conceive of God's throne being now a throne of grace--yea, that Grace which gave His Son to bear sin, made to be sin in our behalf. For us to hang back is to doubt God's heart of mercy; to limit Christ's unspeakable sacrifice, and secretly to conceive that God must have something against us because of past sin or failure: and this is that unbelief which is the great secret foe of the God of truth and grace. Believer, exercise your heart over and over on this wonderful phrase, the throne of grace. To the most of even real Christians, it is a throne where possible judgment awaits them, or a throne which puts them "on probation," or (as the Reformed Theology will have it), a throne where, behind and beyond everything else, Law, and not Love, reigns and must reign. (In the Church time of Rev. 2,3, indeed, our Lord Jesus says, "I also overcame, and sat down with My Father in His throne." But when the dispensation changes from grace to judgment at Rev. 4:1, there is the throne of the thrice holy One surrounded by the four-and-twenty thrones of the elders, and before Whom they and the four living ones fall, crying out, "Holy, holy, holy!" Again at the close of the Millennium, there is the Great White Throne, of the Last Judgment; and finally, the "throne of God and of the Lamb" of the eternal state (Rev. 21,22).

It is called a throne of grace in view of the purposes of God. In us is to be exhibited, for all eternity, age after age, and more and more in each age, the infinite kindness of God Whose name is Love (Eph. 2:7). It is a throne at which no charges against sinners are made. For we read, "God was in Christ (at the Cross) reconciling the world unto Himself, not reckoning unto them their trespasses" (2 Cor. 5:19). That dispensation is on, in which our Lord Jesus Christ said,

"If any man hear My sayings, and keep them not, I judge him not ... the word that I spake, the same shall judge him in the last day" (John 12:47-8). But the "Last Day" is not yet; the day of Grace is here, and, praise God, has not yet closed, as it will close! In all the unspeakable blessedness of that friendship toward sinners which the Friend of sinners displayed when in this world, the throne of grace exists. Now if God chooses to sit in grace, not judgment, let poor sinners hasten! and let believers, no matterhow faint of heart or how failing in life, hasten into this throne room! There can be no mistake: God cannot lie.

Let us come boldly--As we have seen (cf. Hebrews 3:6, and see comment there) the word "boldness" is literally, all-spokenness--meaning, "Unreservedness in speech; freedom, frankly, without concealment; fearless confidence: the diametric opposite of being covered with shame" (Thayer). So let us not be ashamed or fearful, but have boldness before such a throne.

To close, then, this wonderful verse, we have the object to be obtained in thus coming boldly to a throne of grace: first, that we may receive mercy--special favor, Divine blessing; second, that we may find grace to help in time of need. Let us analyze these briefly.

Paul speaks of himself as one who had "obtained mercy" at his salvation; and again, as one who had "obtained mercy" to be faithful--in his ministry. National Israel also in the future is to obtain what she has never yet obtained--mercy (Hos. 2:19). Now here in Hebrews the believer is exhorted, having this Great High Priest touched with the feeling of his infirmities, to come boldly unto the

throne of grace, to receive mercy. This is not the mercy of salvation, for he has already received that. (Mark that "mercy" here is a noun. The verb, which we know in Lk 18:13, "Be Thou merciful (or propitiated) to me a sinner," sets forth initial salvation. See Ro 9:15, 16, 18; 1 Tim. 1:13, 16. But it is special mercy to a saved person that Heb. 4:16 speaks of.) Unsaved people are not told that they have a Great High Priest, for they have not, till they have believed the marvelous news of the gospel. But, you say, when is the believer then to come to receive mercy? Well, let him come according to the example given in Scripture. David said:

"Evening, and morning, and at noonday, will I complain, and moan; And He will hear my voice" (Ps. 55:17); and,

"At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto Thee Because of Thy righteous ordinances" (Ps. 119:62).

The "mercy" referred to in Hebrews 4:16 is explained by what follows: Here is a faithful, praying believer, daily going to God, pouring out his soul--for he is always in a state of dependence, as we know. Then suddenly, unexpectedly, there comes a time of need, need of special grace for special testings or even chastenings (see Hebrews 12). False friends betray, or weak Christians try his spirit. Testings of all kinds come. But peculiarly does the saint find times of need when the great enemy is permitted specially to attack him. But lo, such a one has already obtained mercy for just such a time of need: so that when they arrive, he finds grace to help him. Grace in this sense is the direct supplying by the almighty power of God, by the indwelling Spirit, of such Divine help as the believer needs at any time.

Alas, perhaps all of us will give ready testimony that we can trace our spiritual failures to a lack of prayer beforehand--a lack of a drawing near with boldness unto the throne of grace. (It is to be carefully noted that that operation of the Holy Spirit within us which enables us to pray is not here set before us, as elsewhere. Why? Because in Hebrews God is speaking to us in a Son. It is the Person and work of Christ that are in view. We should, however, remember such verses as Eph 2:18: "Through Him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile believers) have our access in one Spirit unto the Father." Here the Trinity is before us: we come through Christ, the Spirit having the enabling power in prayer, unto God as Father. Neither of these relationships is set before us in Hebrews. But, as we said, the Person and work of Christ, by Whom and by which we have the right to, and do, draw near to God in Heaven, are set forth.)

One who has "obtained mercy" is written down in God's book for help when "time of need" arises. This is most important. We ought not to postpone our appeals until the time of need. Then we may be distraught, we may be perplexed; then we may be bereaved, ill in body, or overwhelmed by some tremendous call or opportunity for service. But if we obey this great command of verse 16, and, outside the time of need, draw near with boldness unto the throne of grace, we shall find ourselves made inwardly conscious of a Divine "yes" which will give us wonderful confidence when the time of need comes and we need grace.

Many years ago, in the Moody Institute, it fell to me to direct the afternoon and evening gathering of all the students. Together with my helpers, some eleven men, I made the celebration a missionary one. There was manifest blessing.

When all was over, at about ten at night, I said to the young men who had helped, "Let us go into my office and thank the Lord." We went in and knelt to pray. It was in none of Our Minds to remain long, but just to thank the Lord ere we retired.

But it pleased God to take the meeting in charge. His Spirit filled us. In a few minutes we were on our faces praising God and weeping with joy. How His love melted and overwhelmed us! All sense of distance from God, yea, all sense of self, was gone. Only measureless joy in God, as we knew ourselves the objects of His intimate kindness and love, remained.

There we were until half past three in the morning! And when we dispersed, we were more refreshed, in body and spirit, than at the beginning. After the brethren left, 1 marked stain after stain of tears upon the floor, where men had wept with joy. Four men, if not five, became missionaries as a result of that night's visitation.

God may not at all times overwhelm us, as on that occasion,
with a sense of His blessedness and love. We walk by faith, not by sight (lit., appearance, vision, or experience). But at all times, under all circumstances, God is love, and believers are invited to come boldly to a throne, a throne of GRACE!

Not only justification through the blood of Christ, not only our position in Christ, do we find in Hebrews, but spiritual activity on the part of those who have been "enlightened." There is an entering in, in Hebrews: not an entering in to mere doctrines, but into God's presence. There is a boldness enjoined throughout the book which is a boldness toward God, in view always of Christ's having put away our sin by His one sacrifice, and having Himself entered within the veil as our Forerunner, appearing before the face of God for us.

And in Hebrews, activity of believers culminates in worship. To be satisfied with "joining the church," holding "correct doctrine," or engaging in "church activities" or "programs" is far, far from Hebrews teaching. In Hebrews the believers are all to be acquainted with God, to be godly, to be worshipers, to be pressing on to full growth, to be "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises."

We may note that:

1. Salvation brings joy and gratitude: delightful to God, yet not properly worship.
2. A sense of sonship brings filial affection, rather than worship.
3. Union with Christ (and God) brings a sense of liberty--and blessedness of life.
4. The relation of Bride, "espoused to one Husband," Christ, brings a sense of separation from the world to Him: the "first love" (Rev. 2:4).

5. Taking Christ as Lord brings a sense of being owned by Him, and delight in service. Christ died and rose again "that He might be Lord", "Whom I serve in my spirit in the gospel of His Son," as said Paul.

6. But worship belongs to God as God; and the redeemed will worship forever!

Even Christ said, "My Father" (as being one of the Godhead) but, "My God", as having become man. Indeed. though He was "equal with God," yet will Christ, Who has, as Man, entered into the holies above "through His own blood," as our Great High Priest, lead the praises and worship of "the great congregation" of His saints forever.

It is sadly true that many Christians never on earth become such worshipers and praisers of God. Thus they doubly lose. For it is Christ's business in Heaven to see that our needs are supplied, and our trials and temptations met. But God's plan is that we should come habitually to the throne of grace. Thus all things are supplied, and we are delivered from this world, and our minds set on the things that are above, as we are enjoined in Colossians 3:1-3.

But the greatest result, infinitely the greatest, is the glory God receives from a life filled with prayer and praise. A "heavenly minded" Christian is noted by the world and remembered by the saints. Oh, let us become occupied with this wondrous life of worship and praise!

It is related of the saintly Duncan Matheson in Edinburgh, by a friend who was walking with him one day, that Matheson turned gently to him, saying, "Gang alang, Jimmie, for the Lord ha' a word wi' me. Wait for me." So the friend walked on for several blocks, while Matheson was occupied in some business with God. Then he caught up with his friend.

The great barrier to the love of worship in most hearts is the thought of distance--of a gulf between us and our God. judging in our hearts our nearness to God by our own inner sense of that nearness, we fail to look at Christ (in Whom we are) as having entered in through His own blood into the holies above. He is our nearness! We are created in Him, the Risen Christ, and made to sit with Him in the heavenlies, in Christ Jesus."

How many Christians should daily be "drawing near" the throne of Grace in Heaven? Absolutely all! It will never do merely to say, "I am saved. I have believed Romans' truth--justification by faith. And I have believed Ephesians' truth, that I am raised up with Christ and made to sit with Him in the heavenlies." For Hebrews takes the heavenly calling for granted, and then says, Draw near. Do you yourself, do this? Are you offering up "a sacrifice of praise to God continually"? Are you a constant worshiper within the veil?

Hebrews 5

Heb 5:1 For every high priest taken from amongst men is appointed for men in things pertaining to God: that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins;

2 who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring, for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity;

3 and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

4 And no man taketh the honor unto himself, but when he is called of God, even as was Aaron.

5 Thus also the Christ glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He (did) that spake unto Him: Thou art My Son, This day have I begotten Thee!

6 As He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

7 Who in the days of His flesh, having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto Him that was able to save Him out of death, and having been heard for His godly fear,

8 though He was a Son, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered;

9 and, having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the Author (or Cause) of eternal salvation;

10 named of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

THIS PASSAGE, THROUGH verse 10, grows out of Hebrews 4:14-16. We see in it, first, that the high priests of Israel were appointed for men in things pertaining to God, to offer both gifts, and sacrifices for sins. So with us: it is all through Christ. Second: An earthly high priest could bear gently, because of being himself compassed with infirmity, and so bound ... to offer both for himself and his own sins. Here contrast him with Christ--Whose sympathy arose not out of His infirmities--for He had none! (as see Hebrews 7:28 and comment there), nor sins (see Hebrews 9:14). Christ's sympathy grew out of His passing all along the path of suffering to "perfecting": and so being able to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"--though He had no infirmity! Read again and again Hebrews 7:28: "The Law appointeth men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the Law, (appointeth) a Son, perfected forevermore!"

Heb 5:1: The argument is this: That the high priests of Israel were taken from among men, because they were appointed for men in things pertaining to God. The word "For," which opens the chapter, while it refers back to the priesthood of Christ (Hebrews 4:14-16) both compares and contrasts Him with Aaronic high priests. There are, first in general, things pertaining to God which men must

have attended to, but which men cannot themselves attend to. They must have a priest; and for us Christ is that Priest, because, although Son of God, He became man, and was appointed for men in things pertaining to God. (See this expression, in things pertaining to God, in Ro 15:17; and in Heb. 2:17, and comment there. Cf. 1 Chron. 26:32, 2 Chr 19:11.)

Even William Kelly says concerning Hebrews 5:1-5, "The description of priesthood is general, but with Aaron in view, in order to bring in the wondrous contrast of Christ." Yes; that contrast is brought out in Hebrews, but not, we feel, in this passage, for Heb 5:1-10 set forth the office, work, character, and attitude toward God of a priest, be it Aaron or Christ. It is a description, rather than a contrast, here.

Both gifts and sacrifices for sins: Note that "gifts" precedes "sacrifices," both here and in other places where this expression occurs (Heb 8:3, 9:9), because the chief and normal business of a priest was to receive the gifts and direct the worship of the people. Of course, we know that priesthood is based on sacrifice, and this will be emphasized: see Hebrews 7:27; 10:11. But just as in Hebrews our Great High Priest leads the worship and songs of the saints, who have access by His blood, and through the veil, His flesh; and by His presence, unto God's very throne: so the high priest of Israel, in all except one day of the year, was "appointed for" Israel in things pertaining to God: "first-fruits," "thank-offerings," "gifts," and all manner of worship. On the one day excepted, the Great Day of Atonement, all the sins and iniquities of Israel were confessed by him. All sacrifices for sins throughout the year were under his direction.

It is blessed to reflect that Christ, having offered "one sacrifice for sins forever," is at God's right hand, ready to receive and welcome all gifts from the saints--of praises or of "doing good." See carefully Hebrews 13:15,16.

To sum up and continue:

1. Priests are taken from among men.
2. Priests are appointed for men. A prophet comes forth from God representing God to men. A priest goes in on man's behalf to God.
3. The priest is occupied with things pertaining to God.
4. The priest offers both gifts and sacrifices for sins.
5. The priest must be one who can bear gently with the ignorant and erring. In the earthly priest's case, the reason is that he himself also is compassed with infirmity; and by reason thereof is bound, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins (Heb 5:2, 3). In Christ's case (see Heb 5:7-10), being Himself sinless, He needed not to offer for Himself, yet learned obedience by the things which He suffered; thus having been made perfect, He became a High Priest that can be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities"; but having been "in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart," as we saw in Hebrews 4:15. We repeat, He Himself had no infirmity!

6. (Heb 5:4): The priest must be called of God, even as was Aaron. It is an honor that no man taketh unto himself. Even Christ also, though He was a Son (Heb 5:8), with blessed humility glorified not Himself to be made a high priest, but He (glorified Him) that spake unto Him-that is, the Father!

Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee: "The name here expresses the same relationship, but it is to the Messiah born on earth that this title is here applied. For Ps. 2, as establishing Him as King in Zion, announces the decree which proclaims His title: Thou art My Son; this day have I begotten Thee, is His relationship in time, with God. It depends, I doubt not, on His glorious nature; but this position for man was acquired by the miraculous birth of Jesus here below, and demonstrated as true and determined in its true import by His resurrection."--Darby's synopsis.

Heb 5:6: as He saith also in another place, Thou art a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek Thus the Father spoke to Christ, according to Psalm 2:7; saluting Him thus,according to Psalm 110:4.

Heb 5:7: Who in the days of His flesh--This refers, of course, to our Lord's life on earth, from the time He "in like manner partook of blood and flesh," till the time the Father raised Him from the dead. After the resurrection, His consciousness looked back to these days of His flesh, as we remember His saying just before His ascension, "These are My words which I spake unto you, while I was yet with you" (Lk 24:44). We know, of course, even from this same chapter in Luke 24:39-43, that He had, after His resurrection, flesh and bones--a real human body!

Having offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears--Our Lord's life was one of prayer, as for example in a single Gospel, Luke 3:21; 5:16; 6:12; 9:18, 28, 29; 11:1; 22:39-46. But the two Greek words for prayer used here in Hebrews 5:7 are unusual: one, deesis, meaning supplication in great need; and the other, hiketrios, used only here in Scripture, meaning, entreating for aid.

Unto Him that was able to save Him out of death--Here we evidently have Gethsemane. And what was the conflict in Gethsemane? We have had to turn away from frightful misinterpretations of the scene there. Some have insisted that our blessed Lord in Gethsemane was having a struggle with Satan; and some that He prayed to be delivered from dying! Now I cannot see any persons present in Gethsemane other than Scripture presents--that is, the Son and the Father (and a helping angel, at the close: Lk. 22:43).

Nor did our Lord ask the Father to save Him from (apo) dying, but out of (ek) death, into which He was to come. We know from Psalm 16:10 that He stepped off, at the Cross, into death, with full faith!

"For Thou wilt not leave My soul to Sheol (Hades); Neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life."

Had He not prayed there on the Cross, "Let not the pit shut its mouth upon Me"? (Ps. 69:15 is Messianic--see vss. 9 and 21.) It is the Father (not Satan!) Who is presenting the "cup" to our Lord's lips in Gethsemane--not to drink at that moment, but that He may taste, in all the awfulness of it, what it will mean to drink it fully on the Cross. For the "cup" is the cup of infinite holy wrath against human sin, involving that forsaking concerning which our Lord cried with such anguish, "My God, My God, why hast Thou forsaken Me?" For from all eternity, in love inconceivable, there had been the fellowship of the Father and the Son upon the Father's bosom!

In Gethsemane the Father would have Him taste that cup, and choose it, while still in fellowship with the Father. Consequently there are those agonizing cries, "My Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass away from Me: nevertheless, not as I will, but as Thou wilt." And as our Lord goes on (the sleeping disciples never helping His prayer), His sweat becomes as great drops of blood falling to the ground!

The Son of God, being Himself God, as the Creator and upholder of all things, had never had to obey! But as we read in Hebrews 2:10, "It became Him, for Whom are all things, and through Whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." Therefore we read that His entreaties in Gethsemane were "in an agony" (Lk. 22:44). But He gets the victory! He consents to the Father--to being forsaken by Him. (See the comment on Heb, 13:20, 21.)

So He said, when they came to arrest Him, and Peter's sword was drawn, "Put up the sword into the sheath: the cup which the Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?"

There is no mention of Satan in that holy struggle. His time was not come. Over those of Adam's race who were sinners, Satan "had the might of death," as we have seen in Hebrews 2:14. But Christ had not sinned! Neither was our sin yet laid upon Him. And it is frightful slander to say that our Lord prayed to be saved from dying! He had steadily chosen the path to the Cross: He began "to show unto His disciples, that He must go unto Jerusalem ... and be killed, and the third day be raised up" (Matt. 16:21). And read and re-read these verses: "When the days were well-nigh come that He should be received up, He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem" (Lk 9:51). No! He expected to die, and He would not even pray for deliverance. In John 12:24ff He said, "Except a grain of wheat fall into the earth and die, it abideth by itself alone; but if it die, it beareth much fruit."

And in verse 27 He definitely states the question: "Now is My soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save Me from this hour."

And His answer is, "But for this cause came I unto this hour Father, glorify Thy name."

Be ashamed, all who ever dreamed that our Lord was praying to be kept from dying, or of the fantastic thought that He was praying that Satan might not kill Him, so that He might die on the Cross! These things are far from this scene. Our Lord, Who had "emptied Himself," and had trodden the path of poverty, unselfishness, and nothingness in Himself, now was brought to death. He was tasting now in Gethsemane what it would mean on the Cross to be forsaken under wrath by God, with the awful load of our sin upon Him. And He would obtain from Him that was able to save Him out of death, the present assurance that He would do this. To what a degree of weakness, then, in His path of obedience in order to become our Saviour and Priest, was the Lord Jesus Christ reduced. As He says in Psalm 22:15, "Thou hast brought Me into the dust of death."

Never one of the human race that had stepped off with sin upon him, into physical death, heretofore, but had gone down to doom--no coming back! What our Lord prayed for was that upon His dying such Scriptures might be fulfilled as:

"Thou wilt not leave My soul to Sheol; Neither wilt Thou suffer Thy Holy One to see corruption. Thou wilt show Me the path of life: in Thy presence is fullness of joy; In Thy right hand there are pleasures forevermore" (Ps. 16:10, 11).

And having been heard for His godly fear--That is, He was not heard merely because He was the Son of God and spotless, but He was about to step into the place of guilty creaturehood: He was to be "crucified through weakness," ("For Him, death was death. Man's utter weakness, and God's just vengeance (against sin), and alone, without one sympathy, forsaken of those whom He had cherished, Messiah delivered to Gentiles and cast down, the judge washing his hands of condemning innocence; the priests interceding against the guiltless instead of for the guilty,--all dark, without one ray of light even from God."--Darby's Collected Writings.) and to live by "the power of God" (2 Cor. 13:4). Therefore His attitude is, "Thy will be done": this absolutely, finally. His "fear," therefore, was not dread of God, but that reverence to the utmost which belonged to the place of obedience into which He had stepped when He said, "Lo, I am come to do Thy will, O God."

Heb 5:8: Though being a Son, He learned from the things He suffered, obedience.

As the Eternal Son, the Second Person of the Deity, One in the counsels of creation itself, the Executor thereof, He needed not to learn anything! But He must "learn obedience," even though a Son!

Therefore we read:

"He counted not the being on an equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men; and being found in fashion as a man, He humbled Himself, becoming obedient unto death, yea, the death of the Cross!" (Phil. 2:6-8).

We dwell upon this, our Lord's preparation for Calvary; otherwise the believer, urged by a weak conscience, will be seeking to

substitute his own obedience, not realizing that One has already obeyed, "even unto death," as the passage quoted above concludes, "yea, the death of the Cross." Meditate much here. The Son learned obedience* by the things which He suffered. Reflection upon the relations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, at Calvary, is an ever-flowing spring to the believer's heart: God the Father, holy and righteous, about to take the judgment-seat against human sin; Christ, the Son, Creator, Heir, about to become the Victim, the Bearer of the creature's sin, in, as it were, the creature's place (though ever God)! And all this "through the Eternal Spirit," through Whom all our Lord's ministry was carried out. (See Heb. 9:14.) One reflecting deeply upon this astonishing spectacle, is "lost in wonder, love, and praise"--and this is the Divine desire!

The "obedience" which our Lord learned by the things which He suffered was not legal obedience--that is, to the letter of the Law, which Israel had broken. Those who view Christ as having obeyed the Law, where man had failed and thus giving us His righteousness, miss the great motive of our Lord's obedience—to do the Father's will! And also that great, ever-present love, which chose to lay His life down for the sheep.

It is this constant choosing of the will of the Father that is called learning obedience.

True obedience on our part is an outflow of love, as was Christ's. We also, in the things that we suffer, learn obedience--submission, patience, trust. Nevertheless our
obedience, be it what may, purchases nothing as to salvation--nothing whatever. In this path Christ is alone. We all know this, but it ever bears repeating! Let us remove at this point all thoughts of our obedience to God, or consecration to Him, now or in the future, as "meritorious." It is Christ in this passage Who is about to become the Cause of eternal salvation (Heb 5:9)--Christ, I say-not Christ's obedience plus our surrender, or even our faith as purchasing aught!

Heb 5:9: Then we come to the marvelous ninth verse: **And having been made perfect**--Of course, this was not moral perfection, which was His always, eternally, in every moment, every circumstance. He was perfect as a babe and as a child; but He "grew, and waxed strong, filled with wisdom." He was perfect sitting among the doctors in the temple at twelve years of age.

He did not assume at that time to teach, nor, indeed, until anointed with the Holy Spirit when He was thirty years of age. But when He was twelve, His simple but profound questions, and His understanding and answers to the questions of the doctors, amazed all that heard Him. And so does the verse following (Lk 2:51) amaze us: "He went down with them, and came to Nazareth; and He was subject unto them" (His parents).

But it was most especially in the path of obedience, when He set His face to go to Jerusalem, that His "perfecting" came. As He sent word to Herod: "Go and say to that fox, Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I am perfected." Christ's moral and spiritual perfection only emphasizes this word concerning the end of the prescribed path of humiliation and suffering culminating at the Cross.

On His drinking that cup, all consciousness of God as the Father was withdrawn. He was forsaken! What fearful three hours of darkness they were to Him--"from the sixth to the ninth hour," with the load of the world's sin, and the guilt thereof, transferred to His shoulders! Others had committed the sins. But when laid upon Him, the sins became His, with their guilt. While He cried on the Cross:

"They that hate Me without a cause are more than the hairs of My head" (conscious personal innocence), yet the next verse, 5, in that prophetic Psalm 69 reads:

"My sins are not hid from Thee."

He had accepted this fearful bestowment from God's hand--sins, ours, by commission; His now in atonement.

But faith remained: He cried, "My God, My God!" And hear Him say, as they were nailing Him on the cross, "Father, forgive them"; for He was not yet forsaken (as it seems to me) during the first three hours--the third to the sixth hours upon the Cross. He could still say "Father" to God.

Then came the darkness--corresponding to the outer darkness into which those go who die with sin upon them!

As an accursed thing, as One made sin, as One forsaken, drinking the cup of wrath, He could not speak the word, "Father," but only "My God," For Him to have the witness not only that He pleased the Father ("He that sent Me is with Me, for I do always the things pleasing unto Him"), but the very witness that God was Father; to be reduced to that human consciousness which could only say, "My God," and, "I am a worm, and no man" (Ps. 22:6); there must have been, just as His spirit was departing, a sweet whisper from God, unto which His instant response was, "Father, into Thy hands I commend My Spirit." His blood had been shed. The human spirit leaves the body as the result of death (Lk. 8:55).

He had "borne our sins in His body on the tree." He laid His life down, but He could not cease to be God the Son. Nevertheless, He passed, in bearing sin, in putting it away, into
a place where God could not "look upon" Him as "made sin," "become a curse."

How we do thank God for that faith which, even in Divine forsaking, still said, "My God"! our eternity depended wholly upon that sacrifice--wholly upon that!

His quenchless devotion to the Father's will and word reached its peak there. At the very end He remembered one more prophecy of Scripture, and cried, "I thirst!"

"After this Jesus, knowing that all things are now finished, that the Scripture might be accomplished, saith, I thirst. There was set there a vessel full of vinegar: SO they put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop, and brought it to His mouth. When Jesus

therefore had received the vinegar, He said, It is finished: and He bowed His head, and gave up His spirit" (John 19:28-30).

Had He not said in His great prayer, "I glorified Thee on the earth, having accomplished the work which Thou hast given Me to do"? (John 17-4).

Therefore we read, having been made perfect: tested in every path, tried by every circumstance, tempted with the offer of all earth's kingdoms; denied by one disciple, betrayed by another, forsaken of them all; what fault can we find? None! God found none! God raised Him up the third day--eternal testimony to the perfect obedience of His spotless Son!

Heb 5:9 (contd.): And now, what is the result? Having been made perfect, He became unto all them that obey Him the Cause (Gr., **aitios**) of eternal salvation: Here two results--both most precious--are announced, flowing from our Lord's having been made perfect. First, He is the Cause of eternal salvation. The word "Cause" was used to denote that which constitutes all occasion of action, whether favorable or otherwise; that in which the reason and procuring power of anything resides. Note the same word in Luke 23:4, 14, 22. To translate the word "Author" is to look at Christ as an originator, whereas the salvation is of and from God--Christ and His work being the procuring cause of it. Further, note that it is to them that obey Him that He Himself is this procuring Cause. He is the Lord Jesus Christ: Jesus is His personal name; Christ is His official title--God's Anointed; and He is LORD of all! Because of the suffering of death, "God highly exalted Him, and gave unto Him the name which is above every name" (Phil. 2:9). How wonderful to have a Cause of salvation, and that eternal, lying completely outside ourselves in Another!

Heb 5:10--named of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

11 Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation, seeing ye are become dull of hearing.

12 For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need again that some one teach you the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food.

13 For every one, that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness; for he is a babe.

14 But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil.

Heb 5:10: See Hebrews 6:20.

Heb 5:11: hard of interpretation--Difficulty of interpretation may lie in one of three directions: (1) in the teacher, not fully instructed, (2) in the subject, often in itself deep and difficult, or (3), in the hearers who are dull of hearing. In this case number 1 was not true--Paul had many things to say. Number 2, many Will affirm, was a fact, because of the "difficult" statements concerning Melchizedek. But Paul asserts that neither of these two was the trouble. It was the hearers, who by reason of the time ought to have been teachers, who through spiritual sloth and neglect had become dull of hearing.

Of the subject of Melchizedek, of the "order" of our Lord's priesthood (see Hebrews 7 and comment there), Paul is full, and desirous to speak, but the many things to say were hard of interpretation seeing they were become dull of hearing. It is not said that the matters concerning Melchizedek were in themselves difficult to a spiritual, alert, Bible-absorbed Christian. But those to whom Paul was writing were become dull (sluggish) of hearing, not constitutionally, but dispositionally. Compare "By hearing ye shall hear," and, "Their ears are dull of hearing," of Matthew 13:14, 15 (lit., "With their ears heavily they have heard"). We must apply this: when God's Word is read or preached publicly, how many people crowd to the front seats, or cup their ears with their hands in eagerness? Or, how many hang back (if they come at all), clinging to the back seats, amused possibly with the least distraction?--a cat or dog getting into the building and walking across the platform!

Heb 5:12: For when by reason of the time ye ought to be teachers--

The gospel had been first published to the Hebrews at Jerusalem at Pentecost, and spread by those who heard it everywhere. We are familiar with the list of some fourteen places mentioned in Acts 2:9-11, of those who heard in their own tongues "the mighty works of God." Over thirty years after Pentecost comes the writing of the Epistle to the Hebrews! They ought to be teachers, indeed! God counts the time since a man has heard the truth and believed it. He rightly expects progress in Divine things. Years, months, days, hours, yea, moments, are precious to professing Christians, since the Holy Ghost came down from Heaven to "enlighten" us, to "lead us into all truth," to empower us in things Divine, and to bring forth through us and in us that precious "fruit" for which the Husbandman (the Father) looks with yearning from those in Christ, the True Vine. Is there anyone reading these lines who ought to be a teacher who is still, after a long time, needing re-teaching in the rudiments of the first principles of the oracles of God?

This of course does not mean that all the saints are to have that special gift of teaching of Eph. 4:11. Yet it does set forth what God expects of those that bear the good news. "They ... that were scattered abroad" (and they were NOT the apostles) "went about preaching the Word" (Acts 8:4). If you have believed and know "the truth of the gospel", you ought to be a teacher, a witness. And some day the Lord will ask you about this.

And are become such as have need of milk, and not of solid food. Here are two sad, most solemn, and in the light of what comes in Hebrews 6, terrible facts. First, these long-ago believers were milk-users--had need of milk, and not of solid food. Second, they

had become such again! Reader, we are always becoming! Not one of us is where he was yesterday. If an unbeliever, you are further in unbelief today than yesterday.
For:

"To sow an act is to reap a tendency,
To sow a tendency is to reap a habit;
To sow a habit is to reap a character,
To sow a character is to reap a destiny."

If a believer, you have either become "a bondservant of God," or, you may have become such as have need of milk, unable to bear, or undesirous of, the "strong meat" which belongs to the word of Christ Risen, and the saints risen with Him--and, to Christ leading the heavenly worship, and you one of the saints entering into that heavenly song, "giving thanks always for all things." Or, you have, as we shall see in Hebrews 6:12, been "sluggish," not an imitator "of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises." God, by His blessed Spirit, is ever exhorting us to "follow on," to grow in the grace and acquaintanceship of our Lord Jesus Christ; to "abound in every grace," to be "filled unto all the fullness of God."

It is tragic beyond utterance that this great epistle of Hebrews is addressed to Hebrew believers who had become such as have need of milk--tragic that Paul had to talk to "babes"! It was indeed difficult to interpret to them the mighty and glorious Melchizedek priesthood, of which the Levitical system could be only a "shadow." "Babes"? Users of milk? Turning back to earthly priests and forms? When only a few brief years had passed since the Son of God walked on earth, Who had put away sin forever at the Cross, and sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, a High Priest forever! Babes? in need of milk? when just now the holy apostles, who had walked and talked with this now Risen and Glorified Christ, had been speaking to them? Men, the apostles were, not babes! Filled with the energy of faith, not "sluggish," were they! Strong men, ready for martyrdom, "filled with all joy and peace in believing."

Brethren, I am filled with trouble at all this. Can it be possible that human hearts are capable of such shallowness, indifference, ingratitude, sluggishness, unbelief?

"Yes," they say, "Peter was here but now, full of eagerness, putting us in remembrance. But give us a little milk, warm milk, and let us sleep! Apollos we heard, mighty in the Scriptures! He stirred us at the moment, but give us just a little milk now, and we shall get to sleep! Paul we knew, whose presence made Christ real, whose eyes were always ready to weep. We often heard him, and now this letter comes from Italy, from him and those with him. Yes, we remember his holy influence, his deep, wonderful words. But we have settled down. We no longer like arousing words. Once, perhaps, we did; but we have certain 'standards' that are good enough for us now. Our creed is all written out and settled; we have only to say 'Yes' to it. We find a need, true, in our souls; but it is for milk, for the simple fundamentals of the gospel. Others may like Peter's, Paul's and John's talk of suffering with Christ, of being filled with the Spirit, of being not under Law but Grace, and of waiting for our Lord's return.

"But we believe there's a middle path. We do not believe in excitement about religious matters. Too, we have relatives and close friends among the Jews, who do not believe as we do that Jesus was the Messiah. But they are good citizens, and we wish to live in peace with them, to be tolerant! So give us a little more milk, and do not ask us to be roused up!"

Hebrews 5:13: For every one that partaketh of milk is without experience of the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

Now what mean these words? It is a tragic thing if we do not know. Without experience of the word of righteousness, does not mean merely inexperience in the fact of righteousness by faith, justification. But, as the apostle goes on to show, it is an ignorance, an inexperience, that results from the lack of use of the spiritual senses! It refers more particularly to walk—that walk of holiness and uprightness belonging to the children of God, which is the true path of every eager, obedient believer!

For he is a babe: Let me seek in a brief footnote to give some of the characteristics of these babes.

Babes: that is, those who have become babes. Every one delights in a true babe in Christ, eager, hungry, trustful, discovering a fresh world! But these became milk-users, babes. Have they marks? Oh, yes. To name a few:

1. They are "tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine" (Eph. 4:14ff), as a babe is carried about and handed from one to another.
2. They "belong," as they say, to some particular denomination--which they call, like a baby his crib, "My church."
3. They glory in men: "Dr. So-and-so's preaching." They do not know what the Church of God is, the one Body of Christ, and that "membership" is only in Christ. Paul had to minister to the Corinthians as unto babes in Christ, feeding them on milk only, not because he had not told them deeper things, but because they had turned aside to be carnal, saying, "I am of Paul," "I am of Apollos," "I of Cephas," and (condemned alike because they said "I," not "We") "I of Christ" (1 Cor. 12:13). So today: "I am of Wesley," "I am of Calvin." "Are you," says Paul, "not carnal, and walk as men?" Men choose to say, "I am a conservative," or, "a liberal," "a Republican," "a Democrat."

Such things are all abhorrent to the one Spirit Who has baptized us into the one Body of Christ! Furthermore, we are "members one of another," that is, of all saints, not of some

little narrow denomination!

4. Again, mark how much a babe must sleep. Do you realize the trouble of heart a preacher or teacher of the Word of God experiences when he stands up to declare the eternal truth which infinitely concerns his audience, and knows that they do not follow him? Babes must sleep a great deal; and so do these Christians!

Years and years ago I was preaching in a large church in the United States on the atonement. The subject was, "The Three Crosses," and God greatly enlarged and helped. Three rows from the front there sat a delightful gentleman for many years an elder in that church, very prominent in business, who had been vice-mayor of that large city. I noticed him in these meetings, settle himself to sleep every time! The moment the singing and announcements were over, to sleep he would go, with his knees braced against the seat ahead, and hunched down in his pew.

But one Lord's day morning, suddenly he opened his eyes, straightened in his seat, grasped the seat in front, and listened with great intentness, without moving. The minute the service was over he almost ran to the front, grasped my hand, and said,

"I never heard that before in all my life! I did not know that all my sins were laid on Christ and put away forever. This is most wonderful!"

"Yet," I said, "my dear Mr. H., it is the truth."

He said, "I see it's the truth, and I have been asleep all these years!"

From that moment that man's life was transformed, as everybody testified. No more sleeping for him! I presented to him a special copy of the New Testament, which he treasured. Coming to that city several years afterwards, I heard, "Mr. H. is very ill." I hastened to see him.

His wife said, "Slip up quietly: I think he is asleep. But he has that Testament you gave him, and reads it day and night."

I stepped quietly to the bedroom door, and there he was, lying asleep, yet with the peace of Heaven on his face, and with the Testament I had given him open! No more spiritual sleep for him, I repeat. Shortly after, he went to glory!

5. Then there are spiritual babes who fuss over this and that, just as babies fuss. They are the quarrelers, the dividers, those who, like a petulant child, "want my own way."

6. Finally and alas, there are vast thousands who once were wakened, perhaps in revival times, who once were drawn to the Word of God, who once were stirred by earnest prayer and teaching, who once had family prayer and thanksgiving. Today they are "church members," respectable, unspiritual, unfruitful, dull, uninterested in the study of Scripture, unfavorable toward revival or "special measures" which might arouse them.

Draw out a lamentation for those who become "babes"!

There is, however, this vital difference between natural life and spiritual life. In natural life, a babe needs to be carried about, needs to be fed with milk, and needs to be left often to sleep. Thus he will grow. Not so with spiritual life! The proper babe in Christ needs milk but for a little while, and needs to be told, and that soon, and fully, the stronger things: needs to be pointed to a glorified as well as a crucified Christ, the Great High Priest; and to Christ as coming again. He needs to be told that he cannot be carried, that he must press on, if he is to attain full growth. The regenerated will is involved in spiritual growth.

Hebrews 5:14: But solid food is for fullgrown men, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern good and evil:

"Fullgrown (teleios) men" here has no reference to six feet of height and two hundred pounds of weight. But, as Paul says, "In malice be ye babes, but in mind be men" (Gr., of full age), those who, according to Hebrews 6:1, "press on unto perfection," or full growth. The whole thought here is of spiritual development. When you were born into your earthly family, your parents were eager to know whether all your senses were perfect--sight, hearing, smelling, feeling, taste. In the verse we have in hand, the spiritual senses are in view. Men of full age are those who have their senses exercised, and are able to take "solid food."

It is striking that all five bodily senses have their counterparts in the spiritual realm! (1) Taste: "If indeed ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious"; "O taste and see that the Lord is good." (2) Hearing: "Hear and your soul shall live"; "He that hath ears to hear, let him hear."

Lack of use of senses from lack of interest is described by our Lord in Matt. 13:13-15:

"Therefore speak I to them in parables; because seeing they see not, and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. And unto them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which saith,

By hearing ye shall hear, and shall in no wise understand; And seeing ye shall see, and in no wise perceive:
For this people's heart is waxed gross,
And their ears are dull of hearing,
And their eyes they have closed;
Lest haply they should perceive with their eyes,
And hear with their ears,
And understand with their heart,
And should turn again,

And I should heal them."

"Fatty degeneration of the heart," as the doctors call it, they have, due to too much fat in the whole body (from over indulgence in earth's foods and follies; and spiritual inactivity), and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have dozily closed! This lack of interest in Divine things which comes like a creeping paralysis upon those remaining inactive, when God is calling, is, in this passage, quoted by our Lord (Isa. 6:9-10) laid directly to the blame of the hearer.

(3) Sight: "Open Thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of Thy law." "Having the eyes of your heart enlightened."

(4) Smell: the Holy Spirit said of Christ, "He shall be of quick scent in the fear of Jehovah" (Isa. 11:3, R.V., margin): and Paul wrote to the Philippians, "I am filled, having received ... the things from you, an odor of a sweet smell, a sacrifice acceptable, well-pleasing to God."

There is no sense so subtle and certain as that of scent. It is beautifully set forth as concerning God, in that Christ offered Himself up for a sweet smelling savor! His life, walk, and ministry were a constant fragrance of delight to the Father. Turning it about, Christ was and shall be, we repeat, "of quick scent in the fear of Jehovah," discerning the least inclination of His will.

There are also spiritual sins, which to the quickened spirit become foul and stenchful--unclean things of the world.

(5) Feeling: Of King Josiah, God said He sent the gracious message "because thy heart was tender." Toward one another we are told to be "tender-hearted." Again, we are cautioned against wounding the conscience which is weak (1 Cor. 8:12); while the awful word is spoken of some, that "being past feeling," they "gave themselves up to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness" (Eph. 4:19). Like our Lord, we should be "able to be touched."

To discern good and evil: To discern good and evil, to refuse the evil and choose the good, describes a holy walk. Brother, brother, have you not discovered that this world, as regards your feet, is a labyrinth of snares? As regards your hearing, is full of false voices? Its wisdom is foolishness—its promises are empty and vain--its philosophy is a puffball. But the most of even professing Christians are steeped in the thought that this world has something, educationally, socially, even religiously, to benefit them. Paul cried, "We are not ignorant of his (Satan's) devices"! Over and over we are counseled, "Be not deceived." A fullgrown man will discern good and evil, with exercised senses. But alas, most professing Christians are described in the verses we have been looking at. They cannot discern--they are without experience in the word of righteousness; they are become dull of hearing--they need to be taught--they can take only milk!

Ere we close the chapter, it is imperative that we here see, acknowledge, and hold, the Bible doctrine of Christian perfection.

First, we remember that there was no such thing as being perfected under the Law (Heb. 7:19). David cried, "I have seen an end of all perfection ... Thy commandment is exceeding broad"! (Ps. 119:96). The Law, being holy and just, as well as good, must demand and keep demanding from the creature--not what the creature in a fallen state may be able to supply, but what God, in His infinite holiness and righteousness must require. Alas, if only the legalists all might see this! Does not Moses cry,

"Thou hast set our iniquities before Thee,
Our secret sins in the light of Thy countenance"?

This was the very purpose of the Law. Sin was there all the time, but the Law made it known to the sinner. "The Law was given that the trespass (of it) might abound." And since, in man and in the flesh, there is no moral ability, therefore, there is no attainment of perfection, and those who in any sense whatever hold themselves under Law, remain infants, just where the Jews remain who were placed under Law by God: "So we also (writes Paul as a Jew), when we were minors (nepioi) were held in bondage under the rudiments of the world" (Gal. 4:3). (See the same word nepioi in 1 Cor. 3:1, babe; 13:11, child, five times; Eph. 4:14, children; Heb. 5:13, babe.)

Second, we read that for those in Christ, they being not under Moses' Law, but dead to it and discharged therefrom (Ro 6:14; 7:4, 6, R.V.); and being indwelt by the Holy Spirit, there is the "law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus," which makes us "free from the law of sin and of death." This "freedom" does not mean that the flesh is changed (Rom. 8:2), for we are "waiting for ... the redemption of our body," groaning within ourselves until that day (Rom. 8:23); but it does mean that we may "by the Spirit ... put to death the doings of the body," and live by and be led by the Spirit of God (Rom. 8:13, 14). "But I say, Walk by the Spirit, and Ye shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Gal. 5:16). Again, "They that are of Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with the passions and the lusts thereof." These are such as are described also in Galatians 5:25: "If we live by the Spirit, by the Spirit let us also walk."

Paul was one of the fullgrown (perfect) men Hebrews 5:14 speaks of, and such was Stephen, and all the apostles! Such are some saints today. For there is set before the believer constantly the command to "grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ." Nay more: there is commanded, as in Ephesians 4:13, 14; Colossians 3:14, a state of adulthood, arriving at a "fullgrown" man, being "no longer children (nepioi), tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine."

When in 2 Corinthians 13:11 Paul says, "Finally, brethren ... be perfected," he uses the second word for perfecting, katartidzo. It is illustrated beautifully in Matthew 21:16: "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings Thou hast perfected praise." These two words, katartidzo, meaning fundamentally to render fit, or sound, to put in order, make complete; and teleios, which has reference to maturity, as a finished product--of full age, fullgrown, mature (as in Eph. 4:13; Phil. 3:15), are set before the believer. To full growth, completeness, maturity, both the Word of God and the indwelling Spirit urge us. The believer should be no more content to remain a babe, than a lad have no urge to become a man! To press on to full growth is the Divine command; to fail therein through neglect,

unbelief, or earthly "religious" influence, fear of men, or yielding to the world, invites spiritual decline, and is the path to apostasy!

Alas, "perfection" and "perfecting" are words many Christians shy from, because they connect them with "perfection in the flesh," which of course does not exist. When believers understand that the great desire of God is that "Christ may be formed in them" and that "perfecting" is the operation of God: and that they are simply to present their bodies a living sacrifice, acceptable to God, that they may be "transformed by the renewing" of their mind, that they may prove "what is the good and acceptable and perfect will of God," all is changed! The only question is, Are they willing for this transformation? For, as Paul puts it (2 Cor. 3:18), "We all, with unveiled face beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are transformed into the same image from glory to glory, even as from the Lord the Spirit." (As the sainted Andrew Murray wrote: "It is only the full and perfect knowledge of what Christ is and does for us that can bring us to a full and perfect Christian life. The knowledge of Jesus Christ that we need for conversion does not suffice for growth, for progress, for sanctification, for maturity. Just as there are two dispensations, the Old Testament and the New, and the saints of the Old, with all their faith and fear of God, could not obtain the more perfect life of the New, so with the two stages in the Christian life of which the Epistle (Hebrews) speaks. Those who, through sloth, remain babes in Christ, and do not press on to maturity, are ever in danger of hardening their heart, of coming short and falling away. Only those who hold fast the beginning firm to the end, who give diligence to enter the rest, who press on unto Perfection, do in very deed inherit and enjoy the wonderful New Covenant blessings secured to us in Christ.")

Let us close our study of Hebrews 5 by searching out other Scriptures on "perfecting," (1) as to faith, (2) as to holiness, (3) as to love, (4) as to knowledge, especially of God's will:

1. Paul writes, "Night and day praying exceedingly that we may see your face, and may perfect that which is lacking in your faith" (1 Thess. 3. 10). And he says to the Corinthians, "This we also pray for, even your perfecting." James also recognizes the perfecting of faith, saying, "Thou seest that faith wrought with his (Abraham's) works, and by works was faith made perfect; and the Scripture was fulfilled which saith, And Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness." How often our Lord lamented the "weak" or "little faith" of those who sought His help, even of the disciples! Do you and I expect to be perfected in faith, as God desires?

2. Perfecting in holiness:

"Having therefore these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2Cor. 7:1).

The preceding verses (2 Cor 6:14-18) indicate separation from "unequal yokes" with unbelievers, from all fellowship with unrighteousness or darkness, having no concord (being in Christ) with Belial; remembering that a believer has no portion with an unbeliever, nor a temple of God (which every believer, being indwelt by the Spirit, is) with idols: remembering that separation unto Him which God expects of His people, saying:

"Come ye out from among them, and be ye separate, saith the Lord,

And touch no unclean thing; and I will receive you, And will be to you a Father, and ye shall be to Me sons and daughters, saith the Lord Almighty" (2 Cor. 6:17-18). "The Lord Almighty" corresponds to the name He revealed to Abraham in Genesis 17:1: "I am God Almighty; walk before Me, and be thou perfect." God furnishes the power for a separated life! "This is the will of God, even your sanctification" (1 Thess. 4:3).

3. Perfecting in love:

"Perfect love casteth out fear ... he that feareth is not made perfect in love" (1 John 4:18); "If we love one another, God abideth in us, and His love is perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). Here, on the negative side, is deliverance from the fear of judgment; and on the positive, a walk in love with one another. The pathway to love is entered in 1 John 4:16 (R.V., margin):

"We know and have believed the love which God hath in our case." Again, "Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that He loved us, and sent His Son to be the propitiation for our sins" (vs. 10); and, "We love, because He first loved us" (vs. 19); "Above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness" (Col. 3:14); 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, 14:1, "Follow after (pursue) love; yet desire earnestly spiritual gifts."

4. In knowledge:

"We ... do not cease to pray and make request for you, that ye may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (Col. 1:9).

"Epaphras ... saluteth you, always striving for you in his prayers, that ye may stand perfect and fully assured in all the will of God" (Col. 4:12).

The above are some of the passages of these blessed epistles which describe the heavenly calling and walk of the Church, the Assembly of God.

Let us "press on unto perfection," unto "full growth." "He Who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Jesus Christ" (Phil. 1:6). Rely on that! Let us beware that our Lord does not say of us as of Sardis, "I have found no works of thine perfected before My God" (Rev. 3:2). Let our ambition daily be that we, "dealing truly in love, may grow up in all things into Him, Who is the Head, even Christ"! (Eph. 4:15, R.V., margin.)

Hebrews 6

Heb 6:1 On this account, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ, unto full growth let us be pressing on! not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God,

2 of the teaching of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of judgment eternal.

3 And this will we do--if God permit.

YOU MAY WELL ASK concerning these six things how they constituted the word of the beginning of Christ. First of all, we must remember that the epistle is addressed to Hebrews. Second, that these Hebrews addressed had, as indicated here, received the word of the beginning of Christ (as set forth in the Gospels), that is, what to them were fundamentals concerning Christ. Third, leaving these things which are enumerated, they were to press on unto full growth, out of their state of babehood.

We are astonished to find some authors whom we love asserting that the word of the beginning of Christ was Judaism. But Paul tells us in Gal. 1:13, using the very word Judaism (Ioudaismos), that so far from Judaism's being the word of the beginning of Christ, it was the religion of Christ's chief hater and persecutor of the saints! "Ye have heard of my manner of life in time past in the Jews' religion (Ioudaismos), how that beyond measure I persecuted the Church of God, and made havoc of it; and I advanced in the Jews' religion (same word) beyond many of mine own age among my countrymen, being more exceedingly zealous for the traditions of my fathers. But when it was the good pleasure of God, Who separated me, even from my mother's womb, and called me through His grace, to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles; straightway I conferred not with flesh and blood," etc.

As we inquire then concerning this word of the beginning of Christ, which these Hebrew believers had embraced, we must put ourselves into their position, tracing truth as they would hear and embrace it; and not from the Gentile believers' experience or point of view.

For we remember that our Lord Jesus gave to Peter "the keys of the kingdom of the heavens." This must have a certain meaning. We open ourselves unto the snare of Romanism if we deny or neglect the fact! These "keys" were not keys to salvation (which is of course based wholly on the shed blood of Christ), but the office of announcing those conditions under which Jews first (Acts 2:37-38), and afterwards Gentiles (Acts 10:43-44), should receive the benefits of Christ's redemption--and thus enter the Kingdom. (Distinguish between Peter's using the key for the Gentiles in Cornelius' household, where faith only was a condition of "remission of sins" (Acts 10:43), and the key for the Jews in Acts 2:37, where the national sin of having rejected the Messiah being shown, not only repentance concerning that sin, but open confession of the rejected Christ in baptism, preceded remission of sins. With the Gentiles, water baptism followed faith and the remission of sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 10:44-47). The door of faith was thus opened to the Gentiles by the sovereign God, but Peter, led of the Spirit, used the "key" Christ had given him, and opened the door of faith to the Gentiles, although Peter, Christ's apostle, said concerning Cornelius and his house, "Who can forbid the water that those should not be baptized, who have received the Holy Ghost as well as we?" (Acts 10:47-48). Bullinger and his followers in our days "forbid the water" which Peter commanded!)

Moral delinquency is not charged against these Hebrew believers, but what is infinitely more serious, spiritual rebellion. For they were not at all in the same category with their fathers, to whom the Law had been spoken and the Levitical shadow system had been prescribed--for now the Son of God had come. (There should be constant reference by each of us who reads Hebrews to the glory of the Son, in Whom God had now spoken: the Heir of all things: Creator, Upholder, the Effulgence of the Divine glory: God, Lord!)

Nor was it merely that He had come and walked as the Son, as related in the Gospels; but that, according to prophecy, He had died, as David wrote of Him in Psalm 22: "They pierced My hands and My feet." He had died, forsaken of God! Divine wrath against human sin had been fully expiated. Then "He hath been raised"--"raised from the dead through the glory of the Father," "saluted of God a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek." And He had "ascended into Heaven, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God." The contemplation and eager belief of these mighty facts were expected by God. How could it be otherwise?

These Hebrew Christians had heard this glorious gospel, and should have been pressing on, leaving the word of the beginning of Christ.

"Pressing on unto Full Growth" would be a good title for the Book of Hebrews!

The great exhortation in Hebrews is to press on to "full growth." The danger connected with "neglect," with sloth, non-use of spiritual faculties, accumulates before our minds. The infinitely loving God who has given His well-beloved Son for our sake warns of the danger of provoking His wrath by turning back from His revealed perfect work to religious forms or by choosing the sin which He died to save us from. These dangers are thoroughly warned against in Hebrews.

Meanwhile before the eyes of faith at God's right hand sits our great High Priest in the infinite value of His atoning work, also with all power in Heaven and on earth committed unto Him.

Let us press on unto full growth--The Greek word here, teleioteta, signifies what we saw in Hebrews 5:14: "Strong meat belongeth to them that are of full-age." The process of the Holy Spirit within the believer will conform him to the image of Christ in faith,

holiness, love, and knowledge, as we saw in Hebrews 5. (See also Jas. 3:2; Col. 1:28.)

Let us note that the word of the beginning of Christ* having been accepted, there is to be a pressing on unto full growth. (Literal translation of the Greek for the first part of vs. 1. The R.V. has, "doctrine of the first principles of Christ"; the A.V., "principles of the doctrine of Christ." Neither is a satisfactory rendering. Darby well renders: "Leaving the word of the beginning of the Christ, let us go on to what belongs to full growth.")

As Paul says in Ephesians 4:13-15:

"Till we all attain unto the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a fullgrown man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: that we be no longer children, tossed to and fro ... but dealing truly in love, may grow up in all things into Him, Who is the Head, even Christ."

Not laying again a foundation--Here note three things:

1. That the foundation which these Hebrew believers had is about to be described.
2. That the laying of this "foundation" at the first was approved.
3. That the exhortation is, not to be occupied with re-laying the foundation, but to press on unto full growth!

We shall find in this passage, as we have said, describing the "foundation," six items. What are these six things?

The **first** one was, repentance from dead works, a remarkable expression. Now Gentiles were commanded to repent of sins! (Acts 8:22). You will find no Gentiles ever commanded to repent from dead works. Why? Because these "works" were such as people would be occupied with to whom "works" had been prescribed. The Hebrews were the only people with whom this was the case. They had the Law--a yoke, indeed, which Peter declared neither their fathers nor they were able to bear (Acts 15:10). Nevertheless, there it was! The very first gospel announcement to the Hebrews would be something entirely new--repentance, an entire change of mind, as to "works" securing salvation—the announcement that such "works" were "dead," as regards obtaining eternal life, and were no longer to be trusted in, but wholly left as a ground of hope. There was to be repentance from dead works. ("Dead works" present the essential character of the works in themselves: "works of law"--present them in relation to an ideal, unattainable, standard! It follows therefore that repentance from dead works expresses that complete change of mind--of spiritual attitude--which leads the believer to abandon these works and seek some other support for life."--Westcott.)

Their conscience was to be cleansed, by Christ's blood, from dead works (Hebrews 9:14).

The Law given by Moses could command: "And Jehovah commanded us to do all these statutes ... and it shall be righteousness unto us" (Deut. 6:24-25). Alongside of this we must place the Spirit's word through Paul in Galatians 3:11-12:

"Now that no man is justified by the Law before God, is evident: for the righteous shall live on the principle of faith; and the Law is not of faith; but, He that doeth them shall live in them."

Or, as Paul writes in Romans 10:2-4, concerning Israel, "They have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge.For being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the Law unto righteousness to everyone that believeth."

David also "pronounceth blessing upon the man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness apart from works" (Rom. 4:6).

The works of the Law (which cannot at all be kept by man, but is a "ministration of death") must be repented of just as sins must be--for to be occupied with our "works," which God has condemned as unclean, is, in effect, just the same as holding sin. With a wholly changed mind we must, we repeat, repent of, and turn from them, and find trust and rest in the work of Another, even Christ, Whose work God has accepted!

Therefore we find in Hebrews 9:14, that from "dead works" blood of Christ (and of course only that!) can relieve, "cleanse" the conscience. For no matter what efforts you put forth, your conscience tells you that you have not satisfied the infinitely holy God. But when, by His Spirit, the work of Christ on your behalf, and the infinite satisfaction of His blood for your sins, are seen, your conscience rests. There is no more driving the heart, which is thus "cleansed from dead works." It is delivered!

Second, the word of the beginning of Christ which they had heard and embraced, involved personal faith toward (or, on) God. (The Greek preposition (epi) means upon, in the sense of reliance upon, as in Acts 9:42; 16:31; Rom. 4:5, 24.) Strange though you and I may think it, the Hebrews (except such glorious witnesses as are exampled in Heb. 11) did not trust God. They regarded themselves as "the chosen people." But there were always Moses and the Law before them; the feasts and the ordinances, the sacrifices, the cleansing water (of the ashes of the red heifer). To turn away from all ordinances and works, and rely directly upon God, to them would have seemed presumption! Yet the word of the beginning of Christ had taught them just that! That on account of His sacrifice they had become as Peter described (1Pet. 1:18-21):

"Ye were redeemed, not with corruptible things, with silver or gold, from your vain manner of life handed down from your fathers; but with precious blood, as of a Lamb without blemish and without spot, even the blood of Christ: Who was foreknown indeed before the foundation of the world, but was manifested at the end of the times for your sake, who through Him are believers in God, that raised Him from the dead, and gave Him glory; so that your faith and hope might be in God."

Any Jew would have protested--nay, does protest--that his nation have been the believers in God. But note the sense of Peter's words, quoted above. He was writing to the Christian Jews (the Dispersion--the Diaspora), and he says that through Christ these very Jews had become believers in God, Who raised Him (Christ) from the dead ... so that their faith and hope might be in God. No

Jew could trust God in the gospel sense until he was sure that sin was put away. This was announced to him in the gospel, even in the word of the beginning of Christ. To believe there is a God is not necessarily to have faith in Him.

Furthermore, for a Jew to protest, "We are disciples of Moses: we know that God hath spoken unto Moses," and to rely upon performing Levitical duties, was faith in his own works only! Such an attitude brought forth our Lord's words, "There is one that accuseth you, even Moses, on whom ye have set your hope!" (John 5:45). For, as He told them, "Did not Moses give you the Law? Yet none of you doeth the Law!" (John 7:19).

Is it not remarkable that Abraham "rejoiced to see Christ's day; and he saw it, and was glad"? And Moses declared, "Jehovah thy God will raise up a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto Him ye shall hearken" (Deut. 18:15, 18). And again, David had the Messiah in view, for our Lord declares that "David in the Spirit called Him (Christ) Lord" (Matt. 22:41-45). And Isaiah said, "A virgin shall conceive, and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel"; also, "The Lord hath laid on Him the iniquity of us all." Daniel saw "One like unto a Son of man, and He came even unto the Ancient of days, and dominion was given to Him." Even Abel, the first of the cloud of witnesses of Heb. 11, we find bringing death, not life, unto God!

In short, Divinely taught souls, knowing their own guilt, longed like Job for "a Daysman, to lay His hand upon them ...both" ... them and God! (job 9:33). And such, like Job, found personal faith in God, confidence not in forms but in a Person. So Peter witnessed to a great truth (1 Pet. 1:21) in saying that through Christ and His precious blood the elect Hebrews of the Dispersion had become "believers on God." Read also 1 Pet 1:3: "God ... begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead."

The Jews nationally had no direct personal faith in God until, "enlightened," they had really "heard from the Father, and had learned" of Christ, as our Lord says in John 6:45.

Hebrews 5:2: Third, the word of the beginning of Christ, to these Hebrews, involved "the teaching of baptisms." (See appendix B.) The word "baptisms" is plural, because unto the Jews God had prescribed (1) John the Baptist's baptism, and (2) Christian baptism. (Note at once that these two "baptisms" are the only ones connected with the word of the beginning of Christ.) We hear John say, "That He (Christ) should be made manifest to Israel ...I came baptizing with water" (John 1:31). And every one except the self-righteous leaders had taken that (first) baptism:

"Then went out unto him Jerusalem, and Judea, and all the region round about the Jordan" (Matt. 3:5). "And all the people when they heard, and the Publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John. But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected for themselves the counsel of God, being not baptized of him" (Lk. 7:29-30).

Thus by John's baptism a Jew confessed himself a common sinner! As to (2) Christian baptism: upon the rejection, crucifixion and resurrection of the Lord Jesus, God prescribed by the mouth of Peter to the Jews on the day of Pentecost (Acts 2:5) repentance of their awful sin of rejecting their Messiah, and a public confession by water baptism "in the name of Jesus Christ" (Acts 2:38). These two "baptisms" were connected in the Hebrew believer's mind with the word of the beginning of Christ.

Fourth, of laying on of hands--This we find very frequently connected with the receiving of the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-19), and with the acknowledgment by the elderhood of those discerned by saints as chosen for special service (Acts 13:3; 1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6); and also in connection with bodily healings (Acts 5:12; 9:41; 28:8). To the Hebrews the imposition of hands in association with their sacrifices as connecting them therewith had always been familiar.

Fifth, we may be surprised to find that the word of the beginning of Christ to these Hebrews included the resurrection of the dead. Edersheim says, "Even to the quotation of Isaiah 26:19, 'Thy dead shall live; My dead bodies shall arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in the dust; for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast forth the dead,' the Sadducees will answer that that promise must be understood spiritually like the resurrection of dry bones in Ezekiel." The resurrection of the body was believed in by orthodox Jews from such other passages as Daniel 12:2 and Job 19:25, though there was continual contention over the doctrine; and of course even orthodox Jews thought resurrection merely the bringing back into an earthly existence, such as our Lord gave to Lazarus. But the word of the beginning of Christ would include His resurrection by the glory of the Father, with a flesh and bones body indeed, but without blood, which He had poured out; and His becoming thus "the Firstborn from among the dead" in the sense of having received newness of life, a new kind of bodily existence.

The godly and scholarly Stuart says: "A general resurrection of the bodies of men is a doctrine which, if not left undecided by the Old Testament, is at least left in obscurity. The Jews of the apostles' time were divided in their opinion respecting it. Hence, it was insisted on with great earnestness by Christian preachers, as belonging to the peculiar and elementary doctrines of Christianity. It was connected, by them, with the account which every man is to render of himself to God; and such an accountability is a fundamental doctrine of the Christian religion."

Sixth, the word of the beginning of Christ included eternal judgment. There are some, yea many, so befooled by the devil as to hold that "all, even Satan himself, will finally be brought, back to God." But there is no plainer teaching in God's holy Word than that the punishment of the damned will continue as long as God and His saints exist. The eternal judgment of men is a thing nearly connected with the resurrection of the dead. It is also linked closely with our Lord's resurrection from among the dead (Acts 17:31; 24:25).

Eternal judgment, we repeat, is constantly taught in the New Testament. Witness our Lord's words, "eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels." And in Revelation 20:10, "unto the ages of the ages". This phrase is God's constant description of (1) the

duration of His own existence and glory: (See Gal. 1:5; 1Tim. 1:17; 2 Tim. 4:18; Heb. 13:21; 1 Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Jude 25; and fourteen times in the book of The Revelation!); (2) the duration of the existence and of the blessedness of the saints (Rev. 22:5).

We repeat, eternal judgment for the damned will continue as long as God and His saints exist--unendingly.

Hebrews 6:3: And this will we do, if God permit:

In the word "we," Paul speaks generally, for all Christians. In the following verse he at once speaks of "those," and proceeds to describe apostates--formerly professing Christians who had now inwardly "crucified the Son of God," and outwardly "put Him to an open shame" by sin, as we shall see. Therefore this word, Let us press on unto full growth if permitted of God. If permitted of God? Say you. Permitted of the God Whose name is Love, Who gave His only begotten Son? The God Who saith, "As I live, I have no pleasure in the death of him that dieth"?

Yes, this same God! We are about to view certain souls to whom this God Whose name is Love will not vouchsafe blessing or grace from Him--certain whom He has "rejected." We must remember that no human being since Adam sinned has desired in himself to repent. Grace, uncaused in us, must effect repentance. At Jerusalem, upon Peter's report as to what had happened in the house of Cornelius the Gentile, they that heard of these things said with awe, "Then to the Gentiles also hath God granted repentance unto life." Therefore we must view those about to be described in Heb 6:4-8 not at all as willing, desiring, or longing to be "renewed unto repentance" but on the contrary as having come to treat all the advances of Divine love and grace with inappreciation, and neglect; who had a steady disregard of their fruitless spiritual state toward God, and were fruitful in the thorns and thistles (vs. 8) of the evil heart. (Remember, "Thorns and thistles" came through sin! Gen. 3:18.)

There is no need to read the book of Hebrews beyond verse 3 of this chapter if you are not prepared to receive the exact intent of these words of Scripture, if God permit. And once again we beg you, guard your heart against that awful thought, that there are those truly seeking to get back to God, whom He will not receive!

Heb 6:4 For it is impossible as to those having been once enlightened, and having tasted, moreover, the heavenly gift, and partners of the Holy Spirit having become;

5 and furthermore having tasted as good the utterance of God, and the powers of the coming age--

6 and then having fallen away, to renew them again unto repentance: (they being such as) are crucifying for themselves the Son of God and putting Him to an open shame.

7 For the land which hath drunk the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, receiveth blessing from God.

8 But if it keeps bearing thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is for burning.

Hebrews 6:4: Note at the very beginning of our study of this passage, that the word once-for-all (Gr., hapax), precedes and governs all the participles following: having been enlightened, having tasted, having been made partakers, finally, having tasted the utterance of God to be good; and the powers of the coming age. These are all aorist participles, referring to an event definitely past; and they are all followed by the frightful words, having fallen away!

1. Those who were once-for-all enlightened---They had that Divine illuminating involved in the first operation of the Holy Spirit upon the soul of man. The utter darkness and ignorance of nature was dispelled. We read in John 16:8: "He, when He is come, will convict the world"--not of their evil conduct, nor of each man's past guiltinesses, but of the sin of not believing on Christ: "in respect of sin, because they believe not on Me," and "of righteousness," because Christ, adjudged of men a blasphemer, God received up to Heaven. And "of judgment," because the world's prince, Satan, was judged at the Cross.

This "**enlightenment**," then, about Christ, was the same which those finally saved received. To the mind of a Hebrew, it included complete persuasion by the Holy Spirit that Jesus of Nazareth was his Messiah. It is referred to again in Hebrews 10:32 in the words, "Call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were enlightened, ye endured a great conflict of sufferings." It is dealing lightly with Scripture to imagine that this "enlightenment" was merely some "intellectual illumination" and that of the "natural mind." R.A. Torrey's claim that "there is a quickening short of regeneration" is borne out by this, as well as other Scriptures, as e.g., Luke 8:13.

This enlightenment was not merely intellectual, but embraced such a Spirit-wrought view of Christ, His earthly Messiahship, and His resurrection that those faithful Hebrews who received it and acted Upon it, "continued steadfastly in the apostles' teaching and fellowship, in the breaking of bread and prayers ...praising God and having favor with all the people" (Acts 2:42,47).

Mr. Darby says (Coll. Writings, Vol. XXVIII, P. 94): "It should be observed that there is nothing of life signified here. The expressions do not go beyond the indications of truth that might be received by the natural mind and the demonstrative power of the Holy Ghost which persons might partake, of, as Scripture shows, without being participators of eternal life."

We fully agree that these in Hebrews 6:4-8 did not exhibit "the things pertaining to salvation" of vs. 9. Yet Mr. Darby's explanation, like that of all ultra-Calvinists, falls far short both of what is here revealed in Scripture, and of what has been fearfully illustrated in the

experience of apostates. Remember that Paul denies the ability of the natural man to receive the things of the Spirit of God; and why? "For they are foolishness unto him; and he cannot know them, because they are spiritually judged" (1Cor. 2:14). Therefore in Mr. Darby's unfortunate words, "truth that might be received by the natural mind and the demonstrative power of the Holy Ghost," there is a departure from Scripture teaching. The Wholly "natural" man can respond no more to the Holy Spirit's operations than a tree in the forest! But God says in Heb. 6:4 that those who become apostates were once enlightened. The Hebrews thus "enlightened" knew from God that Jesus of Nazareth was their Messiah! and further, that God had raised Him from the dead--that He was now living. Also, there was a "tasting"--an experience such as "the natural mind" never could realize. Tasting was experienced by those of Hebrews 6--but not drinking! Those of Hebrews 10 tasted--and drank! Both knew the taste. Those who drank got life (john 4:14).

This is the "enlightenment;" the miracle of the Holy Ghost from Heaven revealing a Risen, Living Christ--from which those of Hebrews 6:4 finally apostatized. For this is apostasy—willfully casting away known revealed truth! They "rejected for themselves the counsel of God" (Lk. 7:30). We repeat, the word for "enlightened" in Hebrews 10:32 is the same Greek word as is used in Hebrews 6:4: God can reveal only one Christ! The same Christ had been set before those of Hebrews 10:32 as before the "tasters" of Hebrews 6; and there was the same enlightening Agent, the blessed Holy Spirit. Beware lest you miss the message and power of the book of Hebrews by bringing in some "theological system" by which you judge all Scripture.

2. And tasted of the heavenly gift--Now what heavenly gift could be thus spoken of and known without further definition? What indeed but that described in Romans 6:23; "THE GIFT of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord." But our Lord's promise concerning "the gift of God" was not made to tasters, but to drinkers; as He said to the Samaritan woman: "If thou knewest the gift of God, and Who it is that saith to thee, Give Me to drink; thou wouldest have asked of Him, and He would have given thee living water ... Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him shall never thirst; but the water that I shall give him shall become in him a well of water springing up unto eternal life" (John 4:10, 14).

Thus all drinkers of the water of life are truly saved. But, you ask, Could a person taste of eternal life and yet be lost forever? Certainly! Tasting is not drinking! Drinkers are not mere tasters: there has been a consenting act of the will. (Because of their fear of "free will," many shut themselves out from honest interpretation of many a passage of Scripture, as here. Let me ask you about a word in another passage: Jude 12-13, No one denies that these are lost people--"The blackness of darkness" being for them "reserved forever." But what does the expression "twice dead" (vs. 12) mean? We profoundly believe that it can only indicate that there was in them "a quickening" connected with their being "enlightened." At first they were, as were we all once. "dead in trespasses and sins." But how "twice dead" unless there had been such a revelation of the Risen Christ as the "natural mind" knows nothing at all of, connected with their being "enlightened."?)

They have committed themselves to what they drink. In tasting, the flavor and effect of the draught is discovered: the will thereupon must decide whether to drink or reject what has been tasted. The drinker commits the water to the man and the man to the water--a marvelous picture of saving faith! If it be the water of life, which Jesus gives, he has drunk of it; he has committed himself to it; his whole being is involved; his whole future is determined. Thousands today know the taste of the heavenly gift, eternal life, who never did drink that water! who did not accept, receive, that gift in a saving sense. In this most solemn passage in the sixth of Hebrews, we find men who have tasted and rejected--and been rejected by God.

To insist that this "tasting" was simply an intellectual experience, is absurd. If you are a guest at a table, and there is before you some article of food, of which you taste but do not eat, you do not say that your tasting was an intellectual process!

Mr. R.A. Torrey's assertion, "There is a quickening short of regeneration," is the only explanation of this whole passage! God gave these Hebrews of Hebrews 6:4-6 these experiences, having awakened them from the sleep of death sufficiently so that they experienced these things. They were "once enlightened." They "tasted."

In 1892 a company of us from the Gospel Tabernacle were holding a gospel service in one of the great corridors in Bellevue Hospital, New York. I was seated on a ledge in the corridor, expecting to give a testimony shortly. In front of me stood a company, singing a gospel hymn which repeated over and over the name of Jesus. Out from the patients seated beyond this singing company, and past the singers, dashed a man in terror. I was just able to seize and hold his arm, beseeching him to be seated. He turned a frightful look upon me, saying, "I knew Him once!"

I asked him what he meant.

"I mean Him they are singing about. I cannot bear to hear it. I really knew Him once--but I am lost!"

I turned to every passage of invitation. He simply shook his head in anguish. I said, "Christ will gladly receive any sinner."

"Look here," said he. Stooping to his left ankle, he began to unfasten safety pins. Turning back the leg of his trousers--"Look at that," he said. I saw a hideous mass of syphilitic sores. "I went back to that," he said. Rapidly he replaced and fastened the bandage, and said, "Let me go! I knew Him once!"

I followed him down the corridor and held him as long as I could. Judas, on the way to hang himself, must have looked as did he. I went with him (in vain) as far as I could without his leaving the hospital (where he had a right, as an emergency patient, to be). But what a lesson he had taught me!

3. And were made partakers (partners) of the Holy Spirit-Note at once, it is not said that these were sealed with the Spirit, as

were those at Pentecost (Acts 2), and in Samaria (Acts 8), and in Ephesus (Acts 19), who were "sealed unto the day of redemption" (Eph. 4:30); as God says, concerning the Ephesian believers:

"In Whom (Christ) ye also, having heard the word of truth, the good news of your salvation--in Whom, having also believed, ye were sealed with the Holy Spirit of promise, which is an earnest of our inheritance, unto the redemption of God's own possession" (Eph. 1:13-14).

Again, in Romans 8:9: "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His." And Jude describes the professing Christians as "mockers" of the last days, "walking after their own lusts of ungodliness, making separations (among the saints) sensual, having not the Spirit."

EXAMPLES OF PARTAKERS OF THE SPIRIT

But that certain operations of the Spirit of God are "partaken of" both by the saved and by those that are finally lost, we know, from the story of **King Saul** (**Ed**: Clearly Newell believes Saul was never saved, and this is certainly very possible). We read of him, "The Spirit of Jehovah will come mightily upon thee, and thou shalt prophesy with them, and shalt be turned into another man" (1Sa 10:6). This was fulfilled: "God turned him another heart" (vs. 9, R.V. marg., Heb.). And in the next verse, "The Spirit of God came mightily upon Saul." But alas, Saul departed into self-will, and so continued, until not only was he rejected as to the kingdom--"Now thy kingdom shall not continue" (1 Sam. 13:14); "Jehovah ...hath rejected thee from being king" (15:23); but also,--awful result of persistent self-will--"The Spirit of Jehovah departed from Saul, and an evil spirit from Jehovah troubled him" (1Sa 16:14), to the day of his suicide! We read therefore in God's covenant with David, that although his son (Solomon) should be "chastened with the rod of men" upon disobedience, God promised: "But My loving kindness shall not depart from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee" (2 Sam. 7:14-15).

Here then in Saul is one that was a "**partaker**" (partner) in the meaning of the word in Hebrews 6:4, partakers of the Holy Spirit. The Spirit came mightily on Saul, as we have seen; and Saul on his part at first acted with the Spirit, and was used of God. Thus was he a "partner" of the Spirit. In like manner men are today made partakers--partners, of the Holy Spirit, who are never sealed by Him:

"And those on the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for awhile believe, and in time of temptation fall away" (Lk. 8:13. See also Mk. 4:16,17).

Saul had fathomless ignorance of the things of God (1Sa 9:5-10), no real faith (13:8-9); no discernment as to what prayer is (vs. 12). He repeated the sin of Eli's sons in bringing the sacred ark into the midst of the profane host in battle (1Sa 4:14-18). See also Saul's heartless giving over of Jonathan, the man of faith, to death. Saul never really knew God. How like Divine Grace, to choose another Saul from the same tribe, then "chief of sinners," the persecutor of His dear Church, through whom to reveal His utmost counsels and grace in the N.T.: "Saul, who was also called Paul"!

Judas Iscariot went with another disciple when the Lord sent them out two by two (Mk. 6:7,13) to preach "the kingdom of Heaven," and he did preach, and went on, and wrought miracles, without doubt (by the partaking of the Holy Spirit, in the sense of our verse), unsuspected by the rest till the very Last Supper of John 13! At first, doubtless, he deceived himself. Then, unwilling for the self-denial the path demanded, he yielded to his inner greed, to his eternal ruin!

And what about **Demas**, a companion and fellow-worker with Paul, saluting the saints in Colossians 4:14, accounted a "fellow-worker" in Philemon 24? But in Paul's last epistle, towards the end of his second imprisonment, Paul, nearing martyrdom, must dip his pen in bitter ink indeed, and record, "Demas forsook me, having loved this present age."

Let us be frank and honest despite all our feelings, false traditions, and false hopes. There are those that tasted of life, so that they knew what it was: and were made partners (metachoi) of the Holy Spirit, so that they were conscious of Him and His work, who are seen in this passage finally to fall away and be eternally rejected of God.

4. Heb 6:5: And tasted the good utterance of God--This, like the preceding statements, refers to experimental things. The statement is not that the Word of God is good, which we all know; but that an utterance (rhema)* of God's quickened to the soul, has been found good by the spiritual sense of taste: "If ye have tasted that the Lord is gracious" (1 Pet, 2:3); see also Psalm 119:103, Ezekiel 3:3. (Another Greek word--logos, means simply word; but here the utterance of God is expressed by the Greek word rhema, meaning saying, "that which has been uttered by the living voice," "things spoken." This is the hrema of the Spirit which is the sword of the Spirit, of Eph. 6. Compare Matt. 4:4, 26:75; Lk. 2:51, Rom. 10:9 (twice), 17.)

These who merely tasted the good utterance of God, in Hebrews 6:5, were "rocky ground hearers" of Luke 8:13, quoted above. They had attended and enjoyed Bible classes and conferences. The word "taste" is often applied in Scripture to that peculiar enjoyment of the living Word of God. John (Rev 10:10) said, "It was in my mouth sweet as honey." So these "enlightened" souls who had "tasted" of the gift of life and been made "partners" of the Holy Spirit in His presence and operations, had also "tasted" of the quickened Word of God which indeed is "good."

5. And (having tasted of) the powers of the coming age—The explanation of this remarkable phrase, the powers of the age to come, is clear in Scripture. In Exodus 15:26 we see a promise that upon diligent obedience, the Israelites would be exempt from the

diseases of Egypt, "For," God said, "I am Jehovah that healeth thee." They were warned, also, in Leviticus 26:14-16, and Deuteronomy 28:21, 22, 27, that among other judicial results of disobedience would be diseases like "the boil of Egypt." We know how they failed; here God's grace exceeded (Deut. 8:4). Through disobedience they were smitten, and shall yet be smitten (until the Remnant of Israel turns to God) with these various diseases. But in connection with the coming of "the King in His beauty" to them, and the restoration of Zion, we find, "The inhabitant shall not say, I am sick" (Isa. 33:24); and "The eyes of the blind ...opened, the ears of the deaf ... unstopped"; "the lame man" leaping "as a hart," and "the tongue of the dumb man singing" (Isa. 35:5-6).

Now when our Lord came with the gospel of the kingdom (for He was the King of the Jews), offering to fulfill their kingdom promises, He "healed all manner of diseases" (Matt. 4:23, 24). He fulfilled to Israel, His people, that which Isaiah had prophesied (Matt. 8:14-17). At first, the healings were general, numberless. Later, as official rejection developed, our Lord demanded personal faith of the sick. Finally, in Matthew 16:18, He prophesies "I will build My Assembly" (the Church, an entirely new thing! Eph. 2:15; Col. 3:10, 15). And then He forbids them to tell the Jews that He is the Christ, the Jewish Messiah (Matt. 16:20). And He starts to Jerusalem to die (vs. 21). Thus those "powers" of healing, of complete deliverance from disease, which will be fully realized in the Millennium, the coming age, were manifested to the Jews by our Lord.

Later, when the Holy Ghost came, and the building of the Church was thus begun, we find on the day of Pentecost the powers of the age to come manifested in the remarkable healings of the book of Acts. So we have also present among the gifts (charismata, 1 Cor. 1:7; 7:7 etc.) bestowed by the Holy Spirit, in 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, one gift that directly touches the matter of bodily healing (vss. 9, 28). But read carefully the footnote below.*

*We fully believe that these gifts belong to the Church throughout the dispensation--first, because of Scripture; second, because of the history and teaching of these things; and third, because of personal experience and observation. But we would have carefully noted the peculiar form applied to that work of bodily healing which belongs to the Church time. In 1 Cor. 12:8-10, it is a double plural: "To another, gifts (charismata) of healings." Just as in the following phrase: "To another, workings of miracles." As also, "To another, discernings of spirits" (1 Cor. 12:9, 10, 28). Notice these plurals. The very expression, "gifts of healings," should guard us against the notion that to any person is given a gift of healing--that is, a gift of healing any and every one--as the Lord Jesus exercised the powers of the coming age at the beginning of His ministry. "Gifts of healings" is indeed a distinct bestowment by the Holy Spirit. But the very expression, a double plural, shows that the exercise of the power is directed by the Spirit in special cases: a different character of working from that of a gift like wisdom, or knowledge (vs. 8): or prophesying or teaching, vss. 10, 28. The unbelieving denial of these gifts as belonging to the Church is to be shunned. We recommend the reading of such books as Dr. A.J. Gordon's Ministry of Healing, and Nevius' Demon Possession.

Now in the age to come, the Millennium, the Church will be with Christ in glorified, heavenly bodies; and Israel will be in their own land--not one of them, as we have seen, saying "I am sick," for they will be "forgiven their iniquity." Healing, then, is just one of the powers of the age to come, the manifestations of the power of God (1 Cor. 12:4-11) of which these Hebrew believers had "tasted." For in the age to come, the Millennium, the glory of God is revealed at Jerusalem, and His mighty power publicly known, even upon other creatures than man (Isa. 40:5, Heb. 2:14). Christ will reign in personal Presence and power, Satan will be banished; peace will be enjoyed; ills will disappear. Every believer tastes even today something of that glory, however hindered through unbelief is its manifestation.

Hebrews 6:6: and then have fallen away, it is impossible to renew them again to repentance, since they again crucify to themselves the Son of God, and put Him to open shame.

We come now to one of the two great crisis words of this most solemn passage of holy Scripture having fallen away: (Gr., parapesontas). This is the only occurrence of this word in Greek Scriptures. Its corresponding Old Testament word, mahal, is found, for example, in Ezekiel 14:13, Leviticus 5:14. This Hebrew word is defined by Gesenius: "To act covertly, treacherously, faithlessly, as an adulterous woman against her husband" (Num. 5:12, 27); "to deal treacherously with Jehovah" (Deut. 32:51; 2 Chron. 12:2; 29:19; job 21:34. See also Job 31:11, 26, 28). The same word is used concerning Achan's sin (josh. 7:1). The inner meaning of the word translated "fallen away" in Hebrews 6:6 is that of secret departure from God: "apostasy gradually resolving into antipathy," as Saphir puts it. Now parapesontas, having fallen away, is an aorist participle; the whole process is looked at as one event. And it is not a falling into sin that is meant, but, a falling away from God, from Christ, from salvation, a renouncing the truth. The "once" (hapax) of verse 4 governs all these verbs, as I have said, and looks at their acts as of past time--done! This "falling away" is not 1 John 2:1, "If any man sin, we have an Advocate." Nay, it is the abandonment of desire for the Advocate! Apostates are described here, not backsliders; for to the latter God said:

"Return, thou backsliding Israel ... I will not look in anger upon you; for I am merciful, saith Jehovah, I will not keep anger forever. Only acknowledge thine iniquity" (Jer. 3:12-13).

Two Greek words are used to denote that fatal spiritual state, falling away:

1. Aphistemi, which means primarily to separate from, either by one's own will (voluntarily), or by that of another. The four occurrences of this word in the Gospel of Luke will illustrate: Lk. 2:37: "Anna departed not from the temple"; "he (Satan) departed from him (Jesus), until a fitting opportunity" (Lk. 4:13): The rocky ground hearers are said to "fall away" in time of temptation, (by

their own consent, clearly, even if unconsciously or by degrees) (Lk. 8:13). Christ said He would say to the wicked "in that day" (as told also in Matt. 7:22), "Depart from Me, all ye workers of iniquity" (Lk. 13:27). This will be by the will of Another, the judge.

This same word is used in Heb. 3:12, where the idea of will seems to prevail as in the other cases cited.

Note also, Paul "departed from them (the Jews) and separated the disciples" (Acts 19:9) And "In later times some shall fall away from the faith." (1 Tim. 4:1). In the same epistle, "From such withdraw thyself" (1 Tim. 6:5, A.V.). "Let every one that nameth the name of the Lord depart from unrighteousness" (2 Tim. 2:19).

2. The other Greek word, parapipto, is found in Heb. 6:6 only: ... and then fell away. Parapipto is compounded from para, alongside; and piptein, to fall--literally, to fall alongside. "Hence, to deviate from the right path, to turn aside, to wander. In Scripture, to fall away from the true faith, from Christianity.--Thayer.

Doubtless the thought of will is here also, but more that of delusion: so the Galatians were said to be "bewitched" in turning from the way of simple faith back to Judaism. See Gal. 3:1; 4:9-11.

In either case, certainly, only God's true saints, His elect, would be preserved, whether from willful departure or from fatal bewitchment.

Even Webster defines apostasy as "Abandonment of what one has voluntarily professed: total desertion of principles or faith." The Greek word from which our word "apostasy" comes, stands out in Hebrews 3:12: "Take heed, brethren, lest haply there shall be in any one of you an evil heart of unbelief, in falling away (Gr., apostenai) from the living God."

The noun (apostasia) of the same verb occurs twice in the New Testament: in Acts 21:21, where Paul is accused of abandoning Moses; and in 2 Thessalonians 2:3, where the general apostasy from God to the Antichrist of Revelation 13 is described. Let us put out of our thought, then, that those who in Hebrews 6:6 fell away merely through lack of faith honestly and earnestly kept up Jewish practices; or that they are only in a fearful, uncertain state. No, the verses following forbid any conclusion other than that they have turned back to the sin they have loved, away from the light they had seen (remember, they are those who were once enlightened) and had come to hate the light! It is impossible to renew them again unto repentance—Note that in accordance with the whole present-day trend of false security, the impossibility of renewing such to repentance is placed in verse 6 in our Bibles, whereas in the Greek it belongs to verse 4, at the beginning, in the emphatic place: literally, For impossible (it is) those once for all enlightened and having tasted ... become partners ... have tasted ... and have fallen away to renew them again unto repentance. In the awful word REJECTED of verse 8 lies the secret of the impossibility of renewing to repentance those that "fall away." For, (a) such do not themselves desire to repent! (b) No man or angel has power to bring about repentance. It is a granting, a gift, from God. (As see Acts 11:18; 2 Tim. 2:25.) Repentance in Scripture is shown to be a miracle, "about-mindedness"--what a man loved, he loathes; what he loathed, he is now drawn to. It is not that God is not able to renew them but--awful fact! that He is unwilling; that these are the "rejected." God rejected them, for there was no response, but the contrary, to His infinite love in the "heavenly gift" of Christ, which they had tasted.

And now for the summing up of their fearful sin: Seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God--The word "afresh" is not in the text: it is with them (inwardly) to reject the Son of God for themselves, and (outwardly) to put Him to an open shame--or, to expose Him to public disgrace. No one but a professing Christian can put Christ to an open shame. An atheist, an infidel, a denier, puts Christ far from him. But a professing Christian has taken Christ's name upon himself. The world looks to him, and rightly, to exemplify in himself what they know the Son of God Was and is. It is manifest that these who have fallen away have not only renounced their confession of Christ, but have also gone into open worldliness and sin.

Heb 6:7: We remember that in the parable of the Sower (the understanding of which our Lord indicated was fundamental to knowing all parabolic teaching--Mk. 4:13), it was the state of the ground in each case that decided the issue: the seed was the Word of God, the same in each case. So here in Hebrews 6:7, the rain that cometh oft upon the land, "the rain that cometh down from Heaven," was the same upon the ground that bringeth forth herbs meet for them for whose sake it is also tilled, and upon the ground that beareth thorns and thistles, the fruit of the curse. (Read Gen. 3:17.) Brethren, it is always herbs meet for the tiller, or--thorns and thistles. As for these "herbs," they are "things that accompany salvation" (vs. 9) to wit: work for God, and "love toward His name," shown in "ministering unto the saints"; and in keeping on--still do minister. it would not be kindness for God to give assurance to any saints but herb-growers. On the other hand, the thistle-growers have rejected all God's mercy, and choose to bear sins--thorns and thistles still. Therefore, they are righteously rejected. Further grace and mercy would be inconsistent with the holiness and justice of God's throne. These, loving lawlessness, are allowed still to love it; and thus, finally, "fall into the hands," in judgment, of that "Living God" from Whom they "fell away" during their earth life. (See Hebrews 10:31.)

Heb 6:8: Now comes the awful final word of this passage, the second crisis word (the first was, "fell away": see comment on Heb 6:6). We now read: IT IS REJECTED. The natural results of rejection follow: nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned. The Hebrews to whom Paul was writing, knew what their Scriptures spoke about God's using fire in judgment, "Abraham beheld, and lo, the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace" (Gen. 19:28). "Ye were as a brand plucked out of the burning, yet have ye not returned unto Me, said Jehovah" (concerning cities in Israel forward in sin, Amos 4:11).

Also Moses' warning prophecy in Deut. 29:22-28: "The whole land is brimstone, and salt, and a burning."

So shall the final destruction of restored Babylon be: "Her high gates shall be burned with fire" (Jer. 51:58). "Every shipmaster, ...

and mariners, cried out as they looked upon the smoke of her burning" (Rev. 18:17-18).

God has exhausted with such apostates those means by which He reaches the hearts, consciences, faith, and affections of man; they having been "enlightened," having "tasted" of life, the heavenly gift, in Christ; and of the sweet goodness of the Word of God, and the blessed powers of the world to come, all to no effect. They have tasted Christianity and rejected it, bearing thorns and thistles despite God's blessing upon them. Having rejected God, they are "rejected" of Him! Fearful state, fearful outlook!

In connection with this we must remember John 15:6; "If a man abide not in Me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and they gather them and cast them into the fire, and they are burned."

There are those who would rob this verse of all meaning, by asserting that the ones spoken of here had never had Christian experiences.

Nor must we neglect the statement of Lk. 8:13, already quoted, concerning those who "for awhile believed." Believed what? Why, the word that they had "received with joy." It was the same word that the "good-ground" hearers received. The sole difference was in the soil; not in the seed--not in the Word preached! Our Lord emphasized that it was "Upon the rock" that the shallow soil was, and we remember the Scripture, "Is not My word like a fire? saith Jehovah; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock to pieces?" Remember that brokenness shown by the publican, who "smote his breast, saying, God, be Thou merciful to me the sinner!"

Going back to John 15:6: "If any man abide not in Me he is cast forth as a branch," indicates the very state described in Heb. 6:4-8, and 10:26,31. In no other way can the words, "tasted of the heavenly gift (eternal life); and the blood ... wherewith he was sanctified," be honestly explained. And the judgment of such is the same in John 15:6 as in the Hebrews passages: "Cast forth as a branch ... withered ... cast into the fire ... burned." REJECTED ... cursed ... burned. And Hebrews 10:27: "A certain fearful expectation of judgment, and a fierceness of fire which shall devour the adversaries."

Heb 6:9 But, BELOVED, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany SALVATION, though we do thus speak.

10 For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and the love which ye showed toward His name, in that ye ministered unto the saints, and still do minister.

11 And we desire that each of you may show the same diligence unto the fullness of hope even unto the end:

12 that ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

We have studied three of the great warnings of Hebrews, which begin with (1) Hebrews 2:1-4, and continue in due season throughout the epistle: (2) Hebrews 3:7 to 4:13; (3) Heb 5:11 through Hebrews 6:8; (4) Hebrews 10:36-39; (5) Hebrews 12:14-17; (6) Hebrews 12:25-29; and (7) Hebrews 13:9.

Let us note at the beginning to whom these warnings are addressed. It is certain that they are not addressed to what Scripture calls "the world." In His great high-priestly prayer of John 17 our Lord said to the Father, "I pray not for the world." Christ on the Cross "tasted death for every man." "He gave Himself a ransom for all." "He is the propitiation for the whole world." The gospel is preached to the whole world, to all men; and Christ's atoning death, His burial, and His resurrection, is the gospel! But in Hebrews it is those who have confessed who are addressed. Even concerning the doom of the apostates, as in Hebrews 6 and Heb 10, we have seen that it is those who had been "enlightened," had "tasted," had been "made partakers," or were "sanctified," who are spoken of.

By misunderstanding the warnings of Hebrews, many true believers have been cast down in spirit and filled with apprehensions. But after the awful announcement concerning apostates, there is the great passage, Heb 6:9-20, which should give comfort and firmness of soul to such. For the Spirit has in mind true believers, "saints," in Hebrews, as in all of the epistles. We see this exemplified here: they are the "beloved," of whom things that accompany salvation are spoken. These two great words, "Beloved" and "Salvation," are not used to and of apostates! To them indeed Paul announces, "We are not of them that shrink back unto perdition" (Heb 10:39), although he had been warning them: for it is God's way with all those who confess Him, to warn them of evil.

Heb 6:9: But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak: Vincent has an excellent word concerning are persuaded (pepeismetha): "We are firmly convinced the verb indicates a past hesitation overcome." Also Westcott: "The form implies that the writer had felt misgivings and had overcome them." Alford says here that the word is "stronger than pepaithamen, which would express only a subjective confidence, whereas pepeismetha gives the result of actual conviction by proof." Compare the remarkable parallel in Romans 15:14, where the same word is used.

Paul said though we do thus speak (of the apostates of Heb 6:4-5), yet he now in contradistinction to these uses the precious address "beloved" (agapetoi), a word used sixty times in the New Testament--the first nine times by God to Christ His beloved Son (quoted thus by Peter in 2 Pet. 1:17); and then only of saints, whether Gentiles ("To all that are in Rome, beloved of God"--Rom. 1:7); or the Israelitish Remnant ("Touching the election, they are beloved for the father's sake," Rom. 11:28).

In all Hebrews, Hebrews 6:9 alone contains that precious word, "beloved," which is always spoken of true believers. Take your pencil and mark in 1 John, beginning with Hebrews 3:2, "Beloved, now are we children of God," then verse 21; then Hebrews 4:1, 7, 11; then 3 John 1, 2, 5, 11; ending with Jude 3, 17, 20. And things accompanying--The Greek participle, echomena, is from the word echo, meaning "I have," "I hold." See Matt. 7:29; 8:9; 9:6. It is used over 600 times in N.T. and constantly concerning reality,

possession, as in John 3:15, 16, 36; never indicating a mere nighness to possession. Bloomfield renders it "connected with," as does Darby.

And things accompanying salvation--This whole verse turns on this word "salvation." There are described in the first part of Hebrews 6, as we have noted, remarkable privileges, experiences, and professions; but the word "salvation" is not connected with them--not mentioned! Manifestly in the apostle's mind there were distinct and sure marks of those who are called, in Hebrews 1:14, "heirs of salvation."

He does, indeed, "thus speak," as he puts it, to those of whom he is persuaded the better things, the things connected with salvation. For man is not an automaton. He is told of a salvation to be received, by faith, and of a doom to be avoided. All this, although "Salvation is of Jehovah" (Jonah 2:9; Ps. 3:8; 37:39; Lk. 3:6).

This great word SALVATION (sotjria) is applied to actual deliverance over forty times in the New Testament (with its cognates, over fifty times): and always meaning certain, eternal deliverance. For instance, we read, "Neither is there salvation in any other"; "The gospel is the power of God unto salvation"; "God chose you unto salvation in sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth"; "The salvation which is in Christ Jesus with eternal glory"; "The Author of eternal salvation" (Heb. 5:9). The word is used seven times in Hebrews, for instance Hebrews 1:14; 2:3, 10; 5:9; 6:9; 9:28; 11:7.

So that while the Spirit does thus speak in Hebrews 6:1-8 of the Divine rejection of those having fallen away, we may "rejoice with trembling" if we find the marks that accompany salvation with ourselves! For certain signs attend either salvation, or decay, and possible final damnation.

Heb 6:10: In this case, as Heb 6:9-12 show, there was, accompanying salvation, certain spiritual activity which God calls your work and the love which ye showed toward His Name. Note that love toward God's Name, that love which He treasures, is not a mere sentiment or ecstasy. "Whosoever loveth Him that begat loveth him also that is begotten of Him" (1 John 5:1). And what a word is this concerning our humble ministering to His saints--that God is not unrighteous to forget it!

We may say that Hebrews 6:10 is a verse that we quote to others very frequently. Living, as it has been our privilege to do for many years, a life relying upon God, when one of His saints, for example, as the Lord's steward, writes ministering to us, we put in our reply, "Remember Hebrews 6:10!" Some of you have been visiting and comforting the bereaved; others have helped the weak, and visited the saints who are sick. Some of you have that rare gift of discerning and relieving human loneliness, or hidden sadness. Now, our Lord said even a cup of cold water given in His name should in no wise lose its reward! Service rendered to the Lord will not be forgotten! See Mark 9:41. (The R.V. gives the literal meaning, "in name that ye are Christ's." You may be wrong concerning the person, but you did it as unto Christ, believing he was Christ's. That renders the reward certain!) God is not unrighteous. He hath said, "He that reapeth receiveth wages," and He will be faithful to His Word.

There are terrible utterances in Hebrews concerning both the unbelieving and the fearful, as well as the open rebels. Also there is a consciousness developed here, as in all the epistles, of genuineness, of sainthood, that is, of being Christ's! As John says, "We know that we are of God, and the whole world lieth in the evil one" (1 John 5:19). And Hebrews 6:10, "Your work ... ye ... ye ... the saints."

Verse 11: And we desire that each one of you may keep on showing the same diligence (both in laying hold of the truth, and putting it into service) unto the full assurance (same word as in Col. 2:2; 1 Thess. 1:5, et al.) of hope even to the end. The words mean, of course, the end of their pilgrimage through this world.

And Peter enjoins, "Wherefore, brethren, give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure" (not to God, but to yourselves). "For if ye do these things, ye shall never stumble: for thus shall be richly supplied unto you the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ."

Now what shall we say of those--yea, to those, willing to neglect this diligence, which adds grace upon grace--saying that they "believe in election," and straightway lapsing back into the slumber which they love? We would shout the word of warning! We would read this book of Hebrews in the power of the Holy Spirit unto such, over and over. Three things we must emphasize then:

1. That people may have experiences and Divine dealings, and yet fall away and be lost.

2. That the word "salvation" is not in God's Word spoken of such, for "Salvation is of Jehovah," as we saw. And, as we read so clearly in 2 Corinthians 5,18: "But all things are of God, Who reconciled us to Himself through Christ"; or Romans 11:36: "For of Him, and through Him, and unto Him, are all things. To Him be the glory forever"! God's beloved are His elect* who will inherit salvation by His will--uncaused by them in any degree, for "the purpose of God according to election is not of works."

*Such have passed through the "Enchanted Land" of sluggishness and drowsiness so accurately described by Bunyan in The Pilgrim's Progress: "By this time they were got to the Enchanted Ground, where the air naturally tended to make one drowsy: ... Then they came to an arbour, warm and promising much refreshing to the pilgrims, for it was finely wrought above head, beautified with greens, furnished with benches and settles. It had in it a soft couch where the weary might lean. This, you must think, all things considered, was tempting, for the pilgrims already began to be foiled with the badness of the way: but there was not one of them that made so much as a motion to stop there. Yea, for aught I could perceive, they continually gave so good heed to the advice of their guide and he did so faithfully tell them of dangers, and of the nature of dangers when they were at them, that usually, when they were nearest to them, they did most pluck up their spirits and hearten one another to deny the flesh. The arbour was called the Slothful's Friend, on purpose to

allure, if it might be, some of the pilgrims there to take up their rest when weary."--Oh, get Pilgrim's Progress, and read this wonderful picture and warning!

3. That God keeps His saints by His Word, as we saw anew in the words of Hebrews 6:9, "though we thus speak." "By which also (the gospel) ye are saved, if ye hold fast the word which I preached unto you," Paul wrote to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 15:2). And, "To present you holy and without blemish and unreprovable before Him: if so be that ye continue in the faith, grounded and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel which ye heard" (Col. 1:22-23).

It is no sign of the absence of faith to be concerned about our salvation, but rather the opposite. As Paul says to the Corinthians, "Try your own selves, whether ye are in the faith; prove your own selves. Or know ye not as to your own selves, that Jesus Christ is in you? unless ye be reprobate" (2 Cor. 13:5).

it was no sign of the absence of faith that the disciples at the Last Supper asked with deep concern, "Lord, is it I?"

Hear Paul speak of himself:

"I fight, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body, and bring it into bondage: lest by any means, after that I have preached to others, I myself should be rejected"--reprobate, as "rejected" should read. (Paul does not here say, as in 1 Cor 3:15, "If any man's work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as through fire." But he says, "Lest I myself"--his person, "should be reprobate," the Greek word adokimos. The other occurrence of this word is in Heb. 6:8 concerning the ground: "If it beareth thorns and thistles, it is rejected and nigh unto a curse; whose end is to be burned.")

It was not that Paul lived in uncertainty or terror, but that he knew and had accepted in his very soul the Christian path: and especially the path belonging to teachers of God's Word, who bear a heavy responsibility--James 3:1: "Be not many of you teachers, my brethren." "God will keep the feet of His saints," but it has been His good pleasure to put red lights of warning at every "Bypath Meadow." And Christian may go on his way rejoicing, but those very Philippians who are told to rejoice evermore, are also told to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling: "For it is God Who worketh in you," says Paul, "both to will and to work, for His good pleasure." Or, see Hebrews 12:28-29:

"Receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us have grace, whereby we may offer service well-pleasing to God with reverence and awe: for our God is a consuming fire."

Levity and lightness are as foreign to true faith as are unbelief and despair! Peter says:

"Receiving the end of your faith, even the salvation of your souls ... Gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and set your hope perfectly on the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ."

There is a false presentation of "eternal security" today that presumes that the believer is under eternal safety without taking heed to such warnings and exhortations to a holy walk as we find in Hebrews and indeed, throughout Scripture.

I was speaking at a Bible conference in Indiana several years ago. Near my table at lunch was a long special table set for a company. Soon they came in, a crowd of young people, evidently enjoying a day's outing at the lake. They stood at attention behind their chairs around the table, and repeated three times in loud staccato tones, after the manner of a college football yell, the three letters, "J! I! M!" Then they seated themselves, and plunged immediately into vivacious conversation. Much perplexed, I called one of the waiters and asked, "What did those young people mean by shouting 'J.I.M.'?" "That is their watchword," he replied. "It means, 'Jesus is mine.'"

Now there were doubtless, among those dear young people, many earnest ones. But can you imagine such a thing taking place on the day of Pentecost, or in Paul's great ministry at Ephesus? Persecution, death and dungeons were the lot of that early Church. Indeed, it is in the last chapter of Hebrews that we read of an imprisonment noted nowhere else: "Know ye that our brother Timothy hath been set at liberty." And Paul wrote of the wondrous heavenly calling of the Church, the Body of Christ, in the Epistles to the Ephesians and Colossians, with a Roman chain clanking on his wrist!

Has the world become "a friend of grace"?

You say, There are those that are born again, and they are all safe; they are God's elect. We agree heartily that God's elect, the born-again ones, are sealed by the Spirit unto the day of redemption. Glorious fact! But, brother, it is in the eighth of Romans, the great citadel of the security of the saints, that God says to His saints, "If ye live after the flesh, ye must die (spiritual death]: but if by the Spirit ye put to death the deeds of the body, ye shall live." Romans 8 links up with Hebrews.

"Give the more diligence to make your calling and election sure," says Peter--"sure" not to God, certainly, but to yourselves. And Peter insists that we add to our faith, virtue; to our virtue, knowledge; to our knowledge, self-control; to our self-control, patience--godliness ... brotherly kindness ... love.

But what about the passive, "sluggish," professing Christian, who claims he believes on the Lord Jesus Christ, but shows no spiritual life or activity? Hebrews tells him his danger! If neglect of "so great a salvation," or a spiritual slothfulness--that is, willingness to remain "babes" when "by reason of the time since we heard the truth" "we ought to be teachers" of others--if this is our state, let us read Hebrews and awake!

Those who rely on "security" apart from a holy life, and from that diligence enjoined in the book of Hebrews, either will find their sense of security bitterly attacked some day by the enemy (who will overwhelm them with a view of their unworthiness), or else will be let alone by the devil, to become companions of Mr. Vain Confidence.

There are those (and they are sadly many) who are ready to

cry. "Heb. 6 belongs only to the Hebrews!" Indeed, we have lately found those who claim that this entire passage "does not refer to

Christians at all, but to the Hebrews as a nation, and to the way that God has led that nation for many centuries." But such teaching ignores the words of Heb. 3:1, where those addressed are "partakers of a heavenly calling": which the Hebrews as a nation never have become.

Instead of saying Heb. 6 belongs to the Jews, and dismissing its warnings, Christians should take just the opposite attitude: If Hebrew believers, with all their advantages, need warning, how much more we, branches of the wild olive tree, who have been grafted into the good olive tree, need to be warned! Read frequently Rom. 11, where Paul says: "Be not high-minded, but fear: for if God spared not the natural branches, neither will He spare thee. Behold then the goodness and severity of God: toward them that fell, severity; but toward thee, God's goodness, if thou continue in His goodness: otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Ro 11:20-22).

Ah, we could cry out because of these things! For have we not seen congregations dying before our faces? Have we not spoken to thousands to whom we knew our words were not welcome words (for fear that they would arouse them into real spiritual consciousness and activity)? Have we not cried Awake, thou that sleepest, and arise from among the dead ones, and Christ shall shine upon thee!" only to see most of the hearers passing out chattering about petty personal matters, or the crops, or the weather? Did not Christ say it is a "little flock" to whom the kingdom will be given? And unto a hearer inquiring, "Lord, are there few that be saved?" He said:

"Strive (Gr.: agonidzo, agonize) to enter in by the narrow door: for many, I say unto you, shall seek to enter in, and shall not be able" (Lk. 13:24). (Agonidzo is the word of the Greek games; and means to use every energy in the face of difficulties and opponents. "Seek," represents mere desire, not contest!) And, "For narrow is the gate and straightened the way, that leadeth unto life, and few are they that find it" (Matt. 7:14). (These city gates of the East admitted persons, not baggage. They were narrowed to admit the passage of a pilgrim at a time, if necessary!)

These things being so, what mean ye by wondering at the mighty warnings of the Book of Exhortation, Hebrews?

Heb 6:12: That ye be not sluggish, but imitators of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises: Those in Hebrews 5:12 were "sluggish," and became dull of hearing; became milk-users; and, awful thought! some of them became apostate! But imitators of them (that is, of the saints of old) who through faith and patience inherit the promises--Notice the connection with Abraham (vss. 13-15). His great example follows: "Having patiently endured, he obtained the promise."

Heb 6:13 For when God made promise to Abraham, since He could swear by none greater, He sware by Himself,
14 saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.
15 And thus, having patiently endured, he obtained the promise.
16 For men swear by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation.
17 Wherein God, being minded to show more abundantly unto the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His counsel, interposed with an oath;
18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us:
19 which we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil;
20 whither as a Forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

Heb 6:13, 14: You remember that the God of glory appeared to Abraham (Acts 7:2) in the Chaldean land, and made him the great seven-fold promise recorded in Genesis 12:1-3:

"Now Jehovah said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto the land that I will show thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and be thou a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and him that curseth thee will I curse; and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

Heb 6:15: Abraham was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. (How long he had "patiently endured" his father's fleshly effort to go along into the land of Canaan or to hold Abraham back (Gen. 11:31-32)--before that father's death we are not told.)

"After these things," came the great covenant of Genesis 15, and Abraham's believing in Jehovah, and God's "reckoning it to him for righteousness" (Gen. 15:6). (Then came the birth of Ishmael--an effort of Abraham's flesh to help God out! When Abraham was eighty-six: Gen. 16:16.)

"Dwelling in tents," building altars, digging wells, in Canaan (not asking yet to possess Canaan!), Abraham still believed God's promise to him of the land! Then, when he was ninety-nine, comes the renewal of the promise, and the prophecy of the birth of Isaac. This, by the way, is the circumcision chapter, Genesis 17; and God's command was faithfully observed by Abraham, who commanded "his children and his household after him" (Gen. 18:19). Then came Isaac's birth and growth and the great testing from Jehovah of offering up Isaac a sacrifice! And God's oath--spoken out from heaven to His faithful servant:

"By Myself have I sworn, saith Jehovah, because thou hast done this thing, and hast not withheld thy son, thine only son, that in blessing I will bless thee, and in multiplying I will multiply thy seed as the stars of the heavens, and as the sand which is upon the seashore; and thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies" (Gen. 22:16, 17).

And so, after Sarah's death, and the honor the Hittites paid to Abraham as "a prince of God among them," we come to the end of

his life of faith: "Abraham died in a good old age, an old man, and full of years, and was gathered to his people" (Gen. 25:8).

Heb 6:15: Now the Spirit's comment upon all this in Hebrews, as we have seen is, Having patiently endured, he obtained the promise. We see that from Abraham's departure from Haran (Ge 11:31, 32; 12:4) to his being "gathered to his people," was over a hundred years (from the promise made in Ur, it was more than that) of patiently enduring. (He failed in the matter of Egypt (Gen. 12); and in the matter of Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 16); but did you ever observe this fact: NOT ONE SIN of an Old Testament saint recorded in the New Testament?)

It is remarkable that after Jehovah's oath to Abraham when he was about to offer up Isaac (Gen. 22:15-18), there are no more recorded testings of his faith. He was now in such a deep rest of faith that he walked steadily therein, the remainder of his days. Indeed, he had said to his servants when on the way to offer up Isaac, "Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship, and come again to you." And to Isaac he had said, "God will provide Himself the lamb!" (Read Gen. 22 often!)

Heb 6:16: For men swear by the greater: and in every dispute of theirs the oath is final for confirmation: Let us suppose that some king of England, renowned for uprightness, had promised one of his subjects he would raise him to a baronetcy. Doubts might arise in the subject's mind as to whether the king might forget his promise, or circumstances be allowed to interfere with its fulfillment. But if we may suppose further, that the King of England should humble himself to go before the Lord Chief Justice of the realm and place himself under oath that he would appoint the subject to a baronetcy; and that the king should give the subject a record of this royal oath, in addition to his promise--all room for uncertainty would be removed. How much more when God promises and takes His oath!

Heb 6:17, 18: God ... pledged Himself with an oath that by two unchangeable things, (His word, and His oath; which is final for confirmation vs. 16; Ex. 22:11; Deut. 29:12) in which it is impossible for God to lie, we may have a strong encouragement. In a promise, the assertion of an intention is made; in an oath, the person's character is publicly and solemnly put behind the assertion! In a promise, we look at the words; in an oath, we look at who and what the promiser is!

"Had He sworn by Heaven and earth, I might have feared, lest, as they shall pass away, so His word might. But when the Most High swares by Himself Who abides forever, my fears are gone."--Govett.

And Andrew Murray: "God points to Himself, His Divine Being, His glory, His power, and pledges Himself, gives Himself as security, as hostage, that, as sure as He lives, He will fulfill His promise. Oh, if we would but take time to tarry in the presence of this God, and to listen to Him swearing to us that He will be faithful, surely we would fall down in confusion that we ever harboured for a moment the doubt, which thinks it possible that He may be untrue and not keep His word. And now let us pause and realize what all this argument about the blessing and the oath of God means. In the Christian life there is lack of steadfastness, of diligence, of perseverance. Of all, the cause is simply--lack of faith. And of this again the cause is—the lack of the knowledge of what God wills and is of His purpose and power to bless most wonderfully, and of His faithfulness to carry out His purpose. It is to cure these evils; it is to tell His people that He will do anything to win their trust, and will do anything for them if they will trust Him, that God has taken His oath of faithfulness."--The Holiest of All, pp. 221-2.

Now it is to the heirs of the promise that this assurance is made. You and I may ask, Are we such heirs? We dare not say so if we are careless and sluggish professors, instead of those of verse 12 "who through faith and patience inherit the promises." But of these, we have read further in verse 18, By two unchangeable things (the promise and the oath of God) ... we may have a strong encouragement, who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us. (To how many of the professing Christians of your acquaintance would the word "refuge" and "fled" apply? They may have "joined the church," but have they fled for refuge (from coming judgment) to lay hold of the hope set before them?) Here, of course, the writer speaks of the "cities of refuge" to which a manslayer (who had killed someone unwittingly" "unawares") might flee and be safe "till the death of the high priest." (See Ex. 21:13; Nu 35; Deut. 19; Josh. 20.) Three cities of refuge were appointed in Canaan on the west side of the Jordan, and three on the east side, whither the manslayer might flee "from the avenger of blood." Read carefully Numbers 35:9-15, and you will see that it was the business, the duty, of the manslayer to flee, "lest the avenger of blood pursue the manslayer, while his heart is hot" (Deut. 19:6). God would see to it that the man who fled for refuge "obtained that safe refuge" (Num. 35:28). What a picture, both of Hebrew sinners, to whom Paul was writing; yea, and of us all who have believed; and also of national Israel in the future! For they slew Him "unwittingly," "unawares"! So the Lord Jesus prayed, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do!" And Peter preached, "And now, brethren, I know that in ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers" (Acts 3:17). But note that there was no ransom to be taken for the murderer (distinct in all the Law from the "manslayer"), just as no refuge from coming wrath is provided for the rejecter of Christ (Num. 35:31).

Heb 6:19: To a Hebrew believer, then, this fleeing for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before us would be a vivid picture! Let it be so in our own hearts, for there is no other hope of rescue from judgment than "Christ Jesus our hope" (1Ti 1:1); as Peter also says, "God ... begat us again unto a living hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." CHRIST, in His work of putting away sin on the Cross, and now being our Great High Priest in Heaven, where the veil is rent, and access to God is absolutely free through Christ--this is the "hope" we have fled to lay hold of which (Heb 6:19) we have as an anchor of the soul (a hope) both sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil.

Note that while it is our fleeing for refuge to lay hold in Heb 6: 18: the hope we lay hold of in Heb 6:19, becomes "an anchor" that holds us. "An anchor of the soul unfailing and firmly fixed," Stuart translates. It is well to reflect that have fled for refuge is in the perfect tense, while, which we have as an anchor, is present and continuous. (Some refer sure and steadfast and entering into that which is within the veil back to "refuge," of Heb 6:18 (which is grammatically possible); but to refer the words to "hope" is also grammatically possible, and is, we think, the meaning.) Mark this well. For in Hebrews, Christ is the Great High Priest, Who, by His present perfect knowledge of our needs, His sympathy with our path, and His intercession, perpetually keeps His own. It is not our holding fast, but His holding us fast. For note again the words of Heb 6:19-20, entering into that which is within the veil, whither as a Forerunner Jesus entered for us. Notice that "within the veil" indicates Heaven itself, the very presence of God. It is that which is within the veil, and not the veil itself, which is in view. (As to "the veil," see comment on Hebrews 10:20.)

Heb 6:20: Whither as a Forerunner Jesus entered for us, having become a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek. In Hebrews 9:24 we read:

"Christ entered not into a holy place made with hands, like in pattern to the true; but into Heaven itself, now to appear before the face of God for us."

Vincent well says, "'Forerunner,' (a word used only here) expresses an entirely new idea, lying completely outside the Levitical system. The Levitical high priest did not enter the sanctuary as a forerunner, but only as the people's representative. He entered a place into which none might follow him, in the people's stead, and not as their pioneer. The peculiarity of the new economy is that Christ as High Priest goes nowhere that His people cannot follow Him. He introduces man into full fellowship with God."

To quote the saintly Andrew Murray, "He is a Priest forever, a Priest in the power of an endless life, a Priest Who opens to us the state of life to which He Himself has entered in, and brings us there to live here on earth with the life of eternity in our bosom."

"There is a sanctuary in which God dwells. There was a veil that separated man from God. Jesus came from within to live without the veil, and rend it, and open a way for us. He is now there for us as Forerunner. We may now enter in and dwell there, in the power of the Holy Ghost. This is the gospel according to the Epistle to the Hebrews."

And now we return in Hebrews 7 to the subject of the Melchizedek high priesthood of Christ; mentioned indeed in Hebrews 5, 6, 10, but (in Heb 5:11-6:19) broken off by a prolonged parenthesis necessary on account of the "dullness of hearing," and lack of full growth of the hearers: for the apostle had "many things to say" of Melchizedek, but they were hard to explain because of the hearers' low spiritual state. But in Hebrews 6:9, as we have just seen, he calls them "beloved," and is persuaded that "things that accompany salvation" are theirs--though he had thus spoken to arouse them out of sluggishness into diligence and imitation of the faith and patient endurance of such as Abraham.

Now we must consider this Melchizedek priesthood of Christ--a stupendous subject--and may God indeed assist us; for have we not all found ourselves to be "dull of hearing" as to many glorious truths spoken in Scripture?

Hebrews 7

Hebrews 7:1 FOR this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of God Most High, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him,

2 to whom also Abraham divided a tenth part of all (being first, by interpretation, King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is King of peace;

3 without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God), abideth a priest continually.

4 Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils.

5 And they indeed of the sons of Levi that receive the priest's office have commandment to take tithes of the people according to the Law, that is, of their brethren, though these have come out of the loins of Abraham:

6 but he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises.

7 But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better.

8 And here men that die receive tithes; but there one, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

9 And, so to say, through Abraham even Levi, who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes;

10 for he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchizedek met him.

WE MUST SAY EARNESTLY that in view of these words concerning Melchizedek in Hebrews 5:11: "Of whom we have many things to say, and hard of interpretation," we need to approach this subject with earnest prayer for light and for wisdom from Heaven. For is it not true of practically the whole Church, at least in a sad degree, that we "are become dull of hearing ... such as have need

of milk"?

After the description of our Great High Priest, the Son of God (Hebrews 1), and Son of Man (Hebrews 2), Who, as such, is to have all things subjected to Him, it is emphasized at the close of Hebrews 2, that, having suffered, having been tempted, "He is able to succor them that are tempted." Again at the end of Hebrews 4:14, 15 we read:

"Having then a Great High Priest, Who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. For we have not a high priest that cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but one that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart."

We should often reflect on these matters regarding Christ which lie at the beginning of the epistle, for they draw out our hearts toward Him Who partook of "blood and flesh ... in like manner" with us. After setting forth these personal features which so endear our Lord to us, the Spirit immediately proceeds to bring before us two great facts, both of which must be laid hold of if we would understand either our present heavenly position and walk, or our future hopes in connection with our Great High Priest.

1. He is a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek (Heb 5:6-10; 6:20; 7:17). His priesthood is, then, after the order of Melchizedek, not after the order of Aaron (Heb 7:11). After Melchizedek, "priest of God Most High, brought forth bread and wine" ... and blessed Abram in Genesis 14, God waits a thousand years, and then Melchizedek appears in Psalm 110:4, where God says:

"Jehovah hath sworn, and will not repent: Thou art a Priest forever After the order of Melchizedek."

Therefore from eternity to eternity He is such!

"The whole place Melchizedek occupies in sacred history is one of the most remarkable proofs of the inspiration and the unity of Scripture, as written under the direct supernatural guidance of the Holy Spirit. In the book of Genesis all we know of him is told in three short, very simple verses. A thousand! years later we find a psalm with just one single verse, in which God Himself is introduced, swearing to His Son that He is to be a High Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Another thousand years pass, and that single verse becomes the seed of the wondrous exposition, in this epistle, of the whole work of redemption as revealed in Christ Jesus. All its most remarkable characteristics are found enveloped in the wondrous type. ... We see in it nothing less than a miracle of Divine wisdom, guiding Melchizedek and Abraham with a view to that which was to take place with the Son of God two thousand years later; revealing to the psalmist the secret purpose of the Divine mind in the promise made to the Son in Heaven; and then, by the same Holy Spirit, guiding the writer of our epistle to his Divinely-inspired exposition. It is indeed the Eternal Spirit, the Spirit of Christ Himself, through Whom all was wrought and in due time recorded.... So had God prepared in Melchizedek a wondrous prophecy of His Son, Whose right to the priesthood lay in no earthly birth. But in His being the Son of God from eternity to eternity.

"May God teach us to know what it means that Christ is our Melchizedek, a Priest forever. It is the spiritual apprehension of this everlasting priesthood ... that lifts our inner experience out of the region of effort and change, and failure, into the rest of God, so that the immutability of His counsel is the measure of that of our faith and hope."--The Holiest of All, An Exposition of Hebrews, Andrew Murray.

We think of the word "order" as denoting inheritance, or succession; but here it denotes character of being, and office. This "order" is contrasted in Hebrews 7:11 with that of Aaron, as we shall see. It becomes necessary, then, to the student of Hebrews to inquire what this "order of Melchizedek" means, prophesies, and anticipates; and none the less to inquire what is that priestly work in which our Lord is now occupied which was set forth in type in Aaron's priesthood.

To speak briefly: 1. Our Lord exercised priestly functions of care and prayer for His own during His earthly life. Again, on the Cross He "offered Himself" (Heb. 9:25, 28). Next, He was saluted at resurrection by God as "Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 7:17). (It is idle to contend that Melchizedek was not connected with sacrifice but with blessing only: Gen. 14 (quoted above), Heb. 7:15, 17, 24, and 27--"when He offered up Himself": these verses concern Christ after the order of Melchizedek! He was not "after the order of Aaron" at any time, though of course in the types such as the Day of Atonement, blood sacrifice was set forth. But it was Christ after the order of Melchizedek Who "offered up Himself," and thereafter appears in blessing, as did Melchizedek to Abram in Gen. 14.)

2. Aaron, on the other hand, is connected constantly with sacrifices. He is traveling through the wilderness with the people of God before they come into the land of their inheritance.

3. Melchizedek is revealed, in his person and ministry, to Abraham, the great-grandfather of Levi, Aaron's ancestor. The counsels of God revealed in Melchizedek, therefore, are prior to those revealed in Aaron and his ministry.

The time and circumstances of Melchizedek's coming to meet Abraham are most striking. Abraham is returning from the slaughter of the kings (Heb. 7:1), the hosts of the Mesopotamian country that had overwhelmed Lot and the cities of the plain. Abraham, the depositary of the Divine promises is met by Melchizedek, "king of Salem ... priest of God Most High ... Possessor of Heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:18, 19). The king of Sodom is about to offer Abraham of the spoils of the victory, saying, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself."

Melchizedek, we read, "brought forth bread and wine: and he was priest of God Most High" (Gen. 14:18). Now we read in the Psalm 104:15 of "wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart"; and Jesse sent bread and wine to King Saul by David (1 Sam. 16:20). The bread and wine Melchizedek brought forth would indeed refresh Abraham and his three hundred eighteen weary servants!

Now note again the name of God in connection with Melchizedek's priesthood: "He blessed him (Abraham), and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High (Heb., El Elyon), possessor of Heaven and earth" (Gen. 14:19). "(a) The Lord (Jehovah) is known to a

'Gentile' king (Melchizedek) by the name 'most high god' El Elyon. (b) a 'Gentile' is the priest of El Elyon and (c) His distinctive 'character' as most high God is 'possessor of heaven and earth.' ... As "possessor of heaven and earth," the most high God has and exercises authority in both spheres: (a) the heavenly authority of El Elyon (e.g.) 'Da 4:35,37 Isa 14:13,14 Mt 28:18" (b) the earthly authority of El Elyon (e.g.) "De 32:8 Ps 9:2-5 21:7 47:2-4 56:2,3 82:6,8 83:16-18 91:9-12" "2Sa 22:14,15 Da 5:18"--Scofield Bible p. 23.)"

Melchizedek, as priest of God Most High, acts doubly: (1) He calls the blessing of God Most High upon Abraham; and then (2) he blesses God Most High. Thus he does in typology the very two things Christ will do: first, obtain blessing from God upon His people; second, lead their praise of God, as He says, "In the midst of the congregation (of 'My brethren') will I sing Thy praise" (Ps. 22:22; Heb. 2:12).

Melchizedek, being priest of God Most High, "possessor of Heaven and earth," must represent Christ leading in worship, in Heaven as well as on earth! And here will be fulfilled in its time that "mystery of His will made known to us":

"According to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him (Christ) unto a dispensation of the fullness of the seasons, to sum up (gather together into one) all things in Christ, the
things in the heavens, and the things upon the earth" (Ep 1:9-10).

"For it was the good pleasure (of the Trinity) that in Him (Christ) should all the fullness dwell; and through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His Cross ... whether things upon the earth, or things in the heavens" (Col. 1:19-20).

We pause here in this great subject to sum up briefly in a footnote the teachings of our chapter in Hebrews concerning Melchizedek, under three heads: What he was, What he did, What the "order of Melchizedek" means as to Christ.

I. What he was:

1. He was a man (Heb. 7:4), not Shem, as some contend, for the record of Shem's beginning of days and end of life is given to us.

2. Named eight times in Hebrews (besides Gen. 14 and Ps. 110), superseding and preceding Aaron and all the Levitical economy, his place is exceeding high.

3. He was (vs. 1) King of Salem, priest of God Most High, a dignity high above that of Abraham the Patriarch.

4. His name means, King of righteousness (Calvary); his position, and then also King of Salem, means King of Peace (the result of Calvary). That is, he was King of righteousness as Christ first answered at the Cross all righteous claims against us; and second King of peace: Christ is our peace: "Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God." Melchizedek was king-priest: king before priest.

5. His father's name is not given, nor his mother's, though he had both father and mother, being a man.

6. The record is not that he was like the Son of God, but that (vs. 3) he was made like unto the Son of God, (in having no earthly origin given). He was made like (in his record) to the Son of God--evidently as to the facts of Heb. 7:1-3, of which note the last--abideth a priest continually.

7. Without father, without mother--revealed to us; without genealogy--revealed to us. The expression without genealogy simply means that his genealogy is not given, for from vs. 6 it is evident that he had genealogy: whose genealogy is not counted from them (the sons of Levi). Note especially without genealogy, for Jesus as Son of Man had genealogy: an official genealogy of the house of David (Matt. 1), and a maternal genealogy (Lk. 3). (Of course, as Son of God He had none! "I came forth and am come of God," He said. And, "Ye know neither Me, nor My father.")

8. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life--(Heb 7:3) revealed to us: no recorded time of birth, death, or age. We are not to draw from these remarkable words the inference some have drawn, that Melchizedek never was born, nor that he has not died. This is to misread the type. The conviction of Calvin and a host of careful commentators is a true one, that his having neither beginning of days nor end of life is a descriptive clause of the same character as without father, without mother, without genealogy.

9. No kingly line named, no "successor"; not as with the kings of Israel and Judah, a life with recorded beginning and end.

II. what he did.

1. He blessed Abraham, "who had the promises" (Heb 7:1, 6): so is greater "better," than Abraham.

2. He blessed God Most High on the occasion of Abraham's triumph over The kings (Vs. 1), and his rescue of wretched Lot (type, perhaps of Israel's condition at Armageddon). This reminds
us that throughout the New Testament, especially in Hebrews and the Revelation, we see that Christ's enemies are to be put beneath His feet as the first step in the establishment of the kingdom.

3. He received tithes of Abraham: unto whom Abraham, the patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils (vs. 4). Thus by tithes Abraham confessed Melchizedek's superiority, for (Heb 7:7): Without any dispute the less is blessed of the better.

III. See main text.

What the "order of Melchizedek" means as to Christ: In our sad "dullness of hearing" the "many things" that we find concerning Melchizedek are indeed "hard of interpretation." He is, you may say, a type of Christ. Ah, but he is more than that! The Levitical priests were "after the order of Aaron." Aaron was thus not a mere type. We hear God say of Christ, "Thou art a Priest forever After the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:17). Christ is a Priest, and He is a Man. Mary was the mother of Jesus, but it is

blasphemy to call her "the mother of God." Let us believe, with hearts rejoicing, that there is a Man at God's right hand in the glory Who is our Great High Priest; and, that He is God the Son, through Whom the worlds were created! Let us not seek with our little minds to "reconcile" His humanity and deity, for God asks us to do no such thing, but to have the faith of little children.

Heb 7:2: King of righteousness, and then also King of Salem, which is, King of peace: Note carefully Heb 7:17, 18, 27, where Christ, "after the order of Melchizedek," is seen as High Priest offering Himself for the sins of the people, once for all. Thus in type is set forth first, Christ's work on the Cross, where He met all the righteous claims of God against us victoriously, and from which death He was raised triumphantly. Then, the result of His work on the Cross:

"Being therefore justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ" (Rom. 5:1).

"Through Him to reconcile all things unto Himself, having made peace through the blood of His Cross" (Col. 1:20).

Melchizedek was king, and that in a double sense: King of righteousness, as to character--no man like him on earth. His very name insists on this; and King of Salem, which (interpreted) is, King of peace.

Then this office of Melchizedek, priest of God Most High, must be meditated upon. We turn again to the story in Genesis 14--brief, but how significant! The eastern confederation of kings under Chedorlaomer has been victorious over the cities of the plain, where Lot dwells. Abraham and his three hundred eighteen trained servants pursues them, smites them by night unto complete victory, and rescues "his brother Lot." Then the king of Sodom comes out to meet the victor. What a place of temptation, for the king of Sodom will say, "Give me the persons, and take the goods to thyself."! But now comes Melchizedek, King of Salem. "And he was priest of God Most High."

Abram knew El Shaddai, the Almighty (Gen. 17:1); and God took the name of Jehovah toward the earthly nation of Israel; but El Elyon, God Most High, reaches everywhere and everything in Heaven and earth! It is a vaster name, all-inclusive, recognized, we shall see, by Gentiles.

"And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of God Most High, Possessor of Heaven and earth: and blessed be God Most High, Who hath delivered thine enemies into thy hand."

Abraham entered readily into this new revelation of His God, so that his answer to the offer of the king of Sodom was,

"I have lifted up my hand unto Jehovah, God Most High, Possessor of Heaven and earth, that I will not take a thread nor a shoe-latchet nor aught that is thine, lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich: let there be nothing for me (R.V., margin); only that which the young men have eaten, and the portion of the men that went with me" (Gen. 14:22-24).

What deliverance this new revelation of his God wrought in Abraham's heart! So David speaks: "I will cry unto God Most High, unto God that performeth all things for me" (Ps. 57:2). And Moses:

"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, When He separated the children of men, He set the bounds of the peoples According to the number of the children of Israel. For Jehovah's portion is His people; Jacob is the lot of His inheritance" (Deut. 32:8-9).

Here God is acting as the Most High (for He is that, as we shall see, to all nations and men), high over all earthly affairs, and arranging them in view of the children of Israel. For as we see from Deuteronomy 32:9, no other nation can say, "Jehovah is our God." But all nations and men must acknowledge Him as God Most High (El Elyon). We see this first in the fourth of the remarkable prophecies of Balaam (unregenerate as he was, but under Divine control in these utterances):

"He saith, who heareth the words of God, Who seeth the vision of the Almighty" (Num. 24:4).

Here we have God as God; as the Most High, above all; and as "the Almighty" (El Shaddai), His name as revealed to the patriarchs (Ex. 6:2-3).

Next we go to Daniel, where the first great king of the Gentiles, Nebuchadnezzar, is brought through seven years of humbling till he knew "that the Most High ruleth in the kingdom of men, and giveth it to whomsoever He will." Then he testified, "The Most High doeth according to His will in the army of Heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth" (Heb 4:32, 35).

This brings us to "the army of Heaven," both holy and fallen angels. As to the latter, beginning with the "anointed cherub" (Ezek. 28:14), their prince, the highest being God ever made: God declares, "I said, Ye are gods, and all of you sons of the Most High. Nevertheless ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes" (Ps. 82:6-7). This "anointed cherub" in his hideous purpose said, "I will be like the Most High" (Isa. 14:14).

Even the demons, when our Lord came, cried out, "What have we to do with Thee, Jesus, Thou Son of the Most High God?" So also the cry of the poor demonized creature of Acts 16:17. It is precious to note in Gabriel's mission to Mary concerning the birth of Jesus, "He ... shall be called the Son of the Most High," and "The power of the Most High shall overshadow thee." It is also most precious that our Lord promised to us, "Ye shall be sons of the Most High:" in doing good without hope of earthly reward, and in loving enemies.

We have spoken so fully of this great title of God, in order that our hearts may be drawn above all earthly and Jewish estimates of the priesthood of Christ. He is not to us the priest of Jehovah; but is, like Melchizedek, Priest of the Most High God, El Elyon, Possessor of Heaven and earth, above all national and dispensational considerations. (If ye could but know and believe, O ye Jews, that we have a High Priest Who, while Man, is wholly heavenly; that all the Levitical things of your earthly tabernacle and temple were types that have vanished away; and the priesthood has been "changed" (Hebrews 7:12), then you would cease naming your Levis and your Cabests (priests), for you would know that out of the royal tribe of Judah came the King-Priest Who shall sit upon His throne in Jerusalem--Who is now at the right hand of God; and that the veil, our Lord's flesh, has been rent, and that through His

shed blood we come directly to God in Heaven, having a Great High Priest there, and the energy of the blessed Holy Spirit in our worship!)

Heb 7:3: Melchizedek did not belong to a royal line, as we have said: without father, without mother, without genealogy. Contrast this with the records of the Kings of Judah and Israel. Having neither beginning of days nor end of life as are recorded of those kings; but made like unto the Son of God. Note that it is not said that he is like the Son of Man, the Son of David, of Whose birth of the virgin, and of Whose death on the Cross Scripture is full: but made like unto the Son of God.

Now other Scriptures tell of our Lord's inheriting the "throne of His father David." But David was a man, not God. Christ indeed is the Son of Man, but, as is brought out in Hebrews 1, He is God's Son, addressed as God and as Lord--God Himself. Here then in Melchizedek stands before us one whom God made "like unto" His Son. No earthly things, no human things, are allowed to hinder. No royal heritage of earth, no record of parentage or birth or death; no account of derivation, office, or authority--simply the words, made like unto the Son of God.

Note further the word "made." It has to do with the description God uses in setting Melchizedek before us. As we have said, it was not that he was like the Son of God in essence, but made like Him in description and consequent typical significance.

"The comparison is not between Christ and Melchizedek, but between Christ and the isolated portraiture of Melchizedek; and that in regard to the Divine Nature of the Incarnate Son, and not to His human Nature in which He both was born and died, nor even to His official dignity. It is not however implied that the record in Genesis was purposely designed to convey the meaning which is found in it, but that the history sketched by Prophetic power has the meaning."--Westcott, Epistle to the Hebrews, p.173.

"As to the import of these affirmations of vs. 3, they stand or fall together. If one may be taken to express the impression made by the silence of the historian, all may. That this latter is the correct view, I conceive to be beyond a doubt. What Christ is really, Melchizedek must be apparently; and this is all that is required. In a historical narration which makes in general great account of parentage, genealogy, and scrupulous record of ancestry and end--he, the greatest of them all, has no such mention. He stands, a solitary instance of a personage whose function transcends that of every other Scripture character ... with not one word to shed light on his family or his nation, his reign, or his destiny. The inference is that the silence is intentional and significant."--A.C. Kendrick, Commentary on The Hebrews, p. 86.

Further, it is evident that the name Son of God here has reference to Christ's deity as the second Person of the Godhead, rather than to His Person as God-Man. For in contrast with the words without father, without mother, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, remember Gabriel's explanation to Mary: "The Holy Thing which is begotten shall be called the Son of God" (Lk. 1:35). Here the body that God "prepared" Christ is in view, and the Divine plan of securing its holiness, so that the Child being born, though partaking of blood and flesh, should be called "the Son of God."

But in our chapter in Hebrews the words made like unto the Son of God are preceded by the words having neither beginning of days (Christ, we have just seen and know, had "beginning of days"), nor end of life--which four latter words do not characterize the Melchizedek priesthood as consummated at Calvary, where our blessed Lord laid down His life. Yes, to "take it again," doubtless, but we are seeking for the significance of His Melchizedek priesthood.

In this connection also, we must go back to the first verse of Hebrews 7, where Melchizedek is called "priest of God Most High," and to Genesis 14 where is added, "Possessor of Heaven and earth." For the first revelation concerning the Son in Hebrews is that He is "Heir of all things," and He must be remembered as such throughout the book. But we read in Hebrews 2:7-8 that, although God "crowned (Him) with glory and honor," and "set Him over the works of His (God's) hands," and "left nothing that is not subject to Him," yet now we see not yet all things subjected to Him." In Hebrews 10:12, 13, He is seen:

"He, when He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God; henceforth expecting till His enemies be made the footstool of His feet."

And (Eph. 1:9-10) we find God "making known unto us the mystery (secret) of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Him (looking forward) unto a dispensation of the fullness of the times, to sum up all things in Christ, the things upon the heavens, and the things upon the earth." Of course this last is not accomplished as yet.

There is a recurring thought throughout Hebrews of a future day of manifestation of our Lord. Note the verses and portions quoted below:

Hebrews 1:6: "When He (God) again bringeth in the Firstborn into the world."

Hebrews 2:5: "Not unto angels did He subject the world to come,whereof we speak."

Hebrews 9:10: "Imposed until a time of rectification."

Hebrews 9:11: "But Christ having come a High Priest of the good things to come."

Hebrews 9:28: "Christ ... shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation."

Hebrews 10:36-7: "For ye have need of patience, that having done the will of God, ye may receive the promise. For yet a very little while, He that cometh shall come, and shall not tarry."

Hebrews 11:40: "God having provided some better thing concerning us, that apart from us they (the O.T. saints) should not be made perfect."

Hebrews 12:26-28: "Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the Heaven ... Wherefore, receiving a kingdom that cannot he shaken, let us have grace."

We see thus that in the book of Hebrews future things are constantly in view. And the Melchizedek priesthood of our Lord (which

not only included His offering up Himself on the Cross (7:27), but a priesthood that lasts forever! looks forward to the day when His enemies have all been made "the footstool of His feet," and all things in the heavens and earth are beneath His hand.

We come now to the last clause in verse 3, (This Melchizedek) abideth a priest continually: There is no note of the beginning of his priesthood nor of its ending, but made like unto the Son of God, as we have seen, he comes on the scene as a continual priest, without earthly or human connection. And we note that the chief emphasis as to our Lord's Melchizedek priesthood is that it endureth "forever." Beginning at Hebrews 5:6, "A Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek"; then Hebrews 6:20: "Jesus ... having become a High Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek," and so on, we find emphasized the last phrase of Hebrews 7:3: abideth a priest continually. It was after the likeness of Melchizedek that Christ arose, "not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an indissoluble life" (Heb 7:16).

Again, Heb 7:24: He "hath His priesthood unchangeable." And Heb 7:25: "He ever liveth to make intercession for them."

Finally (Melchizedek] abideth a priest continually does not say that the man Melchizedek is a "continual priest" today, but simply that he appears on the scene as he does, and is made one, or rather, the only one, of the "order" of his name, fulfilling the great Prophecy in Psalm 110:4. We find in him one who, while a man, yet stands alone as the head of an "order" of which Christ, being God (not, made to be God) is, and not of the order of Aaron, whose father and mother we know, and who was not made like unto the Son of God.

Verse 4: Now consider how great this man was, unto whom Abraham, the Patriarch, gave a tenth out of the chief spoils: Melchizedek comes into our view blessing Abraham, the depositary of God's promises, the father of the household of faith, and progenitor of Israel. Concerning no other man are we told, Consider how great this man was. For it is not the custom of Holy Scripture to set forth the greatness of man--but the contrary. Man is less than nothing, and vanity. Yet Melchizedek is Pronounced "great"; Abraham recognized his greatness; we are told to "consider" it. Though a man, he is looked at as in that dignity in which the Most High God has set him, a dignity beyond that conferred on any other human being: for if we regard Moses as the great revelator of the Old Testament (and he is), and if we regard Paul as God's great herald and revelator of the New Testament (as he is), we come to this: That all Mosaic revelations are set aside in view of that priesthood set forth in Melchizedek, and that Paul is the one who narrates this greatness. Therefore, we need hardly say, it is the position of Melchizedek, the dignity conferred by God upon him, and not natural human greatness, that is in view. Tithes are paid to him, subjecting to him Abraham, Aaron, and Levi, and all his descendants. And he blessed Abraham: But without any dispute the less is blessed of the better (Vs. 7). It is as if the Scripture had hasted to speak of Melchizedek as the priest after which order our Lord Jesus is. Eight times, we repeat, his name occurs in Hebrews 5 to 7, God delighting to say concerning Christ, "Thou art a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 7:17).

How great this man was is shown also in his having the offices of both priest and king. He was King of Salem, which is, King of Peace. But Salem, which Psalm 76:2 identifies with Zion, is agreed by very many to be Jerusalem (which means, Foundation of Peace). For we must remember God's word concerning the place of Israel's sanctuary: "A glorious throne, set on high from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary" (Jer. 17:12). "The beginning" evidently goes back to Creation itself. It was shown to Abraham when he offered up Isaac, wonderful picture of Christ! (Gen. 22:2ff.)

There are two elevations in Jerusalem: the lower, Moriah, where God had Abraham offer up Isaac, and where God indicated to David the temple site (1 Chron. 21:15-22:1). The other and higher elevation was Mount Zion, where David's throne was set. Indeed, the whole city and land became known by that name. This hill of Zion is the place beloved of God on this earth, for the typical services in the old temple were to pass away, and that temple be destroyed, but of Mount Zion God says,

"Jehovah hath chosen Zion:
He hath desired it for His habitation.
This is My resting-place forever:
Here will I dwell; for I have desired it" (Ps. 132:13-14).

And,

"It shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow unto it, and many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of Jehovah, to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the Law, and the word of Jehovah from Jerusalem" (Isa. 2:2-3).

You may say, How could the infinite God desire a habitation, a resting place, upon this earth? I reply, You were made in God's image, and while you may enjoy many other Places, You love your own home. Mount Zion, in Jerusalem, is God's earthly home. In the Millennium this "mountain of Jehovah's house" shall be exalted at the head of all the nations: Isa. 2:2-3; Ps. 78:68; 87:2; Zech. 8:3; 2:10; 9:9--quoted in Matt. 21:5. Thither must all nations of the earth "go up year after year to worship the King, Jehovah of hosts" (Zech. 14:16).

We are not told that Melchizedek reigned over a large part of Palestine--possibly only over the locality where God's sanctuary afterwards was erected. This will be no surprise to them that know God and His ways. Nor did Salem need to be a "great" city in the eyes of men, nor its king a "great" earthly potentate. For men were blind then, and are today, to true greatness, which has to do only with God.

This word "great"--to how few of the human race has God ever applied it! To Abraham (Gen. 12:2): "And I will bless thee and

make thy name great"; to David (2 Sam. 7:9): "I will make thee a great name"; the Shunammite was called "a great woman" (2 Kings 4-8); and the angel of the Lord said of John the Baptist, "He shall be great in the sight of the Lord" (Lk. 1:15). Other than these, I find none except Melchizedek called "great" by God.

We must beware of slight thoughts of Melchizedek because he is mentioned but once in history (Gen. 14), once in prophecy (Ps. 110:4), and now finally here in Hebrews, while Levi and Aaron and Aaron's priesthood have many chapters devoted to them and to their service. It is God Who says Melchizedek was greater than even Abraham. It is God Who declares that His dear Son as Priest is after the order of Melchizedek--not Aaron!

It is evident from these scriptures that royalty is connected with priesthood, for David thereafter sacrificed at Moriah. Now David was of the tribe of Judah, not of Levi. He acted, then, in what we find in Hebrews to be a king-priest function, and thereafter the priest was subject to the Judaic royalty.

Here then is Melchizedek, no Canaanite, but priest of El Elyon, God Most High--not of one nation, as was Aaron afterwards of Israel; and he is also king of the place that Jehovah delighted in and chose above all others in which to dwell. And this is as we find it in Hebrews. Our Lord is a King; He is also Priest: but King first, shall we not say? as we read in Zech. 6:13: "He shall sit and rule upon His throne; and He shall be a Priest upon His throne."

Heb 7:5: Re-read this verse, and compare Numbers 18:21, 26;
2 Chronicles 31:4 ff. Tithes belong to God: Leviticus 27:30; Proverbs 3:9; Malachi 3:8. We saw Abraham in Genesis 14:20 giving a tenth to Melchizedek; and Jacob, years afterwards, promised, if God would bless him, to give God "a tenth of all." The Levites, then, in receiving and using the tenth, were blessed as the servants of God. Tithes were given by the Israelites to the priests of Aaron's house because those priests represented Jehovah to Israel. But Abraham recognized at once in Melchizedek the priest of God Most High, and honored him with "a tenth of all," thus subjecting himself and also Levi to the Melchizedek priesthood.

Heb 7:6: But he whose genealogy is not counted from them hath taken tithes of Abraham, and hath blessed him that hath the promises: Here disappear all Jewish claims! The Jews are nothing in religious matters except as connected with Levi and his priesthood. But here Abraham (Jacob, his grandson from whom Israel's tribes sprung, being not yet born) is acknowledging and paying tithes to one that has no connection with himself or his seed after the flesh. We know that Paul says our Lord was of Israel "as concerning the flesh" (Rom. 9:5). But here we are dealing with counsels of God which regard the Son of God as "Heir of all things." From and through Him will come Israel's blessing, certainly, in the Millennial days. But the attitude of most Jews is that Divine blessing sprung from them; whereas the truth is that God's counsels, in infinite mercy and grace, brought this about: that our blessed Lord had a body "prepared" for Him, and was granted in sovereign grace, not by natural claims, to Israel as their Messiah.

Judaism is of course supplanted by the introduction of this Melchizedek priesthood with which Levi and Aaron had no connection. But not in the same language or manner as that of the vehement denunciation by the apostle of the Galatian believers who were desiring to take over Jewish things to which they had never had a title, does the apostle deal with these Hebrew believers who had had that title directly from God. It is striking, for example, and it has been to me a key in discerning the attitude of God toward the Hebrew believers to whom this epistle is directed, that the author of Hebrews does not charge home upon them the national sin of the rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah (as does Peter, and as do the apostles in the book of Acts). Instead, there is loving but firm instruction of these Hebrew believers that the day of Judaism, of the Levitical economy, of the temple with its visible services so attractive to the flesh, was over; that these things had all been superseded, as seen further in Heb 8-10.

Heb 7:7: The apostle now brings out as regards Melchizedek, that the less is blessed of the better. So that despite the fact that the promises had begun to be given to Abraham (Gen. 12; Acts 7:2-3), and were, after Melchizedek's appearance and blessing, to be spoken more distinctly, with enlargement and detail (Ge 15:17-21): we see, and must keep in mind, that Melchizedek is greater than Aaron--inexpressibly greater: blessing, as we have just seen, "him that had the promises," and taking tithes not, as the priests of Aaron's house, representing Jehovah; but from Abraham, the ancestor of the priests of Aaron's house, as representing "God Most High."

Heb 7:8: And here, dying men (thus the Greek, emphasizing dying) receive tithes; but there one, of whom it is witnessed that he liveth: That is, his human, earthly life was viewed as perpetuated; his priesthood, yes, and his kingship of Salem must also be so viewed. But, contrary to this, in that very city, Jerusalem, upon mount Zion, God will set His King upon "the throne of Jehovah," on which David and Solomon sat (1 Chr 29:23), now disappeared, then to be re-established. This king, Christ, shall be "a Priest upon His throne," where, doubtless, then, will be the thought of Melchizedek, who once occupied the kingship and priestly function, at Salem evidently, as we see connected in Psalm 76:2, with Zion.

* "The Levites are dying men, who pass away in due course, and are succeeded by others. 'But there (in the case of Melchizedek) he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.' The Greek is very condensed: lit.: being attested that he liveth. The A.V. fills it out correctly. Melchizedek does not appear in Scripture as one who dies, and whose office passes to another."

"Under the Mosaic Law, dying men, men who were not only liable to death, mortal, but men who were actually seen to die from generation to generation, enjoyed the rights of Priests. For such an order there is not only the contingency but the fact of succession. While Melchizedek was one to whom witness is borne that he liveth. The writer, recurring to the exact form of the record in Genesis, on which he dwelt before, emphasizes the fact that M. appears here simply in the power of life. So far he does not die:

the witness of Scripture is to his living. What he does is in virtue of what he is"--Westcott.

If one should insist that the expression he liveth refers to life in the flesh, he would have to maintain that M. is still exercising priesthood. But the book of Hebrews sets forth CHRIST as the Great Priest of His people. True, John and Peter testify:

Christ "loosed us from our sins by His blood, and He made us a kingdom, priests unto His God and Father" (Rev. 1:5, 6).

"Ye also, as living stones, are built up a spiritual house, to be a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Pet. 2:5).

But it is only by the death of our one Great High Priest that believers are constituted a Priesthood. Remember, however, that all believers are equally priests in this priesthood.

"Through Him then let us offer up a sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit Of lips which make confession to His name" (Heb. 13:15).

There is therefore no place now for a priest who has not been made so after and through the shedding of Christ's blood.

Heb 7:9, 10: Levi, (Abraham's grandson, not yet born) Levi, who receiveth tithes, paid tithes, subjecting forever any Levitical priesthood to the higher Melchizedek priesthood. Compare the author's Romans Verse by Verse, p. 179:

"We did not have to wait to be born, or to have a sinful nature; but when Adam, our representative, acted, we acted (Ro 5:19).

"The same Divine principle is illustrated in the fact that through Abraham even Levi (Abraham's great-grandson), who receiveth tithes, hath paid tithes; for he was yet in the loins of his father when Melchizedek met him (Heb. 7:9, 10). God says of Levi, who was not yet born, whose father was not yet born, whose grandfather (Isaac) was not yet born! LEVI PAID TITHES!"

Of course in the Levitical arrangements Melchizedek was not mentioned, so that we have a new paragraph beginning with verse 11:

Hebrews 7:11 Now if there was perfection through the Levitical priesthood (for under it hath the people received the Law), what further need was there that another priest should arise after the order of Melchizedek, and not be reckoned after the order of Aaron?

12 For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the Law.

13 For he of whom these things are said belongeth to another tribe, from which no man hath given attendance at the altar.

14 For it is evident that our Lord hath sprung out of Judah; as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests.

15 And what we say is yet more abundantly evident, if after the likeness of Melchizedek there ariseth Another Priest,

16 Who hath been made, not after the Law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life:

17 for it is witnessed of Him, Thou art a Priest forever After the order of Melchizedek.

One of the most difficult spiritual tasks is to read the types of Exodus and Leviticus, and be prepared in and through those types to see the pattern of priestly intercession--and yet hold fast the truth that our Lord does not belong to the Levitical order. For we see in Hebrews that the Levitical things were shadows, and the contrast is constantly drawn between the incessant activities of Israel's priests and the once-for-all work of the Lord Jesus on the Cross. Unless we are careful we shall, in reading the Scriptures, drift into that wrong regard of the high priest to whom all Israel looked, and whose prominence in New Testament days in procuring the death of our Lord, and acting proudly toward His disciples in judgment after the resurrection (Acts 5:17 ff), made these high priests the chief tools of Satan on earth. (The same deluded dependence in human priesthood among those who do not know the gospel of Grace, makes possible the blasphemous fable of "the vicar of Christ," the pope Of Rome. If the book of Hebrews sets aside the Levitical priesthood which God established, and sets before us the one "Great Priest over the House of God," the Son of God, how would this same book of Hebrews deal with Rome's man-appointed system of priests?)

Heb 7:11: It will not do to say, as do some beloved brethren, that Christ's priesthood is after the order of Melchizedek but is exercised after the order of Aaron. Let us beware lest we forget His words, "All things have been delivered unto Me of My Father"; and, after His resurrection, "All authority hath been given unto Me in Heaven and on earth." Nothing of this sort was in Aaron's hands! The Father hath indeed "set within His own authority" times and seasons, so that our Lord said concerning His coming again,

"Of that day and hour knoweth no one, not even the angels of Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father only" (Matt. 24:36). Therefore even now we find our blessed Lord waiting, though invested with all authority, till the hour and the moment come when the Father will say to the Son,

"Ask of Me, and I will give Thee the nations for Thine inheritance, And the uttermost parts of the earth for Thy possession. Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; Thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel" (Ps. 2:8-9).

Thereafter will He "sit and rule upon His throne" (Zech. 6:13)--a manifest reign of righteousness and peace; "and He shall be a Priest upon His throne;" in His earthly, millennial Melchizedek priesthood--"King of Righteousness, and King of Peace."

But He must be viewed now as that same King-Priest, though not yet in the full exercise of His King-Priest office (because it is

now the time of God's long-suffering, the iniquity of the earth being not yet full).

We see then that Christ is set forth in Hebrews as a priest after the order of Melchizedek, not an Aaronic priest. He is of the royal tribe of Judah, and Aaron's work is contrasted with Christ's. All the things of the first tabernacle show that the way into the Holies was not yet manifest.

No, we must not be drawn into any notion of perfection (lit., full attainment of a designed end) through the Levitical priesthood under which Israel received the Law. But we must become subject in our very hearts to this astonishing passage which sets aside not only the Levitical priesthood but the Law itself, in order that Another Priest may be set before us—after the order of Melchizedek, and not ... reckoned after the order of
Aaron.

Heb 7:12-14: The priesthood being changed--Let us hold to this word, for, however the Levitical priesthood might shadow forth the heavenly things, that priesthood has been "changed," withdrawn, so that there is no vital connection between it and the heavenly worship the book of Hebrews sets before us. For ... our Lord hath sprung out of Judah, as to which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priests: the Aaronic order giving way to the Melchizedek order: Levi to Judah, the royal tribe, out of whom by Divine election, our Lord hath sprung. (Of King Uzziah 2 Chr 26:16 ff. tells us the tragic story: "When he was strong, his heart was lifted up ... and he trespassed against Jehovah his God; for he went into the temple of Jehovah to burn incense upon the altar of incense." Uzziah was indeed of the tribe of Judah, but when he attempted to offer incense in the temple, the priests then rightly contended that he was intruding upon the work of the sons of Aaron. But the anger of God and the judgment of leprosy that fell on him may well be regarded as God's jealousy for that true Son of David, of the house of Judah, the Son of God, yet to be born, of Whom Melchizedek was a prophecy.)

Now come Heb 7:15, 16 pointing to the One Who should arise after the likeness of Melchizedek, Who hath been made, not after the law of a carnal commandment (as the Levitical priests were), but after the power of an indissoluble life. We say "indissoluble" because "endless" does not express the thought of the Greek word here. (The Greek word is akatalutos. This negative form of the word occurs but this once. "If the earthly house of our tabernacle be dissolved--" (2 Cor. 5:1) is the same word, except that "alpha privative" (the letter a signifying negation) precedes the word in Heb. 7:16, making it mean, unable to be dissolved. "Incapable of dissolution," is the excellent translation of the word in Bagster's Analytical Lexicon; and Thayer translates: "Not subject to destruction.") It is the undying character of the risen life of our Great High Priest that is here before us, rather than its mere endlessness. "According to the power of a life not subject to destruction" describes that priesthood after the order of which Christ is, of which Melchizedek was the earthly type. Compare the last word of verse 24, aparabaton, which means inviolable, not transient, unchangeable.

Heb 7:17: We now have the final reference to Christ's eternal, Melchizedek priesthood: For it is witnessed of Him, Thou art a Priest forever, After the order of Melchizedek. The contrast of this priesthood with mortal Levitical priests must ever lie in our minds, rather than the comparison: With the Levitical priesthood, many priests; with our Great High Priest--One.

With those priests, continual yearly offerings; oft-repeated sacrifices; with Christ, one, on the Cross, accomplishing eternal redemption.

With human priests, sin, failure, and final death; Christ, sinless, and through suffering "perfected for evermore."

Those priests, after the order of Aaron; Christ, the Son of God, after the order of Melchizedek.

Those priests, connected with the Mosaic Law; with Christ, (vs. 18) a disannulling of a foregoing commandment, and believers told that they are not under Law but under Grace, dead to the Law and discharged therefrom (Rom. 6:14; 7:4, 6); because of its weakness and unprofitableness (for the Law made nothing perfect) (vs. 19), for man had no strength, and the Law conferred none on him; Grace, by Christ, bringing in a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God.

Those priests had no power in themselves; our Great High Priest has all authority (Matt. 28:18, R.V.).

Those priests were not kings; Christ was born a King, and is
typified by Melchizedek, who, as we have seen, was doubly a king--of righteousness and of peace.

Finally, earthly high priests lacked full sympathy and understanding, as we have said; but our Great High Priest is able to be "touched with the feeling of our infirmities; One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart"; "A merciful and faithful High Priest."

And keep remembering that while those priests were daily occupied with sacrifices and offerings, their work never done, sin was not put away; our blessed Lord, "having offered up one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down." ("The Lord Jesus went up to Heaven and took His place at the right hand of God, to enter on a new kind of action there, which was founded on the purgation of our sins by the sacrifice of Himself. Christ's priesthood supposes that the great and absolutely necessary work of grace on their (our) behalf has been accomplished"--Kelly.)

Unless we are constantly watchful, the idea of priesthood and of an active priest brings before our mind sacrifice, placating God. The thought that our sins were forever put away at Calvary, and that Christ not only exercises His priestly work on the sole basis of His work on the Cross, but that He Himself entered in through His own blood into the Holies above (Heb 9:12)--this remembrance, we repeat, must be held fast; otherwise ignorance, or unbelief, or a bad conscience will send the believer, when he prays, to calling upon Christ to propitiate God on His behalf, instead of coming to God as directed here in Hebrews. Propitiation has been made, once for all (Rom. 3:25, R.V.).

As to the place of Christ's priesthood, it is Heaven itself, where He now appears "before the face of God for us" (9:24). There is no place of worship on earth since our Lord's ascension. The saints, not the earthly building, are the Church of God (Acts 7:48; 17:24; 1 Cor. 6:19; 2 Cor. 6:16).

To sum up what we have learned about Christ's priesthood thus far:

1. Our Great High Priest has gone up on high and is seated on the right hand of God.

2. He is a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, "and not ... after the order of Aaron." Yet the priestly functions are set forth in the ministry of Aaron: (a) the necessity and Divine appointment of priesthood; (b) its being based upon the death of victims for sacrifice, and (c) its continual existence for the people of God.

3. It was not until Christ had "made purification of sins" that He "sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on High" (Hebrews 1:3): this was after He became a sin-offering at Calvary, where He had as a Priest after the order of Melchizedek offered up Himself (Heb 7:17-27), as said John the Baptist, "Behold the Lamb of God that taketh away the sin of the world." We find in the book of Hebrews a marvelous unfolding, generally by contrast with the Levitical offerings and Aaronic priesthood, of the necessity, nature, and results of this great offering up of Himself.

4. Studying the Old Testament types in the light of the utterances of the Spirit in the epistle to the Hebrews, we should fervently look forward to the "good things that are to come" in that day when Our Lord, the Melchizedek Priest, shall return and be a Priest upon His throne, whereas He now sits upon His Father's throne, "expecting" (Heb. 10:13). (That this is at the Millennial time is evident from the context and from comparison with Other Scriptures, for we read: "Thus speaketh Jehovah of hosts saying, Behold the Man Whose name is the Branch" (Zech. 6:12). "And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a Branch out of his roots shall bear fruit. And the Spirit of Jehovah shall rest upon Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding ... with righteousness shall He judge the Poor, and decide with equity for the meek of the earth; and He shall smite the earth with the rod of His mouth; and with the breath of His lips shall He slay the wicked ... And the wolf shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid; and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them" (Isa. 11:1-6). "Behold, I will bring forth my Servant the Branch" (Zech. 3:8). "Behold, the days come, saith Jehovah, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and He shall reign as King and deal wisely, and shall execute justice and righteousness in the land. In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely; and this is the name whereby He shall be called: Jehovah our righteousness" (Jer. 23:5-6).)

Some Christians (and it is tragic to say it!) have never seen Christ as their present and eternal Priest. This very week a godly, earnest Christian man said to me, "I never knew that I had Christ as my Priest!"

A godly woman, also, came to the altar recently, saying with tear-brimmed eyes, "I did not know till tonight that I had a Priest in Heaven, Jesus!"

Alas, there are so many beloved Christians who do not "Seek out of the book of the LORD, and read"! They are content with those verses they have already known. Oh, that they would give themselves to the Word of God--even for a brief time daily!

We have asked one earnest Christian after another these questions: "Are you a born-again child of God?" "Yes." "You are a member of Christ's Body?" "Yes." "Why then do you need a priest?"

And they do not know! For they have been taught in their "standards" that Christ's priestly work was done upon the Cross, which means He was their Priest; but as to having Christ as their present Priest, they know nothing of it. Of course, they pray, "For Jesus' sake," or, "In the name of the Lord Jesus." But the priestly work of Christ to them is connected with putting away sin, nothing more.

But the astonishing word of God is, that He saluted Christ as a Priest forever upon His resurrection and ascension. So we may ask these dear Christians further questions:

"You believe, then, that priesthood belonged to and pertained to the Hebrew nation?"

"Well, yes."

"Why then a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, who is set forth as before Abraham, and thus before Levi, Aaron, or even Israel? Why is the Son of God addressed as a Priest forever?"

And why, indeed, "forever"? (The Westminster standards say, "Christ executeth the office of a priest, in once offering up of Himself a sacrifice, to satisfy Divine justice and reconcile us to God, and in making continual intercession for us." But this, excellent as it is! makes no provision for the word "forever." The day will come when all that are saved have been brought home to the presence of God, and do not need that care and intercession so necessary when they are on earth. The word still remains. Thou art a Priest forever.)

In answer, we say:

1. That Christ is declared a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek.

2. That the intercessory work of Christ as pertaining particularly to our needs as we traverse this world must continue for the Church, that is to say, present-day believers, until all are brought safely home to Heaven. For any believers thereafter, He must keep succoring them; "He must reign, till He hath put all His enemies under His feet" (1 Cor. 15:25), thus fulfilling the Melchizedek priesthood. Even when God takes His great power and reigns (Rev. 11:17), it is Christ Who is exercising the royal authority, as we know, for "great voices in Heaven" say, "The kingdom of the world is become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ: and He shall reign forever and ever" (vs. 15).

3. As to the words of Revelation 22:5, "They shall reign forever and ever," we ask, How could this be apart from Christ? For our Lord said, "All authority" was given unto Him (Matt. 28:18, quoted above); and, "Neither doth the Father judge any man, but He hath

given all judgment unto the Son" (John 5:22).

4. And in the matter of worship, which shall be eternal, who will be the leader if not Christ? Psalm 22 must continue to be fulfilled: how long, if not forever? Incentives to worship will be eternal, for God is infinite. How easily in this life on earth do we settle down into a ritual: certain thoughts about God, certain forms of worship--very much as we go about our daily round of business. But it will not be so in the ages to come. A billion, yea, a trillion ages after the saints enter glory, they shall find themselves as it were beginning to know their God, to Whose endless glories it will ever be the delight of the Lord Jesus to open the door to us. And, He being Man as well as God, it will be His eternal delight to lead our praises.

5. We have only to study the Gospels and the epistles to see how wholly both God the Father and God the Holy Spirit delight to make Christ the Center of affection as well as the Fullness of all the saints. During our Lord's earthly ministry, for the disciples, all centered in Christ. The Bridegroom was with them: they had no cares. And after His death how desolate they were until, upon His resurrection, Jesus again "stood in the midst of them, and saith unto them, Peace be unto you." God will have it so for all eternity.

6. Our Lord's priestly work may be said to be threefold: (1) Offering Himself up a Sacrifice once for all for our sins, on the Cross, where He "put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself"; (2) making continual intercession for us as we pass through the wilderness of this world on our way to glory; and (3) ever leading the praises of those redeemed, on through eternity into deeper, ever deeper knowledge of the infinite blessedness of God, unto Whom Christ has devoted Himself forever as Servant. (See the type of Ex. 21:2-6 quoted in Ps. 40 and in Heb. 10:5--and comment there.)

As Priest, Christ in Heaven is in full, constant sympathy with our needs, trials, and temptations down here; but He leads the praises of the saints, whether individually or as they are gathered together: Peter and John (Acts 4:23, ff.) "being let go" from imprisonment by the persecuting chief priests and rulers, "came to their own company, and reported all that the chief priests and the elders had said unto them." The whole company of saints "when they heard it, lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said,

O Lord, (Gr., Despotes, Master) Thou that didst make the Heaven and the earth and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the Holy Spirit, by the mouth of our father David Thy servant, didst say,

Why did the Gentiles rage,

And the peoples imagine vain things?

The kings of the earth set themselves in array, And the rulers were gathered together,

Against the Lord, and against His Anointed."

So goes on this rapture of united praise. Then they pray, the place is shaken, and they are all filled with the Holy Spirit. Such praises most certainly come up to God through Christ. That was a company of "priests unto God" crying this praise, and they went directly to God because their Great High Priest was in glory, at the Father's right hand. This holy character of our worship cannot be overemphasized.

For God is the only good. Whatever His blessings, including life itself, the only good is God. When a human being leaves the earth, he takes nothing; and, if a saved one, enters Heaven, where God is all in all. (Or will be, when Christ shall have put down every foe, after the rebellion at the close of the thousand years.) How slowly do our hearts come to realize that there is no good but God Himself!

Heb 7:18 For there is a DISANNULLING OF A FOREGOING COMMANDMENT because of its WEAKNESS AND UNPROFITABLENESS

19 (for the Law MADE NOTHING PERFECT), and a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we DRAW NIGH unto God.

Here we must enumerate again several forgotten facts which need to be held in mind in the study of Hebrews:

1. The Law (meaning the Ten Commandments with all the ordinances--see Lk. 10:26, Deut. 6:5, Lev. 18:19) was never given to the human race.

2. The Law was given to Israel at Sinai, and to no other nation--Psalm 147:19-20.

3. The object of the Law was to reveal sin, and not to secure holiness: for fallen men had no strength.

4. There is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment, the Law, Hebrews 7:18 says, (for the Law made nothing perfect). You ask at once, How can God control His creatures except by legal enactment?

5. We answer that there is another principle, infinitely and eternally stronger than Law. We read in Ephesians 1:4 that God "Chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we, should be holy and without blemish before Him in LOVE."

And in 1 John 4:16 "For God is love; and he that abideth in love abideth in God, and God abideth in him."

Christ obeyed the Father because He loved Him!

God calls the Law "a ministration of death, written and engraven on stones" (2 Cor. 3:7). And again He calls it "the ministration of condemnation" (vs. 9). God tells us that the Law "came in beside (or, alongside), that the trespass might abound." The Law demanded what fallen man could not supply (righteousness, holiness, obedience to God), and in undertaking to supply which, he would discover his lost condition (Ro 7:22-24). Now if God says that the Law "came in besides")as an added thing after God's plan of salvation by Christ was revealed--as in Romans 5:8: "God commendeth His own love toward us, in that, while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us") and deluded, self, confident man seized upon it in the false hope of achieving righteousness and

acceptance thereby, then no matter how such a false hope has been wrought falsely into the creeds of men, we stand by this Word of God: that the Law came in as an added thing, "that the trespass (not the obedience) might abound." Sin was already there, but Law having been laid down, sin became known trespass.

You ask, Why, then, was the Law given? It was given that by breaking it man might discover what God knew all the time—his utter sinfulness and weakness. While the Law could do nothing for us, but only demand of us, by the transgression of it, or breaking through its bounds, men would discover what already existed. For sin was there by Adam (Rom. 5:12-21). But sin does not break forth into conscious trespass until there is a Divine enactment against it: "The POWER OF SIN is the LAW" (1 Cor. 15:56). "I HAD NOT KNOWN SIN except through the LAW" (Rom. 7:7). This explains why a God of love who delighted in mercy would give His chosen people (the Hebrew nation) that which would "bring iniquity to remembrance"--make them know it.

6. Now if God tells the Hebrews that there is a disannulling of a foregoing commandment because of its weakness and unprofitableness and a bringing in instead of a better hope (the work of Christ), through which we draw nigh unto God--let not you or me dare to mix the two. God says concerning those under Law (especially Hebrew believers), that they died unto the Law, that they were discharged from the Law, "so that we serve in newness of the spirit, and not in oldness of the letter" (Rom. 7:6). They are to "bring forth fruit unto God," and fruit is the result of life through Jesus Christ by the operation of the blessed Holy Spirit dwelling in them: "Being filled with the fruits of righteousness, which are through Christ Jesus, unto the glory and praise of God" (Phil. 1:11).

The Greek word translated disannulling, athetesis, is the same as appears in Hebrews 9:26 for the putting away of sin "by the sacrifice of Himself." The disappearance of the Law is as absolute, therefore, as the putting away of sin! The order in time here is marked by the quotation from Psalm 110:4, a psalm by David, therefore upwards of 500 years after the Law: that is why the Law is spoken of as a foregoing commandment, or that which antedated God's recorded oath.

(If you have hopes in the Law, note here in verse 18 that both the Law and Levitical relationships are gone! Christ only and His work are left as any hope for you or anyone now!)

The reason the foregoing commandment, the Law, with all its "ten thousand things," (Hos. 8:12) has been annulled, put away, is, we repeat, because of its weakness and unprofitableness. It was "weak" in that it was unable to obtain obedience in those over whom it was placed. It was "holy, just and good," but men were carnal, "sold under sin." Even the good that they would, they did not. And it was "unprofitable" because by it thousands, yea, millions of hours of human life must be occupied in ordinances concerning the cleanness of the flesh, in sacrifices, in pilgrimages, in purifications. And even if all things were accomplished, the conscience was not fully relieved, for the same
sacrifices must be made the next year or upon any personal trespass.

Alas, today it is the same: tens of thousands of those whom we believe truly converted, born of God, pass numberless hours, days, in ceremonies God did not command, but the contrary! (Gal. 4:10). Whence came Lent? Who commanded Good Friday? As it goes into deeper darkness, Christendom is practicing more and more such things as the celebration of "holy week." You know the so-called Plymouth Brethren do not; you know the early "holiness people," filled with the Spirit, did not. You know that, though legal in many ways, the Puritans did not, nor the persecuted Covenanters. No one does who knows and walks with and talks with God and knows His Word! For all such observance, are not of Him during this dispensation of grace.

7. Therefore we who are Gentiles after the flesh, as we sit and listen to God's Word to that nation with whom He had relationship formerly, are not to try to imitate that relationship, but to recognize that God was not in relationship with Gentiles, and that now, we having believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, along with true Hebrew believers, are "partakers of the heavenly calling," whose life-practice and wondrous privilege it is daily, hourly, to "come boldly to the throne of grace," having a Great High Priest in Heaven! Let us beware lest we be found trusting in "religion" or "church membership" or "ordinances" or "activities." In the book of Hebrews godliness, and to be perfected therein, is the walk of the true believer.

A godly and dearly beloved theologian says, "God has authority to address the human conscience only in His Law," giving this as the conclusion of some forty or fifty passages. But what about the words before us: disannulling of a foregoing commandment ... weakness ... unprofitableness (for the Law made nothing perfect)? What about that? What about Galatians 2:19-20, where Paul says, "I through Law died to Law, that I might live unto God. I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I that live, but Christ liveth in me"?

Several years ago in my teaching, by earnest request, in a Southern city, the Book of Romans, great interest was shown by a large company of young people who would gather about me after each meeting asking questions. There were two fine young men who earnestly protested that the words, "Ye were made dead to the Law," (Rom. 7:4), could not mean exactly that--that the Law was the only means God had of preserving our obedience. So for a number of evenings they made their plea to keep Moses and Elijah on the Mount of Transfiguration, though God left "Jesus only" there!

I learned incidentally that one of these young men had recently been married. Therefore, in the course of the lesson the next evening, I went right down to him, for he and his wife were sitting in the second row of seats, and said,

"I understand you have lately been married."

He began to redden up with embarrassment, but said, "Yes."

I said, "Does your wife obey you?"

"Certainly," he said.

I said, "Have you kitchen rules posted up for your wife's behavior in the kitchen? Have you dining-room rules?"

"None," he said.

"Have you parlor rules?"

"None."

"Have you any rules at all posted up in the house?"

"'None."

"And yet you claim that your wife obeys you," I said. "Why does she?"

And he said, "She loves me," which was a happy solution of our question.

Alas for the pride of the creature's heart! When God asked Israel, through Moses, if they would allow their relationship to Him to be dependent upon their obedience to His statutes, their instant reply was, "All that Jehovah hath spoken we will do." Here is perfect self-confidence, which the Law was given to destroy. It matters not to you, dear friends, that Israel then made a calf and worshiped it, and broke all the Commandments. You still teach that the Law is the rule of life. The moment the Law was promulgated, trust was placed therein as if the conditions of obedience were already fulfilled! And those to whom the Law was given--the "ministration of death" and of condemnation, gloried in having it! Their attitude became summed up in that of the Pharisees and scribes toward the common people of the Jewish nation: "This multitude that knoweth not the Law is accursed." Yet our Lord could say, "Did not Moses give you the Law, yet none
of you keepeth the Law?"

So, brethren, I beseech you, when you hear, as Hebrews is read, God not only taking away from those Hebrews (to whom alone He gave the Ten Commandments), the whole Levitical system, but also disannulling the Law, hearken to God, not to man. To God, Christ is all in all, and so He is to every Pauline believer.

You answer, It is not so written in my church doctrine. Very well, it is so in Heaven. Do you not believe Paul's words in Galatians 3:11, 12, "The righteous shall live by faith; and the Law is not of faith"? To take away the Law utterly from the ordinary Christian leaves him in a state of panic, which shows that his hopes have really been in his own efforts rather than in the grace of God, all along. You say, Do away with the Law, and what have you left? Ah, you have thus revealed yourself: "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to every one that believeth" (Rom. 10:4). And as regards life: "If there had been a law given which could make alive, verily righteousness would have
been of the Law" (Gal. 3:21).

David permitted the Law he had broken to judge him:

"For Thou delightest not in sacrifice; else would I give it: Thou hast no pleasure in burnt offering. The sacrifices of God are a broken spirit: A broken and a contrite heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise." (Ps. 51:16-17).

Here is a complete renunciation of self-effort, of Law help. Consequently David came into a deeper acquaintance with God than perhaps any other O.T. saint.

In Ephesians 5 we find Christ presenting the Church to Himself "a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing." Will the Church in eternity be under that temporary dispensation under which God put Israel at Sinai? Nay, verily! and never was. But she having died with Christ and been raised with Him, and in the beauty of the presence of her eternal Bridegroom delighting, that word of Ephesians 1:4 will be brought to pass, "holy and without blame before Him in love." God's name is Love; and those who come into the infinite felicity of dwelling in the Father's house where the many abiding places are, will find that the principle there is not Law, but Love. One principle will rule--devotion to God. "Only love seeks love, and only love satisfies love," says someone; and this will be constant for all eternity.

Heb 7:19: And all is summed up in the words, for the Law made nothing perfect. This is a parenthesis, but a powerful one. Let us simply believe it. It is one more reason why we should have no hope in the Law principle. David cried in the 119th Psalm:

"I have seen an end of all perfection; Thy commandment is exceeding broad."

Let all legalists mark this: The Law made nothing perfect. Let the Seventh Day Adventists mark: The Law made nothing perfect.

Let all those who dream of the Law as a rule of life remember: The Law made nothing perfect.

Let all believers remember: The Law made nothing perfect. The God of truth says those in Christ "are not in the flesh" (Rom. 8:9), and that when, before believing, they were in the flesh, "the passions of sins, which were THROUGH THE LAW, wrought in our members to bring forth fruit unto death" (Rom. 7:5). These are God's words, not ours. What God has brought in for you in Christ is not to "live a Christian life," but for Christ to live in you by simple faith (Gal. 2:19, 20; Col. 1:27; Phil. 1:21). "Ye are not under Law, but under Grace," distinct, opposite states of being (Rom. 6:14). Do not forget the word "hath" in Romans 13:8, and "fulfillment," in Romans 13:10. One walking in love, bearing "fruit" against which "there is no Law" (Gal. 5:18, 22-23), is "not under Law," not under that principle. Such a one hath fulfilled, without being under it, what the Law asked.

We must hold fast these words, the Law made nothing perfect, as well as "weakness" and "unprofitableness", when we read the account of the glory and majesty of the giving of the Law upon Sinai; and also when we study the particular directions the Law prescribed for every phase of human life.

This attitude will not be dishonoring to God, but the exact opposite. "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." In the book of Hebrews God announces the setting aside of the whole Levitical code as a system of

"shadows," not indeed setting forth God's real High Priest at all, for Jesus Christ was of another order: that of Melchizedek, not of Aaron. And God announces the Law as "disannulled."

If we do not humbly, but jealously and zealously, hold fast these facts, we shall not be able to give true place to our blessed Lord and His ministry.

For after saying that the Law made nothing perfect, God says there was brought in (in Christ) a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God, adding (vs. 22): "By so much also hath Jesus become the Surety of a better covenant"--than the Law.

In Colossians 2:16-17, we are told:

"Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of a feast day or a new moon or a sabbath day: which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is Christ's."

Those obeying God (and not tradition) will find themselves in a freedom--hated and persecuted of course by the "religionists"--a freedom that only true faith finds. There is plenty of Grace to keep you from judging your Law-bound brother. But be you free, yourself, walking in the blessed place of freedom into which "Another Priest," "after the power of an endless life," a Priest forever after the order of Melchizedek, has brought His saints to draw nigh unto God.

The Law is man's work: we mean, it commanded man to do this or to abstain from that. The Law was consequently "weak through the flesh," for man's sinful flesh controlled him.

Christ's work, though on behalf of man, was wholly His: glorious and perfect, yet to be received by man in its blessed results of eternal pardon, peace and blessing. To be received, we say, by simple Faith, unmixed with human effort. A humbling process, indeed! For man must go out of the righteousness-producing business, and rest wholly and forever on the work of Another, even Christ.

And a bringing in thereupon of a better hope, through which we draw nigh unto God: Mark that there is no mixture. For the Hebrews, the Law, with all its ordinances and its spirit, was "disannulled." For Gentile believers who were at liberty to draw nigh unto God, there is no thought of Law (which never was given to Gentiles); but to Christ only. No one whose conscience still holds him under Law can with full freedom draw nigh unto God. In the first tabernacle there was no drawing nigh, but a standing without the veil. There was Jehovah's presence, but not drawing nigh. Even the high priest was to "come not at all times into the holy place within the veil ... that he die not." Once a year, only, could he come, and that with a sin-offering for himself before he dared offer one for the people (Lev. 16). Then the veil was closed against the high priest and all the priests for another year; while two veils kept back the people. God's presence, with the people shut out, described the situation.

But as we shall see in Hebrews 9, 10, Christ has now entered in "with His own blood"; the veil, that is to say, His flesh, is rent. We have "a Great Priest over the house of God"; and we are told to draw near with boldness to God Himself. This is not mere justification and regeneration: it is the action of justified, born-again ones, toward Him Whom they have come to know. The book of Hebrews takes justification for granted, but deals with drawing nigh, coming unto. (The Greek word in this verse comes from eggus, which means near, close up. In verse 25 a different word for "come unto" is used, as in Hebrews 4:16; 10:1, 22. See also Jas. 4:8). Oh, that all believers would hearken to the book of Hebrews daily, hourly, and draw nigh to their God, for this is the constant desire of His infinite love. But legalists, of whatever stripe, never learn the blessed connection between these two phrases of Heb 7:18, 19: DISANNULLING of a foregoing commandment ... We DRAW NIGH unto God.

It will be a sad day for those who cling to "traditions", church "standards," and "articles" when their lives will be examined not by those, but by the living Word of God.

When the Pharisees and scribes asked our Lord, "Why do Thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders?" He asked them,

"Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition? ...Ye have made void the Word of GOD because of your tradition. Ye hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying,

"This people honoreth Me with their lips; But their heart is far from Me. But in vain do they worship Me, Teaching as their doctrines the precepts of men." (Matt. 15:2-9).

When our Lord Jesus did not keep the Sabbath according to the Jewish doctors' traditions, they "went about to kill Him"--Who was the Lord of the Sabbath. God speaks over and over of changing His methods of dealing with men; but people will not hear of it. When the Scripture says, "At the end of these days," in which He had "Spoken of old time unto the fathers in the prophets" (Heb. 1:1, 2), plainly the Old Testament days, God means the end! To have the Church begin with Abraham, despite our Lord's word in Matt. 16:18 that the Church was in that day future, is to ignore Heb. 1:1, 2, and to ignore God's saying in Heb. 7:18-19: There is a DISANNULLING OF A FOREGOING COMMANDMENT ... WEAK ... UNPROFITABLE ... THE LAW MADE NOTHING PERFECT. But will "church members" today part with Moses and the Law? Nay, they cannot, because the Law "hath dominion over a man for so long time as he liveth" (Rom. 7:1), and they do not know or believe that we died with Christ unto sin, and unto the Law that gave sin its power (Rom. 6:1-14; 7:1-6); and that therefore the Cross ended our history in the first Adam before God.

What do such words mean as "Christ abolished in His flesh the enmity, even the Law of commandments contained in ordinances; that He might create in Himself of the two (Gentiles and Israel) one new man"? (Eph. 2:15). Or, "Having blotted out the bond written in ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us: and He hath taken it out of the way, nailing it to the Cross"? (Col. 2:14).

Now to call this "bond," this "Law of commandments in ordinances" the "ceremonial law," and to say that the "moral law" is still binding upon us, is ignorance, traditionalism, and even wickedness. For the "ceremonial law," so-called, prescribing days, seasons, months, years, sacrifices, washings, could be kept, and was kept. (Many a traditionalist is keeping a ceremonial law today!). But the

moral law, prescribing a heart condition of entire love to God, and to our neighbors as ourselves, was impossible of fulfillment by man in the flesh--which God says is just what the Law was given to bring out and make plain! "The Law came in besides, that the trespass might abound" (Rom. 5:20)--not that sin might abound. Sin was there already, had been there 2500 years. But the mind of the flesh, being enmity to the Law of God, not subject to it, nor possible to be subject, according to God's holy Word (Rom. 8:7), the Law was given to bring out this fact; as Paul said, "I had not known sin except through Law, for I had not known coveting except the Law had said, Thou shalt not covet" (Rom. 7:7). Mark you, "Thou shalt not covet" is no "ceremonial" commandment. It is a moral obligation, a heart condition forbidden.

But Reformed Theology puts man right back under the Law as a "rule of life," not knowing or believing that believers, in the eyes of the Law, are not living. They have been "made dead to the Law through the body of Christ" (Rom. 7:4)--of Christ-made-sin for us; and "our old man crucified with Him"; and now we have been "annulled from the Law" (Rom. 7:6), that is, the Law knows nothing of us, we are put out of business (by death with Christ) from the Law as a ruler, and from Law as a principle: "Ye are not under Law, but under Grace" (Rom. 6:14). (Note the absence of the article, the. The Law means the code; Law, means the principle.) Now you may know by your response to this truth whether you are a religionist or Christ's freedman; whether you are an ABC believer, or an adult. Paul in Gal. 4:1-3 describes the ABC believer: "So long as the heir is a minor, he differeth nothing from a bondservant." "So we also, when we were infants (or underage), were held in bondage under the religious principles of the world." (See the two words for minor and adult contrasted in Heb. 5:13-14: Greek, nepioi, babes; opposed to teleioi, fullgrown men). Note three things in Gal. 4:3: (1) In using the word "we" Paul is speaking of Hebrew believers before Christ came, before the bond was taken out of the way. (2) At that time they were in a period of infancy as over against adulthood, in spiritual things. (3) They were "held in bondage" under what the Holy Spirit now calls even Judaism: "religious principles of the world." But Paul says in Col. 2:20-22, "We died with Christ from the religious principles of the world." and asks, "Why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to ordinances? (such as) Handle not, nor taste, nor touch (all which things are to perish with the using), after the precepts and doctrines of men?--remember what we saw our Lord said of these, in Matt. 15:2,9.

In my university days we had as the director of the music department Prof. Carl Metz, a remarkable teacher, filled with the spirit of the old musicians, and withal a true Christian. We loved him much. Every year we gave an oratorio. I have seen him mount on a chair in the music hall, and with tears streaming down his cheeks lead Handel's "Hallelujah Chorus" in The Messiah, while the whole great chorus of singers he was leading was thrilled through and through with the magnificent words and music of praise.

But there were pupils in that town in the first grade of the public schools, who would not have known how to pronounce the word, "Hallelujah"! They were occupied with their ABC's. For century after century the professing church has settled down in this world as an earth religion. People "hope to go to Heaven when they die." The thought of being now a heavenly people with a heavenly calling, and with a High Priest in Heaven conducting heavenly worship, has never entered their mind. We say this with firmness, because it is true; but we speak not with arrogance, but with deep humiliation.

Ah, legalists, of whatever stripe, never learn the infinitely blessed connection of these two phrases of Heb 7:18, 19: DISANNULLING of a foregoing commandment ... We DRAW NIGH unto God!

Heb 7:20 And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath

21 (for they indeed have been made priests without an oath; but He with an oath by Him that saith of Him, The Lord sware and will not repent Himself, Thou art a Priest forever);

Note in Heb 7:20-22 the place God gives His oath in connection with the Melchizedek priesthood. The Levitical priests, many in number, became such by natural descent. But those priests "were made without an oath. The solemnity of the oath with which this priesthood was inaugurated, is the measure of its superiority and existence." God's word to Christ is, (Ps. 110:4, quoted in Heb. 7:21):

The Lord sware and will not repent Himself, Thou art a Priest forever.

"The value of the covenant is determined in this passage by the presence or absence of the oath of God. The Levitical priests were made without an oath, for they attended a transitory office of imperfection and decay. But an oath is something final and determinative in its nature. In Jesus God has won the end of all His counsel. Therefore, by all the value of that oath of God, is the covenant which is now administered by His Son Of greater sanction and of better trust than that which Aaron served." (Pridham, On the Hebrews, p. 178.)

How different from God's oath to Abraham, "Surely blessing I will bless thee" (Hebrews 6:14), is God's oath to Christ! The promise of blessing to Abraham was of course, to and through Abraham's Seed, "which is Christ" (Gal. 3:16). But now is revealed to us in Him, in and through Whom all blessings are as Priest forever, God's oath, from which He will not repent.

It is very touching to the heart that knows the God Whose name is Love to note how often God did repent concerning deserved and threatened judgment. The following are the references: do not let the study of them cause you to forget that there will be, must be, eternal judgment against the impenitent, for "The Strength of Israel will not lie nor repent" (1 Sam. 15:29). But let us note the following: it makes a wonderful Bible reading:

Ps. 90:13; 106:45; 135:14; Jonah 3:9-10; 4:2; Ex. 32:12-14; Jud. 2:18; 2 Sam. 24:16; (1 Chr. 21:15); Jer. 26:19; Joel 2:13-14.

These are moving words concerning a merciful God, the while we do not forget such verses as Jer. 15:6; 18:10; Zech. 8:14;

Ezek. 24:14. Let us believe such passages with child-like hearts, and not let them lose their power upon us through idle theological arguments; God's purpose is eternal, is fixed, so that He will not be moved by any attitude of man.

We see here also that the Levitical priests, though many in number, never had a man to whom God committed Himself thus--"forever." By death they were "hindered from continuing" (Vs. 23). God's purposes of blessing are all connected with Christ, the Second Man, the Last Adam. And how good it is to hear God say to our Lord, Thou art a Priest forever. Remember Christ as a Priest went into God's presence on our side, committed to our cause. All that God's nature, His holiness, His righteousness, His truth, His majesty, could demand against us, had been once for all and forever met, at the Cross. Oh, that all our hearts might really rest upon this: that God's Word, which He has magnified above all His name, is pledged that the One Who bore our sins in His own body on the Tree is pronounced a priest forever, our Priest. But how infrequently do either our hearts or our lips claim Him as our Priest, our Great High Priest!

We have heard earnest saints speak of His as "our Christ." No, He is God's Christ, for God sent Him and anointed Him. He is God's Son, and concerning the future, God says to Him that He will set Him as His King upon His holy hill of Zion (Ps. 2). But we freely say of Him, "Our Saviour," "Our Redeemer." And, as His redeemed ones, loving and serving Him, we call Him our Lord. We even hear people earnestly speak of Him as "Our coming King"--although to a bride, as a Bridegroom, He is head over all things to the church which is His Body, rather than a king! He is indeed King over Israel. God's King! But the Church, His Bride, shall reign with Him!

20 And inasmuch as it is not without the taking of an oath
22 by so much also hath Jesus become the Surety of a better
covenant:
23 And they indeed have been made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing:
24 but He, because He abideth forever, hath His priesthood unchangeable.
25 Wherefore also He is able to save to the uttermost them that draw near unto God through Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them.

Heb 7:22: Here we find the familiar words, by so much, the measure of infinity, once again. How else, indeed, could Christ's blessed Person and work be described than by such an appeal to our judgment, contrasting them with the feeble, incomplete shadowing in the Levitical ordinances, as is constantly done in Hebrews.

(By so much also hath Jesus become the Surety of a better covenant: Here the easure of difference is between the weak and unprofitable "foregoing commandment" (with its perishing, passing priests, with whom no Divine oath of continuance was connected), and Christ, of Whom "The Lord sware ... Thou art a Priest forever." Infinite is the distance between the Old Covenant, and Christ as the Surety of a better covenant. "But now hath He obtained a ministry the more excellent, by so much as He is also the Mediator of a better covenant" (Hebrews 8:6). Again, "by so much" is a measure of measurelessness! All things of the Levitical economy have passed away from God's sight, but the Risen Christ is a Minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, in the presence of God forever.)

Let not ceremonies of the former tabernacle, however interesting in narration and detail here in Hebrews, intrigue the mind: for CHRIST is before us. God is speaking to us in a SON. It is not the time, the Spirit tells us in Hebrews 9:5, to speak of these earthly types in detail. Let these repeated words of infinite contrast, "by so much" as to His Person (1:4); "by so much" as Son, not Servant, over the house of God (3:3); "by so much" as our Surety of a better covenant (7:22); "by so much" as to His mediatorship of a better covenant (8:6); and "how much more" as to the value of the blood of Christ compared to that of goats and bulls (9:14)--let these repeated words of infinite contrast, we say, cause all to fade from our eyes and thoughts but Christ, and His work and glorious ministry.

By so much also ... JESUS ... the Surety of a better covenant: "Here, first in this Epistle, occurs the word covenant (diatheke). In 9:16 the versions slide over into testament; here such a rendering seems without reason. A 'surety' belongs rather to a covenant than to a will. Of this better covenant, Jesus is surety, not as sealing it with his death and resurrection (as Alford, Lunemann), for these created it and could scarcely therefore, be its guarantee; but as High Priest in the heavenly sanctuary, perpetual and unfailing, in emboldening His people to draw near to God, assured that the throne of justice has become a throne of grace."--A.C. Kendrick, Commentary on The Hebrews, p.93.

The Greek is beautiful here, placing our Lord's name at the very end of the sentence--the emphatic place, and naming Him from our human side, the Bethlehem name, JESUS. That our blessed Lord, the Son of God, was born down here, among us, in that "prepared body" described in Hebrews 10:5-6, is indeed a very surety from God, the beginning of assured blessing! The Law had nothing to do with all this, except dimly to shadow forth in the Levitical types the manner of approach, based on shed blood--while God remained behind the veil. How wondrous were Christ's words, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up"—the temple of His body. For Jesus was God's temple. Hear it, my brother, the tabernacle in the wilderness, and the temple thereafter were, after all, mere buildings. So that if we have discerning eyes and hearing hearts, we read the four "Gospels" with this before us. The Holy Ghost descended as a dove and abode upon Him, and He kept saying, "The Father abiding in Me doeth His works"; and, "By the Spirit of God I cast out demons." God dwelt and walked during those three and a half years, in Christ! And then, at Calvary,

God laid on Him our sin, and judged it according to His own being as the Holy One, and thus Christ cried, "It is finished!" The third day God raised Him from the dead, and shortly received Him in glory.

But He had, at the Last Supper (after the Passover) passed to the disciples the broken bread, instituting a new feast, and saying concerning the cup, "This is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many, unto remission of sins."

Ah, we know these things, but let us repeat them more and more. On Calvary that blood was shed, and into the infinite benefits of it, all believers alike enter. And Jesus is THE SURETY, now, at God's right hand, of this better covenant. We repeat that this is the blood of the "eternal covenant" between "the God of peace" and "the Great Shepherd of the sheep," (as we see in Hebrews 13:20), in which we are not the actors but the beneficiaries. And the witnesses: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink the cup, ye proclaim the Lord's death till He come" (1 Cor. 11:26).

In Heb 7:23-25, the perpetuity of Christ's priesthood, because He abideth forever, is set over against that of the Levitical priests, made priests many in number, because that by death they are hindered from continuing. Out of this intransmissible priesthood of the Risen Christ comes the blessed assurance that is in all the most familiar passages of this great epistle. Heb 7:24-25 might well be a text to characterize a whole commentary on
Hebrews. Literally:

But He, on account of continuing forever, the priesthood intransmissible has. Wherefore also to save completely He is able those coming through Him to God: always living to intercede in behalf of them.

In the study of this great utterance, let us anew lay to our hearts the difference between intercession and reconciliation. Our blessed Lord is interceding for us, but He is in no sense appeasing God. All that God's holy Being and righteous government could demand was once for all, completely and forever, satisfied at the Cross. As we read in Hebrews 9:26: "Now once at the consummation of the ages hath He been manifested to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself." In that "once for all" sin-bearing, God is forever resting and delighting. But, you ask, Does not the text say, He is able (now, at God's right hand) to save to the completion those that come unto God through Him? Yes, those are the words. (This, Newberry's rendering, is the best we have seen. It is not that Christ is able to reach utterly bad cases, although that is true; but that He is able to carry the believer right through all trials, temptations and infirmities, unto the completion of his pilgrimage, and present him faultless in the day of His coming again.) But that word "save," please mark, has a three-fold application, we may say: past, present, and future.

1. Past: In Tit. 2:11 we read, "For the grace of God hath appeared, bringing salvation to all men." This was the gift of Christ, as Simeon discerned, and said, holding The Babe in His arms, "Mine eyes have seen Thy Salvation" (Lk. 2:30). So Christ went on to Gethsemane and Calvary, and drank the cup of wrath for our sins; and there went forth the glad message of Salvation through faith in Him--the gospel which Paul calls "the power of God unto salvation" (Rom. 1:16). So every believer looks backto the time when he obtained this salvation (2 Tim. 1:9. 2:10), as the Lord Jesus Christ said in Zacchaeus' home, "Today is salvation come to this house." (See also Tit. 3:5).

2. Present: Those who have obtained this salvation are spoken of as those "who are being saved." (1 Cor. 1:18, R.V., marg.). See also Acts 2:47, marg.; 1 Cor. 15:2; 2 Cor. 2:15.

3. Future: The word is also used concerning the future; Paul said, "In hope were we saved" (Rom. 8:24)--i.e., placed in expectation of future deliverance; and Peter, in the council, Acts 15:11: "We believe that we shall be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, in like manner as they." Thus we have salvation; also we are being saved by the constant grace of God; and we look forward to the consummation of this salvation (the redemption of our bodies, when our Lord returns), as Paul says: "Now is our salvation nearer than when we first believed" (Rom. 13:11). And, "So Christ also, having been once offered to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time, apart from sin, to them that wait for Him, unto salvation" (Heb. 9:28).

Therefore every preacher of the gospel and teacher of souls should always first point out that our blessed Lord Jesus Christ has forever met all Divine claims against sinners:

"God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; not reckoning to them their trespasses." "He that believeth hath eternal life." "He that believeth on him is not judged ... cometh not into judgment, but hath passed out of death into life." "Through this Man is proclaimed unto you remission of sins ... By Him every one that believeth is justified from all things from which ye could not be justified by the Law of Moses."

And what shall we say further to them? That they have peace with God, that they are now under grace and have hope of glory (Rom. 5:1-2)? But is this enough? There lies before each of them a pilgrim path, "babes in Christ" as they are; with the enmity of God's great foe, Satan; and the hatred of that world which is controlled by him. They must be told two great things:

1. That when they believed, the blessed Holy Spirit sealed them; that having received the Lord Jesus, they have the right to call God Father (John 1:12), and the Spirit will bear witness to them in this, Romans 8:16; also that He was sent to guide them into all truth and be within them "the Comforter": taking the things of the Risen Christ and manifesting them unto them.

2. That they have a Great High Priest on high; that their pathway through this world is being cared for, planned, and protected by Him; that He is infinitely sympathetic, and able to save completely, ever living to make intercession for them.

For remember that in the least spiritual exercise, in any turning of the mind toward Divine things, we are approaching a court of infinite greatness and glory. To favor at this court, the shed blood of the Son of God, and His presence there, entitle us. But how constant is our need of a Priest to carry on matters with the King of glory, the Creator of all things! Think of "coming boldly" into the Holy Place of the presence of God Almighty; Jehovah, the Most High!

Now it is necessary again to specify those in whose interests our Lord's priestly work is being carried on--it is for believers: "I pray not for the world, but for those whom thou has given me out of the world, for they are thine" (John 17:9). It is for those who come through Him to God. (We are again confronted by the great and constant question (raised by so many in these very days), as to whether the coming to God in Hebrews is the same exactly as that described in Paul's Epistles before Hebrews. For example, in Eph. 2:18: "Through Him (Christ) we both (Jew and Gentile believers) have our access by one Spirit unto the Father." And again, in Rom. 5:11: "We also rejoice in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through Whom we have now received the reconciliation"; or in Rom. 8:15-16: "Ye received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father. The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are born-ones of God." Now in Hebrews there is described no such inner witness. Also, we come to God as God, rather than intimately to Him as Father. But it must be remembered that there was a People of God whom He brought out of Egypt and among whom He dwelt, both in the wilderness and afterwards in the temple. And there was a complete system of shadows by which they were taught to approach God. Now here we find an epistle addressed to these Hebrews as having possessed (which the Gentiles did not at all), this system of approach to God through an earthly high priest, with days and ordinances--"the ten thousand things of the law" (Hos. 8:12). The question, therefore, in Hebrews is not God's fatherhood, but the method of approach to Him as God. Nor is Hebrews, therefore, the book wherein we shall find described those inner Operations of the blessed Spirit of God set forth in those epistles which define the calling and character of the saints of this Church age. Again, we do not find the Church described in Hebrews at all, but individual saints are addressed, partaking indeed of a heavenly calling (Hebrews 3:1) but addressed as those with whom the true God has been in relation in the past. Indeed, what makes it specially difficult for Gentiles to understand Hebrews is the very fact that God was in relation with the Hebrew people and with no other People at all, as we read in Ps. 147:19-20: "He showeth his word unto Jacob, His statutes and his ordinances unto Israel. He hath not dealt so with any nation; And as for his ordinances, they have not known them." It is largely because the Gentile Professing Christians have conjured up a "religion", called "the Christian religion", that they do not readily grasp Hebrews! Therefore, let us keep before us the fact that those with whom God had been in relationship are being exhorted to desert all things that belong to the Divinely given Levitical system, and go forth to a rejected and crucified Son of God "without the camp"--without any earthly religious connections whatever, and join in that heavenly worship which pertains to all who partake of the heavenly calling: having Christ now appearing before the face of God for them. Therefore, instead of asserting (as do the Bullingerites, etc.) that the other Pauline Epistles are on higher ground than Hebrews, let us rather adore the graciousness and tenderness of God in giving Patient instruction in new things to those to whom He had given a former religion now to be abandoned.)

Carrying His own, bought by His blood, through their pilgrim journey, is included in the words able to save completely. (Both the King James and the Revised read, to the uttermost. If their meaning is set forth literally the Greek phrase, eis to Panteles, well and good. It translates literally, to the all (or entire) end.) The only other occurrence of the phrase is in Luke 13:11, concerning the woman who "was bowed together, and could in no wise lift herself up unto Completion"--that is, as we would say, straighten up. So in our Hebrews verse, it indicates Christ's readiness and sufficiency in whatever need we may have, in whatever adverse circumstances. The true believer early finds self-confidence to be his snare: he has in himself neither wisdom nor strength. The mature believer is one who has realized his weakness, ceased to strive for strength, and rests in Christ for every need. From their spiritual infancy unto full growth, from the beginning of their pilgrim path to the completion thereof, they have always One Who ever liveth, of Whom it is the constant, unvarying purpose to make intercession for them. Whether therefore it be a sinner, a publican who has cast himself upon the mercy of God and gone down to his house justified; or whether it be a Paul, finishing his course, and standing before the mouth of the lion, it is always, "The Lord stood by me and strengthened me." He ever looks after His own.

"What then shall we say to these things? if God is for us, who is against us? He that spared not His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, HOW SHALL HE NOT also with Him freely give us all things?" (Rom. 8:31 ff).

Then follow the words that comfort me in the preparation of this commentary on Hebrews:

"Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? Shall God that justifieth? Who is he that condemneth? Shall Christ Jesus that died, yea, rather, that was raised from the dead?" Of course these court room truths belong to Romans, but note how the following words of Romans (8:34) join it to Hebrews: "Who is at the right hand of God, Who also is making intercession for us." This is the only direct assertion of such intercession outside of Hebrews. Bullinger, of the Companion Bible, (whose falsehoods are followed today by so many), says: "God has put asunder the epistle to the Romans and the epistle to the Hebrews"—taking away any direct application of Hebrews truth to us today. To prove his position, he goes to Romans 8, which he says is directly about us, where "There is no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus," and "no separation from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus." He is offended by the warnings of Hebrews 6 and 10, whereas in Romans 8 we have exactly the same warning (vss. 12-13) as in Hebrews, and, in what we have quoted, the very same priestly intercession of Christ at the right hand of God! (vs. 34).

Christ's intercessory work:

1. Not at all, atoning: propitiation was once for all accomplished at the Cross.

2. Therefore His intercession is not to turn God away from wrath against believers. It was GOD Who loved the world. It was GOD Who gave His only begotten Son for us. And it is God Who is delighting in the finished work of Christ on our behalf.

3. We can conceive that God, to Whom all things are possible, could have wrought directly upon us, and brought us home to Heaven. But He chose to set Jesus as our High Priest at His right hand, and He has given us marvelous encouragement: for we find Him in Hebrews "a merciful and faithful High Priest," "made in all things like unto His brethren"; "not a high priest that cannot be

touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but One that hath been in all points tempted like as we are, sin apart."

Here then is the wonderful love of God toward us displayed afresh, in His not only giving His Son, but having Him pass through all temptations and trials in order, when exalted, to keep sympathizing with us in understanding tenderness that knows no bounds.

4. Christ's intercession also precedes our temptations and trials. He warned Peter of a coming attack by Satan: "I have prayed for thee that thy faith fail not." Peter disregarded the warning, and fell into the devil's trap, denying the Lord he loved. But when "the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (not a look of fault-finding, but of tenderest love), Peter went out to burst into bitter tears.

5. Remember, it is "the Man, Christ Jesus," that is our High Priest. Yes, He is God also; but He has forever taken the place of subjection, "the form of a servant.... in the likeness of men." He entered into the Holies above through His own blood, keeping the fashion of a man, and the form of a servant. And thus will He be forever; for He Himself shall at last be "subjected" to God the Father. Eternally, then, He has the place of Priest and Intercessor. It is God the Father's yearning not only that we have, certainly, assurance of our eternal safety, as we find in Romans; not only that we have a heavenly calling and are members of the Body of Christ Himself; but that we come into an unbroken experience of the daily, hourly, tenderness of infinite Divine love: and this is brought about, is fitted to our poor capacities, by the work of Him Who ever liveth to make intercession for us.

Not as a prophet, telling us our duty, but as a Priest, representing not God but us, is Christ set forth in Hebrews. Reverently we say, He is not on God's side but on our side! He is called our Great High Priest; prophets were called God's prophets.

The king in Israel, was God's "power." He represented God's authority. So David (and Saul before him) was anointed "king over Israel." Our Lord Jesus is coming back as King of kings, and Lord of lords (Rev. 19:16), as the Seed of David (Isa. 11:1-10; Lk. 1:32). "Behold A KING shall reign in righteousness" (Isa. 32:1). See also Zechariah 14:9, 16 ff; and all the prophets. He is to reign as we have seen, as "a Priest upon His throne" (Zech. 6:13). "Of the increase of His government and of peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David" (Isa. 9:7).

Even now, He has "all authority in Heaven and on earth," as He had not on earth. We are looking daily for His return, when the full glory of His Melchizedek priesthood will be revealed. As one has said, "Our Lord is the manifested One at last, through Whom men come to God. He is a manifest Priest reigning there."

Heb 7:26: For such a High Priest became us: holy, guileless, undefiled, separated from sinners, and become (made) higher than the heavens; Humbly we would call attention to the emphatic place in this sentence of the word "us." For here we have the "partakers of a heavenly calling" in plain view.

Study the beautiful progress in the words of verse 26. First, the High Priest Who became us, even Christ, is called "Holy." "Holy" has reference to nature. Gabriel's announcement of our Lord's birth was, "That which is to be born shall be called holy, the Son of God." Twice the word is used in Acts 2:27, 13:35: "Thy holy One"; Christ as we have seen, "through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish unto God" (Heb. 9:14). When it came to Calvary, the end of His earthly life, He was still the Holy One; and in Revelation 15:4, "Thou only art holy."

The next word is "guileless." It means, without an evil thought--like an innocent little child. Such was Christ! This word is very difficult for us, because, since Adam sinned, this world is crowded with a race none other than guileful. Peter tells us (1 Pet. 2:1-2): "Putting away therefore all wickedness, and all guile, and all hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speakings" (what a heart full of guile this list reveals!) "as new born babes, long for the spiritual milk which is without guile, that ye may grow thereby unto salvation." The only human beings we know who are naturally without guile are utter babes and very young children.

Now in Christ there was no guile whatever. He said, "I came not to judge the world, but to save the world" (John 12:47). This was the reason publicans and sinners crowded around Him. Unconsciously, they found One Who was guileless as any child! He spoke words which, because He was The Light, discovered indeed their sins to them,--but, all the while, they knew He was the Friend of sinners! Gently and guilelessly He could say to the Samaritan woman who had had five husbands, and was then living with a man not her husband, "Thou saidst well, I have no husband."

Our Lord is still the "guileless" One, "the same yesterday and today, and forever." He is not today a judge, a severe inspector. Think not of Him so! The day of His judging (Acts 17:31) is not come. Rely on Him as your Friend. It is impossible, except by God's help, to conceive of this guilelessness in the One Who knew all things, Who "knew what was in man" (John 2:25). But it is of inestimable comfort to our hearts, this fact of guilelessness in our Great High Priest! of utter absence of evil thoughts concerning us.

Years ago I brought from Edinburgh, Scotland, along with many theological books, a history of Roman Catholicism in which, at the foot of the page, were printed in Latin questions priests were compelled to ask their confessors. These questions were so indescribably vile, even unnaturally indecent, that I destroyed two volumes, lest my sons, who were young, might grow up to even read these unutterably filthy imaginings of the worse than pagan priests of this false religion. The whole occupation of the priest in the so-called confessional was (and is) to conceive evil, imagine evil, draw out from the confessor expressions of evil, and place in the imagination even of young confessors evil as yet unthought of, and often never to be thought of, except as put into the mind by the foul questions of the inquisitor.

This alone is an excellent illustration by contrast, of our Great Priest, Who is guileless. This Greek word, akakos, which we translate guileless, could be literally translated evil-less. Its only other occurrence is in Rom. 16:18, where saints are warned against certain insidious, false teachers: "By their smooth and fair speech they beguile the hearts of the innocent," in this case, wholly

unsuspecting, guileless hearers.

The next word concerning the Great High Priest Who "became us," is "Undefiled," or unsoiled. Literally it means unstained, undyed by foreign color; consequently, uncontaminated. (The word without the negative is used in Hebrews 12:15). Such was our Lord that though passing through the midst of and thronged by publicans and harlots, and ecclesiastics full of Satanic pride, of sin and stain of every sort and degree, He remained unsullied, undefiled. This affords our hearts measureless comfort and confidence. It is such a high priest, unstained by the sin and sinful scenes that confront us daily, Who is at the right hand of God, ever keeping His own.

Necessarily we have the next descriptive word, Separated from sinners. No Pharisee would understand this. Look at Luke 15:1- 2 for example: "All the publicans and sinners were drawing near unto Him to hear Him. And both the Pharisees and the scribes murmured, saying, This man receiveth sinners, and eateth with them." See also Matthew 9:10-13. But you say, Publicans and sinners drew near to Him in perfect liberty, for was He not everywhere known as a friend of publicans and sinners (Matt. 11:19; Lk. 7:34), "eating and drinking" with them? He was! Praise God for it! And yet all the while this astonishing, to us impossible, but glorious fact remained: separated from sinners. This separation does not mean as Alford contends that He was "void of all contact and commerce with sinners, removed far away in His glorified state and body, into God's holy place" (Alford, en loc.). This idea defeats any true understanding of this wondrous expression. For if Christ must be carried up to Heaven to be separated from sinners, all the four blessed things already affirmed of Him are defeated. Note that "separated" is the participle in the passive voice, aorist. I am thankful that the passive voice is used, for our blessed Lord did not say, Behold Me: I have separated Myself from sinners. (Although He did say, with the calmness of Deity, "Which of you accuseth Me of sin?" And there was no answer to that!) His was not such a physical withdrawal from the world as that which the monks and nuns and all the hermits (Prov. 18:1) follow--taking their sin with them into their self-deceiving seclusion! But it was as the Sinless One: "I came out from the Father, and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go unto the Father." "I am not of the world." What a strengthening of heart to us to know that this Jesus, the holy, guileless, undefiled One, separated from sinners, has passed through this earthly scene!

By His whole history among us there unfolds before us the holy flower of Deity--of "God manifested in the flesh." Separated from sinners indeed was He, yet did the publicans and sinners draw near to Him, for here was a Teacher such as they had never heard, Who spoke with the authority of Heaven, Whom yet in their hearts they knew for a friend! Thus was fulfilled in Him this blessed passive voice, separated from sinners.

In the next words, we follow Him into Heaven as our Great High Priest: and made higher than the heavens. Now in Ephesians 1:20, 21 we read:

"God wrought in Christ, when He raised Him from the dead, and made Him to sit at His right hand in the heavenlies, far above all rule, and authority and power, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come."

In Ephesians 4:10 we see Him as "ascended far above all the heavens." And in Hebrews 4:14: "Having been a Great High Priest Who hath passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God;" and in Hebrews 8:1:

"Now in the things which we are saying the chief point is this: We have such a High Priest, Who sat down on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens."

Here then is the High Priest that became us, who in the infinite wisdom and grace of God are partakers of a heavenly calling. Are we born again (anothen, literally, down from above)? We have a High Priest above. Is our citizenship in Heaven? Our representative, our "Forerunner" and Great High Priest is already there, a Man in the glory. Has God, "being rich in mercy, for His great love wherewith He loved us, even when we were dead through our trespasses, enlifed us together with Christ ... and raised us up with Him, and made us to sit with Him in the heavenlies"?

Even so! And although we ourselves are yet traveling through the world in our unredeemed bodies, the earthly tabernacle in which we groan, being burdened, yet Christ, the Firstfruits of the resurrection, the First-born from the dead, has already ascended up on high, and been greeted by God as High Priest forever! And to Him has been given the place of honor at the right hand of God.

The heavens, of which three are mentioned in Scripture (2Cor. 12:2), were created by Christ. Solomon at the dedication of the temple said: "But will God in very deed dwell with men on the earth? behold, heaven and the heaven of heavens cannot contain Thee; how much less this house which I have builded!" (2 Chr 6:18).

The third heaven is evidently synonymous with Paradise, (for Paul says he was "Caught UP to the third heaven ... into Paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter"), the abode of the spirits of the blessed, doubtless. Our Lord indeed said, "In my Father's house there are many abiding places"--of various orders of heavenly beings. But he "ascended 'far above all'," even of these heavenly dwelling places, when He took His seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

There used to be a teaching that Heaven was at the center of the created universe, which revolved around it! Not so. The throne of God is far above all the heavens, far above His created universe. Our Great High Priest was made higher than the heavens. But His position "far above all" does not change His affections, His sympathy. How humbling it is to us who "look to the hole of the pit whence we have been digged" by sovereign Divine mercy and grace, we who have received a heavenly calling, with such a High Priest as this!

Indeed, this one blessed verse, Hebrews 7:26, could afford an excuse to that great man of God, John Owen, the Puritan, to write his commentary of nine volumes on this wondrous epistle to the Hebrews!

To proceed:

27 Who does not day by day need, as those high priests, first for His own sins to offer sacrifices--then for those of the people. For this (whole matter of sacrifice for sins) He attended to once for all when He offered up Himself.

28 For the Law constitutes men high priests, having infirmity; but the Word of the oath, which was after the Law (in time), a Son, perfected for evermore.

"It happens in this case, as in all others of a like nature which occur in our epistle, that the deep and accurate knowledge of the writer, in respect to everything which concerned the Jewish dispensation, becomes apparent, just in proportion to our knowledge of the usages which really existed under that dispensation."--Moses Stuart, in loc.

Heb 7:27, 28: He offered up Himself: The objection of some, that our Lord was not acting as a priest when He offered up Himself upon the Cross, is baseless and harmful. How foolish so to misinterpret a verse that positively says, He offered up Himself. And again, "I lay down My life for the sheep"—commanded of the Father so to do (See John 10). Our Great High Priest now is in the glory at God's right hand, fulfilling His blessed heavenly priesthood. And He will be back upon earth, "a Priest upon His throne," in the one thousand years.

It is as a Priest after the order of Melchizedek that He thus "offered Himself" here in Hebrews 7:27. This must not be forgotten, as some seem to forget it, who insist that, as Melchizedek Priest, He only blesses. Read the chapter from verse 11: no other conclusion can be arrived at than that the words He offered up Himself refer to our blessed Lord as Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Priesthood is based upon sacrifice, and Christ's priesthood perhaps most of all, for He is Himself the great Antitype of all priesthood! Therefore He offered up Himself, and that when He was upon earth, not as connected with the Levitical system, but laying down His life of Himself, as we have seen, by the direct command of the Father. Remember also that He suffered without the gate, despised and rejected by the earthly priesthood!

He offered up Himself! This no Levitical priest was asked to do. Therefore, the Levitical priesthood could only "shadow" here and there the things belonging to those heavenly realities brought in by Christ, when He offered up Himself, and "entered once and for all into the holies (in Heaven) through His own blood."

We see from Hebrews 5:2 that the high priests taken from among men were to bear gently with the ignorant and erring because they themselves were "compassed with infirmity; and by reason thereof were bound, as for the people, so also for themselves, to offer for sins." And because the way into the holiest was not made manifest as yet, and God had not come out to them as He did to the nation when He was presented as the Messiah, their King, they could have high priests having infirmity, one of themselves, Aaron, (and after him his sons) subject himself to death and needing daily (vs. 27) to offer up sacrifices, first for his own sins, and then for the sins of the people.

But we see the utter absence of infirmity in our Great High Priest, in verse 28: For the Law constituted men high priests, having infirmity; but the word of the oath, which was after the Law, constituteth a Son, perfected for evermore.

However much we may see our Lord when on earth, compassed by trial, temptation, difficulty, we never see infirmity in Him. For He always does the will of the Father, and is now doing that will in the Glory, and will be accomplishing it for evermore!