

NOTES
INTENDED FOR
AN EXPOSITION
OF
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS.

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PREFACE.

In the lives of Robert and James A. Haldane it is mentioned (p. 636 of Sixth Edition) that shortly before the death of the latter, in Feb., 1851, he had in his public ministrations completed an "Exposition of the Hebrews," which had long occupied his attention. It is added, that his correspondence shows how much his mind was interested in the work, and how clear and acute were his perceptions of its difficulties. Every posthumous work must appear at a disadvantage, and more especially when not finally completed, although obviously intended for the press. It was for some years doubted whether it would be desirable to publish it under these circumstances. But, on the whole, it is felt that it would be wrong to throw away what in his last years had cost so much thought and pleasant labor.

It is, therefore, printed, not as a finished Exposition, but as "Notes intended for an Exposition;" and it is humbly committed to the blessing of Him whom it was the author's privilege for so many years to serve in the Gospel of His Beloved Son Jesus Christ.

Chapter One

Man was created in the image of God, and in the glorious works of creation was surrounded with ample proofs of his Maker's eternal power and Godhead. He was also reminded of his absolute dependence on God by receiving permission freely to eat of all the trees of the garden in which he was placed, excepting the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, which was to be the test of his obedience. All this, however, did not prevent Adam from starting aside from God like a deceitful bow, thus bringing himself and his posterity under condemnation. But God, who is rich in mercy, was pleased to reveal Himself as the God of salvation, and it deserves attention that He did so, not in the form of a promise to Adam, but of a curse upon the serpent. It was, indeed, impossible for God to hold friendly intercourse, or make any direct promise to sinful man. He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and cannot look upon sin; but in the curse pronounced on the serpent, which is the devil and Satan, He revealed the great Mediator between God and man, in whom all the promises are yea and amen. 2 Cor. 1:20. . He was described as the seed of the woman who should bruise the head of the serpent, while His own heel should be bruised in the conflict. It was at the same time intimated that salvation was not to be universal, for mankind were divided into two great families, respectively distinguished as the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent; the seed of the woman being the children of that family, the members of which the Son of God is not ashamed to call His brethren, chap. 2:11; the seed of the serpent being the children of the wicked one, to whom the Judge will say, "Depart from me, I never knew you."

V. 1.—God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets.

God spake.—Whatever was communicated by the prophets is here said to be spoken by God. He spoke whatsoever was uttered by His prophets. The Scriptures are very jealous on this subject;

how different from the language of many who seem desirous to exclude God from being the Author of his own word!

At sundry times.—The wonderful plan of salvation was gradually unfolded. God did not fully communicate it at once, but at sundry times, or, rather, in sundry parts, here a little and there a little. The first intimation of the Savior was made to Adam; His coming as the judge, to Enoch; the covenant, or solemn engagement was renewed to Noah, and a visible representation of the salvation of believers was given in the preservation of Noah and his family in the Ark, which, being warned of God, he had prepared for the saving of his house.

We have seen that the Savior was first revealed as the seed of the woman; [Eve was the emblem of the Church of Christ, the mother of all believers. Gal. 4:21. She was first called woman because she was taken out of man. It is remarkable that the name of Eve, or Life, was given her after she had been the means of entailing death on all her posterity; but the Prince of Life, who hath abolished death, was the seed of the woman, hence the new name given to Eve.] He was afterwards described as the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; His descent was next limited to the tribe of Judah, and finally to the house of David.

The gradual manner in which God communicated His purposes of mercy to man correspond with the other parts of the divine procedure. He could have completed in a moment the work of creation, but He was pleased to accomplish it in six days, and here we see His wisdom and condescension. It enables us to follow the wonderful process; it presents to us the stupendous whole in its various parts, thus preventing our being overwhelmed with its magnitude. So likewise the herb of the field does not at once arrive at maturity; there is first the blade, then the ear, and afterwards the full corn in the ear. Thus, too, man has his age of infancy, youth, and manhood, through all of which steps the Savior passed, thus intimating that His salvation was not confined to any age.

Diverse manners.—Revelation was not only communicated in different portions, but in different ways, by angels, voices, dreams, visions; and similitudes. Such were the different modes in which the prophets received their revelations.

In times past (rather, of old).—Here there appears to be a reference to the fact that the spirit of prophecy had long ceased. No prophet had arisen in Israel for the space of three hundred years from the days of Malachi.

To the fathers.—Here the term fathers includes not only the patriarchs of the Jewish nation, but all the prophets by whom God had communicated His will from the beginning.

V. 2.—Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds.

These last days.—This expression may, no doubt, refer to the present time contrasted with “time past,” ver. 1; but it appears especially to apply to the last dispensation under the reign of Messiah. The expression is parallel to chap. 9:26, “now in the end of the world.” [The Apostle designates the kingdom of Israel as the world. “Wherefore if ye be dead with Christ from the rudiments of the world, why, as though living in the *world*, are ye subject to ordinances?” Col. 2:20.] The same expression is used Isa. 2:2; Acts 2:17, &c.

All the prophets declared that the days should come when the Lord would communicate His will in a clearer and more glorious manner than He had hitherto done, so that “the last days” appear to indicate the period of the new dispensation, to which those who feared God in Israel looked forward. Matt. 13:17.

Spoken unto us by his Son.—For four thousand years preparation was being made for the manifestation of the Son of God. Jesus is termed God’s *own* Son, His *only begotten*, and when the fulness of the time had come He was sent forth, “born of a woman, made

under the law, that he might redeem sinners from the curse of the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons.” Gal. 4:5. When He appeared, the darkness of the old dispensation fled before the beams of the Sun of Righteousness which arose with healing on His wings. The wages of sin is death, therefore as the head, the substitute, and representative of His people He was delivered for their offences; He was made sin for them, although He knew no sin, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him; and in token of the efficacy of His sacrifice He was raised from the dead, and became the first fruits of them that slept. No man took His life from Him, He laid it down of Himself; He had power to lay it down and power to take it again. Having offered Himself a sacrifice of a sweet-smelling savour acceptable to God, He rose to die no more, and because He lives His people shall live also. Adam was the source of natural life to all his children, but he forfeited it and they all died in him, but in Christ all His people are made alive; and when He who is their life shall appear, they also shall appear with Him in glory.

The name of the Savior is Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. In His wonderful person the Divine and human natures are united, and thus we have a manifestation of the closeness of that union which subsists between the head and the members of Christ’s mystical body.

The Word was in the beginning with God, and was God. [Thus the Apostle intimates the personal distinction in the unity of the Godhead, which is to us an unfathomable mystery, of which we can know nothing beyond the simple fact. Yet it is the basis of the Gospel. Each of the adorable persons takes an important part in the work of redemption. The Father chose his people in Christ, and sent forth His Son to redeem them from death; the Son willingly undertook their cause; and the Holy Spirit, which Christ received without measure, is through Him communicated to each of them. Thus they are led into the truth as it is in Jesus. Hence they are baptized into the name, or faith, of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost.] He was the Creator of all things visible and invisible, the

fountain of life, and the only medium of communication of light to fallen man. John 1:2-4. He was made flesh and dwelt among us. When the angels sinned they were cast down to hell and reserved in everlasting chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day. Sin had interposed an impenetrable vail between them and the only source of light and joy; but by the incarnation and sufferings of Christ God was pleased to cause the light to shine out of darkness upon an innumerable multitude of our fallen race which had also come under condemnation. And, inasmuch as the children given to Christ were partakers of flesh and blood, He Himself also took part of the same, that by death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is the devil, and by showing to His people the path of life, and becoming the firstborn of many brethren, might deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. Thus He magnified the law which they had broken, and made it honorable. He spoiled principalities and powers, and made a show of them openly, triumphing over them in His cross. Hence it is written, "As by man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead; for as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive; Christ the first fruits, afterwards they that are Christ's at his coming."

Whom he hath appointed heir of all things.— As God, the Lord Jesus had an independent right to the sovereignty of the universe; but as God manifest in the flesh, at once the Son of God and the Son of man, the great Mediator, He is appointed heir of all things, He is termed the firstborn or heir of the whole creation. Col. 1:18. This was the joy set before him,— "Arise, O God, judge the earth, for thou shalt inherit all nations." Psalm 82:8. [Abraham is termed the heir of the world, Rom. 4:13, as being the father of Christ; just as it is written *in thee* shall all families of the earth be blessed, because this was to be fulfilled in his seed, which is Christ.] "Jesus, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God al-

so hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:6-11.

Thus, we are taught that as the reward of His obedience unto death all power in heaven and earth is committed to Him, and He employs this power in gathering in His blood-bought sheep. The exaltation of the Son of God at His Father's right hand, surrounded by a countless multitude delivered from the power of Satan and translated into His everlasting kingdom, was the grand end of the creation of the world, which was not only made by Christ, but for Christ as a theatre on which His glory should be displayed. Col. 1:16. It was God's eternal purpose to make known to the principalities and powers in heavenly places His manifold wisdom by the Church redeemed with the Savior's blood. Eph. 3:10.

Christ is the head of the Church, and all of its members are members of His body, of His flesh, and of His bones. They are brought into a state of union so close and intimate that their sins are His, and His righteousness theirs. Hence, although He did no sin, nor was guile found in His lips, He says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of my head, therefore my heart faileth me," Psalm 40:12; while they who drank up iniquity as the ox drinketh up water are enabled with confidence to demand, "Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect?" arrayed in His unspotted righteousness, they shall all sit down on His glorious high throne and reign with Him for ever. He is their elder brother, their surety, their life. They were given to Him by His Father in the everlasting council; He undertook for them, has cancelled all their debt, and has entered into His glory to prepare for them mansions in which they shall for ever dwell. The Church of Christ, ransomed with His precious blood, shall abide an imperishable monument of the manifold wisdom of God, showing that with Him nothing shall be impossible.

By whom also he made the worlds.—That is, the universe; all things were made by Him, and without Him was not anything made that was made. John 1:3. Such is the glorious Personage by whom God hath spoken to us in these last days. The prophets were employed to unfold the revelations which God thought fit to communicate, but the Son has completed the discoveries which are necessary for our instruction, and to Him alone we are directed to look.

This was strikingly exhibited on the holy mount. Moses and Elias, the two most illustrious prophets of the old dispensation, conversed with Jesus on His decease which He was to accomplish at Jerusalem. The Apostles were desirous of detaining the heavenly visitors, but a bright cloud overshadowed them, and behold a voice out of the cloud which said, This is my beloved Son: hear ye him. They lifted up their eyes, and Jesus alone remained, the great Prophet of His Church. The darkness was past and the true light now shone.

V. 3.— Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.

Who being the brightness of his glory.—God has revealed Himself in the works of creation and providence, but the brightness or effulgence of His glory is only seen in His Son. In Him God has fully made known the glory of His character. Moses put a veil on his face when declaring the message from God to Israel, but we see the glory of God in the unveiled face of Jesus. No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son who is in the bosom of the Father, intimately acquainted with all His counsels, He hath declared Him. John 1:18.

And the express image of his person.—Christ is the image of the invisible God, Col. 1:15; and this image is so perfect that Christ Himself tells us, “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father.” John 14:9. [It is unnecessary to state that this does not refer to

seeing the Savior with our bodily eyes. It means a right apprehension of His person, character, and offices. Those who are thus enlightened behold the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ, and are changed into His image.] By contemplating in Him the glory of the Lord, we are changed into the same image from glory to glory as by the Spirit of the Lord. This is the new creation in Christ Jesus, which is essential to our being His disciples.

And upholding all things by the word of his power.—All power is committed to Christ in heaven and on earth. This is the reward of His obedience to death, all things are put under Him—all the vessels of His Father's house hang on Him. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son.

When he had by himself purged our sins.— Removing them by His atonement as far as the east is from the west, having washed His people from their sins in His own blood, they are whiter than snow. The priests under the law purified the people with the blood of bulls and goats, but Christ obtained eternal redemption for all believers by the shedding of His own blood. When their sins are sought for they shall not be found, He will present them faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy. The resurrection and ascension of Jesus demonstrated the perfection of His sacrifice. One generation after another had gone down to the grave, which had never said, It is enough; but the Son of God, who knew no sin, having by His union with His people, so to speak, appropriated their sin, was delivered for their offences. He went down into the lower parts of the earth, but it was not possible He could remain there; not only because He was the Prince of Life, having life in Himself, but because He had cancelled the guilt of His brethren. What, then, could retain Him under the power of death? Death had lost its sting, its power was gone, and of necessity the earth cast forth its dead. Jesus rose to the power of an endless life as the head of his body the Church, as the first fruits of an abundant harvest; it was the seal of His Father's approbation of the work which He had undertaken and accomplished. As our great high priest He offered the body which had been pre-

pared for Him. This is the will of God which He came to do, by which, says the Apostle, we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ once for all. Heb. 10:5-10. He is the Captain of the salvation of a countless multitude, who, in virtue of their union with the Only-begotten, shall reign with Him in life for ever.

Sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.—When the Jewish high priest entered the holy place, he *stood* while he performed the service, for he was to remain but for a short time, and only as a minister; but our great High Priest *sat down* as a Prince on the right hand of the Majesty on high. He occupies the highest place. To Him everything in heaven and on earth is subjected. He sits as a Royal priest on His throne, consecrated for evermore, — and His sitting on the right hand of the Majesty *on high*, implies that all things are put under Him, excepting Him who did put all things under Him. 1 Cor. 15:27.

V. 4.—Being made so much better than the angels, as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

Being made so much better than the angels.— It is abundantly manifest that the title of the Son of God, who is said to be appointed heir of all things, to have been the brightness of God's glory and the express image of His person, purging our sins, and sitting down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, is descriptive of Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh. God is invisible, and could not be the image of Himself; and the Son, in His Divine nature, is as invisible as the Father. Besides, where was the necessity for proving God to be superior to angels? But the Divine and human natures were united in the one person of Christ, and it is in this character that the Apostle establishes His superiority to angels.

As he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.—Angels are, indeed, termed by courtesy the sons of God, but to Christ this name belongs by inheritance. [This is illustrated by a passage in English history. Henry II., having admitted his son to a share of the sovereignty, caused him to sit at table while he

waited on him, at the same time observing that never king was more royally served. The prince pleasantly replied, that there was nothing extraordinary in the son of a Count serving the son of a king. The son's rank came to him by inheritance, the father's by conquest.] He is possessed of the Divine nature, as a son partakes of the nature of his father, while from His mother Christ equally partook of human nature. Hence He is indifferently described as the Son of God, implying His Divinity, and as the Son of man, implying His humanity. God does nothing in vain; He accomplishes His purposes by means exactly adapted to the end He has in view. In the first creation He spoke and it was done, He commanded and all things stood fast; but to reconcile justice with mercy, to destroy the works of the devil, the Son of God was manifested, and suffered, and died, and revived, that He might be the Lord both of the dead and the living.

V. 5.—For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee? And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son?

For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?—Here the Apostle proceeds to prove his assertion, that Christ possesses by inheritance a more excellent name than the angels. This he demonstrates by a quotation from the second Psalm, which not only gives Jesus the title of Son, but describes Him as *begotten*. The Apostle elsewhere applies this prediction to the resurrection of Christ, Acts 13:33, because He was thus declared to be the Son of God with power. Rom. 1:4. In various ways had He been declared to be the Son of God, by His doctrine and miracles, the perfection of His character, and repeated testimonies by a voice from heaven; but His resurrection was the demonstration of His being the Son of God, the promised seed of the woman, the Judge of the world. Acts 17:31. Hence, the sign which He gave in token of the dignity of His person was the sign of the prophet Jonas. Jesus was to be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth. The temple of His body,

in which dwelt all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, was to be destroyed, and in three days He would raise it up.

He appeared in our nature, that He might lay down His life. He came in the character of the Father's servant to accomplish the salvation of the children given to Him. He is the seed of the woman, the Head of God's elect; and having identified Himself with them, that He might raise them to life and glory, He in their nature endured the curse which they had incurred that they might inherit a blessing, and might all through union with Him be acknowledged to be the sons of God. He subjected Himself to suffering and death that they might partake of eternal life with Him. It was an easy service imposed on Adam to abstain from the fruit of one tree, but the service required of the second Adam included not only sorrow, shame, and grief in this world, but the pains of death. To all this He cheerfully submitted, knowing that His Father's commandment was life everlasting, not only to Himself, but to a countless multitude. As the Father hath life in Himself, so hath He given to the Son to have life in Himself, and hath given Him authority to execute judgment also, because He is the Son of man. John 5:26, 27. The reason of all judgment being committed to the Son is very remarkable, "that all men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father."

The Apostle adds another testimony to the Sonship of Christ.

And again, I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.—It is evident that this passage refers primarily to Solomon, 2 Sam. 7:14; 1 Chron. 17:12, who was a remarkable type of Christ, but we learn from the Apostle that a greater than Solomon is here. Indeed, this is evident from the passage quoted, for God promises to establish His kingdom *for ever*. The Lord Jesus is frequently described both as David and the Son of David. David was a man after God's own heart, which denotes his zeal for the worship of God; but it has its full accomplishment in Christ, who is in all respects a man after God's own heart, for He always did those

things which pleased His Father. He now sits on the throne of His father David, and is indeed the King of Israel. John 1:49.

We repeatedly find a double type in consequence of the different aspects in which Christ is presented to our view. He was in the form of a servant, engaged in a work committed to Him by His Father, which required Him to be a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, a stranger and pilgrim, a houseless wanderer in this world, and finally to be made a curse by hanging on a tree, thus becoming obedient to the death of the cross. Again, we behold Him a resistless conqueror triumphing over death, His foot on the neck of Satan, and invested with all power in heaven and on earth. Hence a double type was necessary to denote His sufferings and glory. The former was typified by "David and all his afflictions," the latter, by Solomon, who enjoyed a long, glorious, and peaceful reign; a remarkable type of Him of the increase of whose government and peace there shall be no end, upon the throne of David and of his kingdom, to order it and establish it with judgment and justice, from henceforth and for ever. Hence the Apostle applies to Jesus what was primarily said of Solomon,—I will be to him a Father, and he shall be to me a Son.

Besides David and Solomon prefiguring Christ in His humiliation and exaltation, we find other instances of a double type. Thus, on the great day of atonement there were two goats, one of which, when the sins of Israel were laid upon it, was slain, while the other was set free, denoting Christ dying for the sins of His people and raised for their justification.

Again, in cleansing the leper, there were two birds, the one of which was slain, the other, after being dipped in its blood, was set free. This represented the great Shepherd of the sheep brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. Heb. 13:10.

Moses, the Mediator of the old covenant, was a remarkable type of our great Mediator, and in correspondence with the antitype, Israel could not enter Canaan till after his death. When the people

sinned in the matter of the golden calf, and Moses had broken the tables in token of the covenant being broken, he said to the people, "Ye have sinned a great sin, and now I will go up unto the Lord, peradventure I shall make an atonement for your sin." Exod. 32:30. He accordingly returned to the Lord, and said, "Oh, this people have sinned a great sin, and have made them gods of gold. Yet now, if thou wilt forgive their sin—; and if not, blot me, I pray thee, out of the book which thou hast written." Exod. 32:31, 32. Thus he offered his life to atone for the sin of Israel. We know that God spoke to Moses mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches. Num. xii. 8. There is therefore reason to suppose that Moses communicated to Israel in parables what he had heard plainly in the mount. Israel was a carnal, stiff-necked people, and could not have home the truth of the Son of God dying, and reviving, and rising. The doctrine of Christ was a stumbling-block to their children, after they had received all the additional instructions contained in the Scriptures of the prophets, had seen His own mighty works, and heard Him declared to be the Son of God by a voice from heaven,—notwithstanding all this, they crucified Him as a blasphemer. Hence, it is not improbable that Moses concealed in parables what he had been taught in the mount, and that this was intimated by the veil which he put upon his face while speaking to the people, and which he took off when he went in before the Lord. Exod. 34:33, 34. If this were the case, Moses knew that Christ was to die for His people, and as the mediator of the old covenant he offered to expiate by death the sin of which Israel had been guilty. But Moses, however eminent, was but a sinful man, and a sin-offering must be perfect to be accepted—"There shall be no blemish therein." Lev. 22:21. But, although the death of Moses could not be accepted as an expiation for the sin of Israel, it was necessary for the correspondence of the type and the antitype, that the mediator should die before Israel could enter Canaan. Hence it is written, "Moses, my servant, is dead; now, therefore, arise, go over this Jordan, thou and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel." Joshua 1:2. Thus Moses and Joshua were each a type of

Christ, who, having by His death expiated the sins of His people, rose from the dead as the Captain of their salvation, and puts them in possession of the eternal inheritance.

V. 6.—And again, when he bringeth in the first-begotten into the world, he saith, And let all the angels of God worship him.

And again...—There is a great difference of opinion with respect to the construction of the word rendered “again.” It may be understood either as an additional proof of what had been asserted in verse 5, or it may refer to Christ being brought again into the world by His resurrection. The quotation is taken from Psalm 97:, which is descriptive of the reign of Christ. During His humiliation he was made for a little while lower than the angels, being exposed to suffering and death; but when at His resurrection He was brought again into the world, all power in heaven and in earth was committed to Him, and all the angels of God were commanded to worship Him. The passage, therefore, appears to refer to His resurrection. In our version Psalm 97:7 is rendered “Worship him all ye gods;” but the expression is elliptical, and may be rendered “All ye angels of God.”

Jesus is here termed the firstborn, or first- begotten, while personally distinct He is one with the Father. The firstborn had various privileges,—he had authority over his brethren. Hence the Lord said to Cain, after testifying his approbation of his brother’s sacrifice, “Unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.” Gen. 4:7. God’s accepting Abel’s offering was not to interfere with Cain’s superiority as the firstborn. Again, Jacob describes Reuben, his firstborn, as the excellency of dignity and the excellency of power. Gen. 49:3. This privilege was forfeited and transferred to Judah, of whom came the “chief ruler.” 1 Chron. 5: Another privilege of the firstborn was a double portion. This, also, Reuben forfeited, and the privilege was transferred to Joseph, who was the father of two of the twelve tribes; while from each of Jacob’s other sons sprang only one tribe. Another privilege was

the priesthood, which was also forfeited by Reuben and bestowed on Levi.

Christ, as the firstborn in all things, had the preeminence; to Him every knee shall bow, of things in heaven and things on earth, and every tongue shall confess that He is Lord, to the glory of God the Father. The angels are all commanded to worship Him; He is exalted “far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come.” Eph. 1:21.

V. 7.—And of the angels he saith, Who maketh his angels spirits, and his ministers a flame of fire.

And of the angels...—The angels are here described as spirits, and as a flame of fire. The word “spirits” also signifies “winds,” and some, therefore, understand the passage as teaching us that the Lord makes winds His messengers and flaming fire His ministers; but the Apostle does not here teach us the nature of winds and of lightnings, but the nature of angels. The best interpretation seems to be, that the angels when sent by the Lord to perform His will, do so in the form of winds and fire. When Elijah was taken up into heaven, “there appeared a chariot of fire and horses of fire.” “Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven.” This seems to be a work performed by the ministry of angels, the chariot and the horses of fire appear to have been angels. We also read, that when Elisha was surrounded by the Syrian army, the mountain was full of horses of fire round about the prophet. That these were *persons* is evident from what Elisha said to his servant, “Fear not, for there be more with us than with them.” This interpretation both suits the phraseology and presents the angels in a very humble situation. Or, perhaps the meaning may be that the angels serve their Maker with the rapidity of the winds and the resistless power of the lightnings.

V. 8.—But unto the Son he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom,

Christ is described, Psalmxliv. 6, from which this is a quotation, as God sitting on His eternal throne, holding a sceptre of righteousness. This is eminently the characteristic of the Mediator's government, which is conducted on principles of the most perfect justice. While He has taken his redeemed from the fearful pit and the miry clay, He has magnified and made honorable the law which they had broken, they are clothed with a robe of unsullied righteousness. His Gospel, which proclaims God to be just while He justifies the ungodly, is the revelation of this righteousness, Rom. 1:17; and when He has reduced the creation to order and harmony, He will deliver up the kingdom to His Father, and for ever remain the glorious Head of that Church which He hath purchased with His own blood, as well as of all principality and power. The kingdom here spoken of is that kingdom upon the throne of which the King sits who reigns in righteousness, Isa. 32:1, and on which He sat down after having finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquities, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Dan. 9:24.

That the forty-fifth Psalm refers to Christ is evident, not only from the authority of the Apostle in this passage, but from the whole tenor of the Psalm. God promised David respecting him, "I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever;" and when Gabriel announced his birth to Mary, he said, "And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name Jesus. He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David: and he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end." Luke 1:31-33. In the Psalm He is described as riding forth in majesty, vanquishing His enemies, and placing on his right hand the "Queen," the mother of a numerous offspring.

It is evident that the Apostle here speaks of Jesus in the character of Mediator, the Son of man. In this character alone could any comparison be instituted between Him and the highest of created beings.

V. 9.—Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

Thou hast loved righteousness and hated iniquity. —This refers to the character of Jesus while in this world, not, as some have supposed, after His government is over. It was the perfection of the character of Jesus that He loved righteousness and hated iniquity. In the days of His flesh He always did the things which pleased His Father; the law was within His heart. His language was, "O how love I thy law! it is my meditation all the day." He challenges His enemies to convict Him of sin. Indeed one flaw in His character would prove the Gospel a fable, for He is God manifest in the flesh, and therefore must have been absolutely perfect. Again, He received the Holy Spirit without measure, which was inconsistent with the slightest deviation from the path of righteousness. The character of Jesus is in itself a demonstration of the truth of the Gospel. Man could not have imagined such a character; and, we may say with the infidel Rousseau, that to suppose the four Gospels a forgery is more incredible than the admission of its truth. [Why then did Rousseau remain an infidel? Because, as he tells us, the Gospel contains many things to which his reason could not assent. What a comment on 1 Cor. 2:14, "But the natural man receiveth not the things of the Spirit of God: for they are foolishness unto him: neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned."]

Such was the Lord's love of righteousness, that He gave Himself for His people to deliver them from all iniquity, that He might purify unto Himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works. He walked in the perfect law of liberty. His undertaking was entirely voluntary; hence He said, "Lo I come, to do thy will, O my God!" Amidst all the discouragements He met with, He never swerved by a hair's breadth from the path of rectitude. Amidst all the shame and reproach which He encountered He set his face as a flint, nor did He fail or become discouraged till He set judgment on the earth. He had only to will it, and legions of angels were

ready to vindicate His glory; but He endured the cross, despising the shame, and thus was His mediatorial throne established in righteousness. All His subjects are righteous, without spot and blemish.

Therefore—on this account.—The anointing was the reward of Christ's love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity while on earth. Some suppose that the anointing takes place subsequently to His government, but it is not connected with His government, which is spoken of before. The eighth verse speaks of Him as a king, and the ninth verse shows why the kingdom was given Him, consequently it was not the reward of His administration of the kingdom. This would imply that Christ has not yet received the anointing, for the mediatorial kingdom will not cease till He hath put all enemies under His feet.

God, even thy God.—Some render this “therefore, O God thy God.” The difference is not material. Owen observes, that the phrase is generally translated as in our version.

Hath anointed thee.—What is the anointing here meant? Is it that by which He was consecrated to the kingly office? or, has it reference to the anointing which was usual in cases of festivity and joy? The latter appears to be the meaning. Christ was anointed to all His offices after His baptism, when He received the Holy Ghost without measure. The anointing here spoken of took place after the manifestation of His love of righteousness and hatred of iniquity while in this world. It was that happiness and glory which He received as Mediator after his ascension.

Above thy fellows.—Some suppose that “by his fellows” is meant the angels, because the Apostle is here proving His superiority to angels, but He never assumed the nature of angels. In this respect He never had fellowship with them. Others think that “by his fellows” we are to understand the prophets, priests, and kings who were anointed with oil to their respective offices, which were all concentrated in Him while He was anointed with the Holy Ghost. It appears, however, rather to mean His people, whom He is not

ashamed to call brethren. He took part with them in flesh and blood. He is the connecting link by which the whole family in heaven and in earth is united to God. The closeness and perpetuity of this union is exhibited in His person as God-man. Hence he says, "I ascend to my Father and to your Father, to my God and your God." His fellows, then, are those with whom, by His incarnation, He has fellowship; and so close is this fellowship, that both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one—children of one family. But in all things He hath the preeminence; all their well-springs are in Him. He is anointed with the oil of gladness above His fellows, He received the Holy Spirit without measure, of which no creature was capable, which is therefore a conclusive proof of His Divinity. The Jewish prophets, priests, and kings were anointed with oil, which was the emblem of the Spirit; they were types of Him who is the Christ, or Anointed One, and His people are called Christians because they have all an unction from the Holy One. As the precious oil, poured on the head of Aaron, ran down to the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit, poured on the great Head of the Church, is conveyed from Him to all His people, and thus they are one spirit with Him, 1 Cor. 6:17; they are all baptized by one Spirit into one body, 1 Cor. 12:13; and we are taught, that if any man have not the Spirit, he is none of His.

V. 10.—And, Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of thine hands.

And, thou, Lord.—The 102nd Psalm, from which this quotation is taken describes, in an address to His Father, the sufferings of Christ and the depth of His humiliation. Ver. 1-11. The sweet Psalmist of Israel then contemplates Jehovah arising in His might to favor Sion, and anticipates the universal spread of the Gospel. Ver. 16-22. He then adverts to His own suffering and death, ver. 23, and describes the supplications which He offered to Him who was able to save Him from death. Ver. 24. The concluding verses contain the answer to the prayer. Had the Psalm not been quoted by the Apostle, we should, probably, have understood the conclusion of the Psalm as the continuance of the prayer, but we learn

from the Apostle that it is the answer which Christ received. In the depth of His humiliation He is acknowledged as the Creator of heaven and earth. John 1:3. The Apostle had previously stated that God had made the worlds by His Son, ver. 2; and here, in reply to the expression of Christ's deep and overwhelming affliction, He is reminded that His years are throughout all generations:—"Of old hast thou laid the foundations of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands. They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed; but thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end." Psalm 102:25-27. It had been given to the Son to have life in Himself, although in connexion with his humanity He had received a commandment to lay it down, that He might take it again; and not only so, but the children of His servants should continue, and their seed should be established before Him, which exactly corresponds with our Lord's words—"Because I live, ye shall live also." John 14:19.

V. 11.—They shall perish; but thou remainest: and they all shall wax old as doth a garment.

They shall perish.—However glorious the work of creation, the heavens and earth shall perish. They are, so to speak, the scaffolding for the erection of a more glorious fabric.

2 Pet 3:10-13. Here we may apply the Apostle's reasoning,—“Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual.” 1 Cor. 15:46. So the visible heavens and earth are intended to introduce the new creation,—“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a great voice out of heaven saying, Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and he will dwell with them, and they shall be his people, and God himself shall be with them, and be their God. And God shall wipe away all tears from

their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away. And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new. And he said unto me, "Write: for these words are true and faithful." Rev. 21:1-5. The heavens and the earth shall be changed; but He, the Messiah, remains; He is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

They all shall wax old as doth a garment.— As a garment becomes unfit for being worn, so shall they wax old.

V. 12.—And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed: but thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.

And as a vesture shalt thou fold them up, and they shall be changed.—The first creation shall, like a vesture, be folded up and laid aside.

But thou art the same, and thy years shall not fail.—This is a most decided testimony to the supreme Divinity of the Lord Jesus. He is *the same*. The word is used, chap. 13:8. He is the unchangeable Jehovah. The years of the heavens and the earth are numbered, and shall fail, not so the years of the Son of God, the Ancient of days.

The expression "*changed*" merits attention. We know nothing of annihilation; probably there is no such thing in the universe. God created nothing in vain; annihilation means any substance being reduced to nothing. We have no experience of this; the body is changed to dust, fuel into smoke, water into steam, and here we read that the heavens and the earth shall be changed.

Even had the Apostle not applied Psalm 102:24-27 to Christ, we might have been led to it by the last verse: "The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee." Applying the Psalm from verse 24 to Christ, all is plain and easy. In the depth of His humiliation He is acknowledged as the great Creator, and assured that the children of His servants should

continue, and their seed be established before Him. This is very beautiful and consoling as applied to Christ, and exactly corresponds with many promises made to the Lord Jesus. Psalm 22:30, 31; 45:16; 69:36. Isa. 53:10 and 59:21.

In this quotation we have another most explicit testimony to the supreme Divinity of Christ. He is not only declared to be superior to angels, but to be “over all, God blessed for ever.” Rom. 9:5. This is shown by His being represented as seated on His eternal throne, Heb. 1:8; and not only having in His character of mediator the preeminence over all those with whom he had condescended to unite himself, but as the Creator of all things. Amidst all the changes which he would effect on the works of His hands, in order to adapt them to His infinitely wise purposes, He remains for ever the same, and with Him there is no variableness or shadow of turning. James 1:17.

V. 13.—But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool?

The Apostle here returns to his argument to prove the superiority of the Lord Jesus to angels, of which, indeed, he had never lost sight; but had soared so high in describing the Divinity of the Son of God, as to leave every created being far beneath Him. The honor of sitting at the right hand of God is such, that it never was given to any of the angels. They are described as *round about* the throne; but Christ, in the character of mediator, sits *upon* the throne at the Father’s right hand. Thus Christ is distinguished from all angels of every order, from the highest to the lowest.

Sit on my right hand, is a quotation from Psalm 110:1 and 5; it was quoted by our Lord in the days of His flesh, as having been written by David under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit in reference to Christ. The great mystery of godliness, God manifest in the flesh, was hid from the scribes and pharisees, although plainly declared in the Scriptures; but, like many other predictions, was not understood till its fulfilment.

The reference to Psalm 110: was exactly to the Apostle's purpose in proof of Messiah's superiority to angels. It also contained a powerful argument to induce the believing Hebrews to hold fast their allegiance to Christ, because all His enemies must be made His footstool. Isa. 60:12. Psalm 72:9.

Enemies.—The devil and his angels are in a state of rebellion against God; and it would appear that their rebellion arose from the intimation of the exaltation of Christ, and that our Lord refers to this when He said, "*He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth*" John 8:44. It was God's eternal purpose to make known by the Church to the principalities and powers in heavenly places His manifold wisdom. Eph. 3:10. In furtherance of this design He seems to have revealed to the heavenly hosts His determination to put all things under the Son of man, Satan, then an angel of light, and, it may be, superior to all other angels, scorned the thought of being subject to a creature formed of the dust. He therefore set himself to defeat his Maker's purpose. He knew His justice and His truth; he heard the intimation, "in the day that thou eatest thereof thou shalt surely die." If, then, he could lead man to transgress, the exaltation of Adam, or any of his posterity, appeared absolutely impossible. He succeeded, he brought mankind under the curse; but there is no counsel or divination against the Lord. His purpose was accomplished by the very means employed to defeat it; for, in the fulness of time, the Son of God was manifested to destroy the works of the devil, and now in human nature is seated at God's right hand to gather in his redeemed, and to take vengeance on all his enemies. Satan has thus become the dupe of his own subtlety, and has been made the unwilling instrument of accomplishing the Divine purpose.

Not only are the devil and his angels the enemies of Christ, but all the children of men who have not been chosen in Him—called by His grace, are among the number of His enemies. But all His enemies shall be made His footstool. They shall not only fail in their attempts to injure those who are called into the fellowship of God's dear Son, but their enmity shall be overruled to promote

the benefit of Christ's people. As *a footstool* is a convenience to one seated on a chair of state, so all the machinations of Satan and his adherents shall advance the glory of the Son of God.

V. 14.—Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?

Are they not all ministering spirits...—This form of expression may imply that the thing asserted was known and admitted by the Hebrews; yet our belief of it does not rest on this foundation, but on the authority of the Apostle. The question implies no doubt, on the subject of inquiry; it is a strong mode of asserting a proposition. The existence of angels was believed by the Jews, with the exception of the Sadducees. We have many instances in the Old Testament of angels being employed to convey messages to men, and in defending the people of God. Such is not now visibly the case: we have no reason to expect an extraordinary message to be conveyed to us by angels, or that they shall visibly come to our aid; but it is well that we should know that all the angels are employed by our Lord to minister to the heirs of salvation. It may be asked, of what use is this ministry? Had the Lord any need of such agents as instruments in taking care of his people? Certainly not; but can anything more clearly prove the dignity of the saints? They are despised among men, yet all the angels in heaven wait on them. Many of God's people may be engaged in the meanest offices among men, yet they have a retinue of angels to watch over them.

Heirs of salvation.—The saints have their privileges, not by works of righteousness, but by inheritance. They are joint-heirs with Christ. Adam was the heir of the world, Gen. 1:28, 29, but he lost his inheritance. The second Adam is appointed heir of all things, and the inheritance is secured by his love and power to all the children of promise. Those who are saved inherit glory, therefore salvation includes, not only deliverance from misery, but also the possession of glory. Here it signifies whatever the people of God shall enjoy throughout eternity.

Shall be.—Hence it appears that the ministering of the angels belongs to the heirs of salvation from the earliest period of their existence. It is said of Jeremiah, —“Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou earnest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations.” Jer. 1:5. The Lord separated Paul from his mother’s womb, and no doubt the angels were employed in ministering to him while breathing out slaughter and threatening against the disciples of Christ.

Such is the introduction of this most instructive epistle. The Apostle begins by referring to the revelations which God had given by that succession of prophets who were raised up from the beginning. He had now spoken by His Son, whom He had constituted heir of all things. By Him and for Him all the worlds were made. He is the image of the invisible God, and has revealed Him to us, clearly exhibiting his glorious perfections. Having, by offering the body which had been prepared for Him, cast the sins of His people into the depths of the sea, so that they should be no more remembered, He sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high, denoting His absolute and universal dominion. He is the Judge of the quick and the dead, to whom every knee shall bow and every tongue confess. The name which He inherited, and which in its proper sense exclusively belongs to Him, was far more glorious than the name given to the angels. To none of them had God said,

Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee. He had described none of them as standing to Him in the relation of a Son. On the contrary, when He foretold the appearance of the first-begotten, the Lord and heir of all, He commanded all the angels of God to worship Him.

The angels are described as executing His will with the rapidity of winds and the resistless power of the lightnings; but the Son is addressed as God sitting on his eternal throne, and as a King reigning in righteousness. He humbled himself, so that, although he was truly God, the Father stood to Him in the relation of His

God; and, lest this should derogate from His innate dignity, He is described as the Creator of all things, who, amidst all their mutations, abideth ever the same. Once more, which of the angels was ever invited to sit at God's right hand until their enemies were made their footstool? So far from their being thus honored, they are all only ministering spirits, sent forth by their glorious Head to minister to the heirs of salvation.

Chapter Two

V. 1.—Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip.

Therefore, or, on this account, viz., the consideration of the surpassing dignity of the Son of God, by whom God had spoken in these last days.

We ought to give the more earnest heed.— Here we are taught that our regard to what is spoken, ought to be in proportion to the dignity and authority of the speaker. Now, if attention is to be given to the Gospel in proportion to the dignity of its author, who is no less a personage than the Son of God, with what solemn reverence ought we to listen to His words! They are not only to be at first received, but to be kept in memory. The persons addressed had already received the Gospel, but they were to continue in faith and obedience to the end of their lives. Matt. 24:13.

To the things which we have heard.—Believers ought diligently to attend to whatever the Lord Jesus has said in His Word. The Gospel itself is the great truth, the belief of which is salvation, however great men's ignorance in other respects may be; yet nothing which God has said is to be overlooked, but everything is to be attended to as far as it is understood. All things said by Jesus are not of equal importance, but all things are important, and to be received and obeyed at every hazard and every loss. The consideration that the Lord forgives the ignorance of his people ought never to be alleged in justification of inattention to whatever he hath spoken, or of the neglect of the least of his commandments. It may also be observed that we are to give heed to the things *that we have heard*, that is, the things recorded in the Scriptures. Christians have nothing to learn from other sources. They are not to employ speculations of their own to eke out their information with respect to Divine things, far less are they to receive the doctrines and commandments of men. The word which I have spo-

ken, says the Lord, it shall judge you. The word rendered "let slip," literally signifies "to run out," as a leaky vessel, which strikingly corresponds with our proneness gradually and insensibly to lose sight of one or another part of the doctrine of Christ. It is evidently a warning not to depart from the faith.

V. 2.—For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward.

The word spoken by angels.—The law spoken by angels, is the law delivered at Mount Sinai. Stephen speaks of the Jews having received the law by the disposition of angels, Acts 7:53, and the Apostle describes the law as being ordained of angels. Gal. 3:19. We are, however, expressly taught that God spake the Ten Commandments. Exod. 20:1. This may be explained by the 11th verse of Psalm 68:, "The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it." Angels were employed in publishing the law given by God.

But, perhaps, the difficulty may be solved by the consideration that He who was afterwards manifested in the flesh ruled over the Mosaic dispensation in the character of an angel. He is called the Messenger of the Covenant,—the Lord whom they sought, who was to come suddenly to his temple. Mal. 3:1. This is evidently descriptive of Christ. Again, it is said my name is in Him, Exod. 23:21, and under the guidance of this angel Moses had no scruple to proceed. But when the Lord said he would send an angel to drive out the nations, and to give them the land, but that He would not go in the midst of them, Moses objected. He was not satisfied with being under the protection of a created angel, and requested, that if God's presence went not with them, he would not command them to pursue their journey. Exod. 33:15. The angel who had hitherto conducted Israel is frequently called Jehovah; He is the angel of God's presence. Isa. 63:9. Thus, He who was afterwards manifest in the flesh ruled that dispensation in the character of an angel; but this was only for a season, and to this

the prophet refers,—“O the hope of Israel, the Savior thereof in time of trouble, why shouldest thou be as a stranger in the land, and as a wayfaring man that turneth aside to tarry for a night?” Jer. 14:8.

The Apostle had previously established the infinite superiority of the Son of God to angels, and hence he argues the inferiority of the Law to the Gospel,—the Law having been promulgated by God in the temporary character of an angel, implying the temporary nature of the dispensation; the Gospel by the Son of God who abideth for ever, and who has said, “Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my Word shall not pass away.” Matt. 24:35.

Was steadfast.—Many prophets were raised up in Israel, but no alteration of the law was permitted. Malachi, the last of the prophets, concludes his testimony by enjoining upon Israel to remember the Law of Moses, with the statutes and judgments. Mal. 4:4.

Every transgression and disobedience.—The words are nearly synonymous when used together, transgression implies the doing of what is forbidden, and disobedience the omission of what is required. This exactly corresponds with the injunction neither to add to, nor diminish, what Moses had commanded. Deut. 12:32.

Just recompense of reward.—The punishment justly awarded according to the offence. It would be unjust not to visit transgression with merited punishment.

V. 3.—How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard him?

How shall we escape.—This implies that there is no possibility of escaping the wrath of God revealed from heaven against sin. Men may deceive themselves by hopes founded on false views of the mercy of God; but the door of mercy is for ever shut against all

transgressors who do not avail themselves of the only remedy provided by God through the death of His Son.

If we neglect so great salvation.—The Apostle includes himself and his fellow-believers, because it was as true of them as of others. Had they neglected the great salvation there would not have been any way of escape for them. Believers are secured by having been chosen in, and given to Christ, and, consequently, they are secured from neglecting the great salvation; for He who has begun a good work in them, has engaged to perform it until the day of Jesus Christ. Phil. 1:6.

It is a wonderful proof of the wisdom of God that, in the salvation of sinners, He has given a more awful manifestation of the exceeding sinfulness of sin than in the destruction of the rebel angels. So far from sin appearing less pernicious by an unlimited pardon being proclaimed to the chief of sinners by faith in Christ, its malignity is more fully displayed. It was God's eternal purpose to pluck a multitude of our fallen race, which no man should be able to number, as brands from the burning, and His purpose could only be effected by the incarnation, sufferings, and death of His only-begotten and well-beloved Son. If there was no other channel through which mercy could flow to sinners of mankind, how could any who neglected so great salvation possibly escape?

The salvation here spoken of is deliverance from the love and power of sin, hence the Son of God was named Jesus. Matt. 1:21. It is great in every point of view, whether we consider the ruin and misery from which it delivers us, the means by which the deliverance was accomplished, or the glory into which those who receive it are introduced. On the other hand, he that believeth not the record that God gave of His Son, hath made Him a liar. 1 John 5:10.

Some openly reject the Gospel, accounting it a cunningly-devised fable; others, although they do not openly reject it, are so much occupied with the things of time and sense as altogether to neglect it. All men neglect the great salvation who do not consider it

as the one thing needful. All men neglect it who do not receive it. All men neglect it who are not influenced by it, for it *effectually works* in them that believe.

Perhaps, in speaking of the great salvation, the Apostle refers to the deliverance of Israel from the iron furnace. In bringing them out of Egypt, God gave a glorious display of his power and goodness. This, however, was only a temporal salvation, but the salvation announced in the Gospel is eternal. It is deliverance from the bondage of Satan, and, consequently, from the wrath to come—from that lake of fire, where there is weeping, and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. It translates the lost and ruined sinner into the kingdom of God's dear Son. It restores him to the image of God in which he was created. So long as God's Word abode in the heart of Adam, he stood firm in that estate of holiness and happiness in which he was created; but Satan gained admission into his heart in the form of a lie, and thus was man changed into the image of him who was a liar from the beginning. But the believer is created anew in Christ; by receiving the love of the truth he is saved; Christ, who is the truth, takes possession of his heart, and he is thus delivered from the power of darkness and translated into the kingdom of God's dear Son; and, after having fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection, shall sit with Him for ever on His throne. Such is the great salvation, and how shall the sinner who neglects it escape?

Began to be spoken by the Lord.—The great salvation began to be spoken by the Lord. The title, "The Lord," belongs to Jesus as fully as to the Father. He is Lord of heaven and earth, the Lord of life and glory. The great salvation had been announced to our first parents, and intimated by all the prophets by types, and figures, and shadows; but the full and clear declaration of it was made by the Lord during his personal ministry.

Confirmed unto us by them that heard him.— That is, by the Apostles, who were the Lord's chosen witnesses. John 15:27. They had attended Him during His public ministry, they went about

with Him and heard all His discourses. When he spoke in parables, He explained them in private to the Apostles. But after all, their views were dark, they still expected a worldly kingdom,—that He would restore the kingdom to Israel, and raise it to additional splendour, and that He should sit on the throne of His Father David. Even after His resurrection they still fondly adhered to this notion. They were therefore, after all the advantages they had enjoyed, not qualified to preach the Gospel. He, therefore, commanded them to tarry at Jerusalem till they were endued with power from on high, and on the day of Pentecost they were baptized with the Holy Ghost, and not only qualified to preach the Gospel with unerring certainty, but to do so in all the various languages of the assembled multitudes. A new proof was also given of the truth of their doctrine by multitudes receiving the love of the truth. The Gospel came to them not in word only, but in power and in much assurance. Those who believed, according to the Lord's commandment, were baptized, thus putting on Christ, professing their faith in Him who died for their sins and was raised for their justification, and that by His resurrection they were begotten again to a lively hope of an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away. The Apostle, as was customary with him, classes himself with his brethren whom he was addressing; he says, confirmed *to us*. It was, indeed, confirmed to believers in every age and country. This does not imply that the previous evidence from the discourses and miracles of the Lord was not satisfactory, but it proves that the believer's faith is capable of increase. It is like the path of the just, which shineth more and more to the perfect day. The same Apostle gives thanks for the Thessalonians, because their "faith groweth exceedingly."

V. 4.— God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders, and with diverse miracles, and gifts of the Holy Ghost, according to his own will?

God also bearing them witness.—Not only did the descent of the Holy Ghost upon the Apostles on the day of Pentecost establish the truth of the Gospel, but they were enabled to confirm their

doctrine by the most astonishing miracles, giving feet to the lame and life to the dead. The Lord had promised that the Spirit of Truth, whom He would send from the Father, should testify of Him, and that the Apostles also should bear witness. John 15:26, 27. In this and the preceding verse we see his promise fulfilled, in verse 3 we have the testimony of the Apostles, and here we have the testimony of the Spirit.

Signs—are evidences of Divine interposition, and may, or may not, be beyond the course of nature;

Wonders—things that excite wonder, prodigies;

Diverse miracles—a variety of miraculous attestations to the truth of the Gospel.

Gifts of the Holy Ghost.—Rather distributions or divisions. The word employed here does not signify gifts, but that the powers conferred by the Holy Spirit were variously divided,—to some, one power; to others, another. 1 Cor. 12:28-30.

According to his own will.—In the distribution of these powers, or gifts, God acted as a sovereign. Miraculous gifts, are termed the manifestation of the Spirit. 1 Cor. 12:7. The Spirit dwells in every believer, but they do not all possess what is termed the manifestation of the Spirit. “But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to every man to profit withal. For to one is given by the Spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same Spirit; to another faith by the same Spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same Spirit; to another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of tongues; to another the interpretation of tongues: but all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will.” 1 Cor. 12:7-11. These gifts were bestowed, not according to the will of man, but according to the sovereign will of God. The will of God is His only guide in all His works. This will is always holy, just, and wise—but it is always sovereign.

V. 5.—For unto the angels hath he not put in subjection the world to come, whereof we speak.

For unto the angels.—Here the Apostle returns to the subject of Christ's superiority to angels. The Apostles reasoned from the Scriptures, not because their own authority was insufficient, confirmed as it was by the miracles which they wrought, but to show that the Old and New Testaments are in perfect harmony, and that the latter is the fulfilling of the former. Believers are, also, thus taught to prove everything by the Word of God. If the ambassadors of Christ proved their doctrine by the Scriptures of the Old Testament, much more should uninspired men prove what they teach by the Word of God. What is not contained in Scripture is no part of Divine truth.

World to come.—This is evidently the new, or Gospel dispensation; and, perhaps, in contrast with this the Apostle speaks of "this present evil world," Gal. 1:4, from which Christ came to deliver His people. The first, the earthly or natural Adam, was at the head of the first world. The second, the heavenly and spiritual Adam, is at the head of the new world, which God foretells by the prophet as a new creation. "For, behold, I create new heavens and a new earth: and the former shall not be remembered, nor come into mind." Isa. 65:17. God made the worlds, both the present and that which is to come, by His Son. Heb. 1:2. We have seen that the old dispensation was subjected to the angel of the covenant; but He rules the new dispensation, in the character of the Son of God, God manifest in the flesh. The great object of the epistle is the development of the glory of the new dispensation, and he begins by giving the most conclusive proof of the superiority of its Author to the angels of God. We enter the first world by birth; we are introduced to the second by being born again. Adam, the head of the old creation, was of the earth earthy; Christ, the head of the new, is the Lord from heaven.

Whereof we speak.—The Apostle's object was to speak of the things belonging to the world to come, the new creation.

V. 6.—But one in a certain place testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?

But one in a certain place testified.—Here the Apostle proves his assertion by quoting the eighth Psalm, and establishes the universal dominion of the Son of man, the title which Jesus commonly assumed while on earth. The culminating evidence of his being the Son of God was not given till his resurrection.

It is to be observed that the Apostle does not name the Psalm, although this is not always the case, Acts 13:33-35; but all Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and the Lord establishes its authority by so frequently referring to it during His personal ministry. He divides it into three parts—the Law, the Prophets, and the Psalms. To the Jews were committed the lively oracles; and, amidst all their wickedness, they have been faithful to this trust, and have preserved the Scriptures as delivered to them by the prophets. On this subject they have been very cautious; and, although they have adopted many false interpretations, they have never trifled with the purity of the sacred books.

Testified, saying, What is man, that thou art mindful of him? or the son of man, that thou visitest him?—It has been observed, that, were it not for the Apostle's authority, we should not have considered the conclusion of the 102nd Psalm as an answer to the prayer of Christ, and a similar remark may be made respecting the eighth Psalm, which we should have confined to a description of the dominion over the creatures with which man is invested, Gen. 1:26; but the question is decided by the Apostle's application of it to the Lord Jesus, showing that it contains a prophetic intimation of the universal dominion of the Son of man. At the same time it holds true, in a measure, of the authority bestowed on man over the creatures as a type of the unlimited power of Jesus. One testimony from the Scriptures is amply sufficient for the establishment of any truth; but, by comparing one passage with another referring to the same subject, we have a confirmation of the in-

terpretation just given. Now, in 1 Cor. 15:27, Eph. 1:22, Matt. 21:16, where the eighth Psalm is applied to Christ, we have a confirmation of the true application of the Psalm. Compared with the magnitude and glory of creation, man appears very insignificant; but this evidently refers to man in his fallen state. Man was made in the image of God, and the world which contains all within his reach was subjected to him; but now man is altogether vanity, he is cut down as a flower. All flesh is grass; man is of few days, and full of trouble, and in this state he is viewed by the Psalmist.

That thou art mindful of him.—Considering the glorious majesty of God, how could it be expected that God should be mindful of him?

Son of man.—This is not applicable to Adam, he was a man but had no father; he was created of the dust by God.

Visitest him.—God condescended to visit man, as we read of his walking in the garden.

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

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels.—Commentators are divided as to the expression—*a little lower*; some refer it to the shortness of time—*a little while* lower.

It holds true in a measure in both senses. Man held the next place in creation to the angels; he is now *not* a little, lower than they. In his natural state he is like the beasts that perish.

V. 8.—Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet. For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him. But now we see not get all things put under him.

Thou hast put all things in subjection under his feet.—In a very limited sense this is true of Adam and his posterity. The subjection of the animals, even to a child, is very wonderful, and can only be

accounted for by the fear and dread of man being on all the creatures. Gen. 9:2.

For in that he put all in subjection under him, he left nothing that is not put under him.— We have seen that the words quoted by the Apostle, in a limited and modified degree, hold true even of fallen man; but the Apostle takes them in their full extent, without any modification. *But now we see not yet all things put under him.*—Not unfrequently the word *all* must be understood with limitation; but the Apostle teaches us that the word *all*, in the eighth Psalm, is to be understood in the fullest and most unlimited sense, as leaving nothing in the universe which is not put under the Son of man, whether in the heavens above, or in the earth beneath. Even in this world there are many things which man, by his utmost exertions, is unable to accomplish; and, although the animals are in a measure subjected to him, yet there are many of which he is justly afraid, and which devour him when they find opportunity.

V. 9.—But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor: that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.

But we see Jesus who was made a little lower than the angels.— While the language of the Psalm can only be applied to mankind in general in a very limited and confined sense, it has its full accomplishment in the Lord Jesus.

He was made for a little while lower than the angels by His incarnation—coming in the likeness of sinful flesh.

There is in our translation some confusion from the order in which the words are placed. Christ is represented as being crowned with glory and honor, that He might taste death; whereas He first tasted death, and then, as the reward of His sufferings, was crowned with glory and honor. This was the joy set before Him, for which He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God. He has ascended far above all heavens,

such is the uniform doctrine of Scripture. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross. Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:5-11. Christ drank of the brook in the way, therefore He lifted up His head. He is seated at the right hand of God, till all His enemies be made His footstool. Psalm 110:1: At the same time it is true that our translators have followed the order of the words in the original; but, although the Greek may admit of this inverted order, it is evident that Christ was made for a little while lower than the angels by His incarnation and that, in consequence of His voluntary humiliation, He is crowned with glory and honor.

That he by the grace of God should taste death for every man.—

Here we are taught the object of the death of Christ. A multitude whom no man shall be able to number were chosen in, and given to Christ. They came under the curse of the broken law, and by the grace of God He laid down His life for them, that He might redeem them from death, might ransom them from the power of the grave, and swallow up death in victory. Adam was the source or fountain of their natural life, but it was dried up, the streams, consequently, all failed; but Jesus said, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Heb. 10:9. "By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." Chap. 10:10.

Having risen from the dead to die no more, He is to all His people the fountain of eternal life; because I live, ye shall live also.

By the grace of God.—The gift of Christ to die for His people was an act of pure grace; but if so, the withholding of this boon, and the consequent condemnation of all mankind would have been no injustice. Many seem to think, that it would have been unjust to punish mankind without opening for them a way of escape, and putting them a second time in a state of probation. Were this correct, all mankind must have heard the Gospel, whereas the number of those to whom the glad tidings have come is comparatively small. There would be no more grace in the salvation of believers than there would have been justice in their condemnation. But if mankind were lost in their first father Adam, then their redemption in Christ is wholly of grace.

Taste death.—Death is the king of terrors. Those who know not God are described as being, through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage. It is bitter and distasteful, and hence the figurative expression, “tasting death.” So distasteful was it to the Lord Jesus, that in the days of His flesh He offered up supplication with strong crying and tears, to Him that was able to save Him from death, and was heard in that He feared; not that He was unwilling to drink the bitter cup, or endeavoured to avoid it, but He thus earnestly prayed for victory over this last enemy.

For every man. [*Man* here is a supplement. Macknight says the supplement may be “*huiou*,” *every son*, which exactly corresponds with the following verse.] This general expression is frequently employed when a limitation is absolutely necessary. For instance, “*every man* shall have praise of God.” 1 Cor. 4:5. God deals to *every man* the measure of faith. Rom. 12:3. The blind man, when the Lord opened his eyes, saw *every man* clearly. “*Every man*” is said to press “into the kingdom of God.” Luke 16:16. In the passage before us, the context proves that the general expression must be limited to those to whom Christ stands in the relation of the Captain of their salvation. Ver. 10.

He tasted death for *every one* of the “many sons” whom He brings to glory. Here the expression imports that Christ died for

each of His people; he died for them (as Israel is to be gathered) "one by one." [See the author's "Doctrine of the Atonement." Second edition. Pages 276-277] He tasted death for every one of the *sanctified*. Ver. 11. For *every one* of his brethren, ver. 11, 12; for *every one* of the *Church*, for which He gave Himself, Eph. 5:23. Heb. 2:12. For *every one* of the children whom God gave unto Him. Ver. 13. For every one of the seed of Abraham. "And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise." Gal. 3:29. So far from dying for all, Christ will say to many, "I *never* knew you." He prays for the men whom His Father had given Him out of the world, while He expressly states He prays not for the world, John 17:6-9. In point of fact, the greater part of mankind have never heard of a Savior, and are not only living without God, but without hope in the world. If Christ died for all, no man is saved by His death. But perhaps it is said, that they are saved by faith in His death. Still, faith is the gift of God, which, like every other gift, is imparted to sinners through the atonement by which God's righteousness in the remission of sins is manifested.

If salvation be purely of grace, no difficulty is got rid of by holding that Christ died for all. Besides, if the atonement of Christ was not made exclusively for the elect and saved, but for all, even for those who are lost, the unity of the Godhead is denied. If Christ died for all, and the Spirit effectually reveals the truth only to some, where is the unity of operation between Christ and the Holy Spirit?

[Mr. Haldane's work on the Atonement was his last and, probably, his ablest publication. The Rev. Dr. Stanford, of Dublin, so well known as the able editor of Mr. Krause's sermons, has alluded to it in his preface to a new edition of the celebrated Elisha Coles' "Discourse on God's Sovereignty." Dr. Stanford says,—“After so much experience as, I trust, may secure me from the charge of presumption, in venturing an opinion of my own, I do not hesitate to say, that if the expositor of Divine truth would desire to be consistent in his doctrine,—if he would avoid being self-

contradictory,—it can be only by the vivid and unclouded perception, and the unqualified adoption, of such views as are to be found in this (Coles') and similar works. Rare, I regret to say, they are; but though few, they are inestimable. I shall just here mention one, which is happily of easy attainment, and which, I think, no inquirer into truth should fail to provide himself with,—I mean '*The Doctrine of the Atonement*,' by J. A. Haldane. The object is in a good measure parallel with Elisha Coles' work; of course it has the advantage of a more modern and polished style. It is a *singularly able and unanswerable advocacy* of those views which, no matter how men may recoil from them, it has, nevertheless, been God's will to reveal."

The first editions of Elisha Coles' work were published with the strong recommendations of such men as Owen, Annesley, and Goodwin. At the great revival of the Church of England, a new edition was published by the celebrated William Romaine, who states that it is "from these doctrines only that settled peace can rule in the conscience, the love of God be maintained in the heart, and a conversation kept up in our walk and warfare as becometh the Gospel. It is from them all good works proceed, and that all fruits of holiness abound, to the praise of the glory of the grace of God."

It may here be remarked that the errors revived in the present day, involving universal pardon and the denial of eternal punishments, render the enforcement of the old doctrines taught by the Reformers and the Puritan divines all the more important. One of the last acts of the judicious Thomas Scott was to republish in English the decisions of the Synod of Dort, with a preface, in which is contained the manly concession that he had been himself prejudiced against them. It may, however, be fairly said, that if good men, who hold the doctrines of free grace were to compare their respective views, it would be found that their differences on the questions of general and particular redemption, are often reduced to a mere logomachy, or war of words. If disobedience to God's Holy Commandments be a sin against God of *infinite* de-

merit, it could only be atoned for by a sacrifice of *infinite* value. The sacrifice of Christ is admitted by every Christian to be of *infinite* value, and such a sacrifice was necessary to atone for the sin of Adam, even had he stood alone before his Maker, the solitary inhabitant of this world. But that sacrifice being *infinite* in value, it must have been *sufficient* for the salvation not of Adam only, but of all the countless millions of his posterity. It is from no defect in the value of Christ's blood, that His *sacrifice* is *efficacious* only for the salvation of the elect. But it can hardly be said, without an abuse of words, that there is an actual *atonement*, or reconciliation, accomplished for those who are lost. "No man cometh unto me except the Father draw him" are the words of Christ Himself. "But why are not all drawn? Ask not the reason why," says Benedict Pictet. "It is secret, but not unjust." All true Christians agree that the value of Christ's *sacrifice* was infinite. All who receive the doctrines of grace through the electing love of God, believe that the *atonement* purchased by that sacrifice is efficacious only for the elect given to Christ in covenant by the Father. Is there not then in the dispute often a confusion as to the meaning of the word *atonement*? The *sacrifice* was infinite in value, but limited in its effects; for, unless we adopt the fatal error of universal pardon, it will be admitted that it is the procuring cause of an *atonement* only for the saved who are reconciled to God by the priceless blood of His beloved Son. Here there is no fetter on the free proclamation of the Gospel. Salvation is proclaimed to all who will believe in Christ, to all who will come to Christ, to all who will trust the promise that He is able and willing to save. It is not for us to try to reconcile God's sovereignty with man's undoubted responsibility, by bending the truths of revelation either to the one side or the other.—Editor.

ON THE EXTENT OF THE ATONEMENT.

A great deal of disputation on this subject arises from a doubtful interpretation of the meaning of the word Atonement. In the Bible the sacrifice of Christ is always represented as a price paid to Divine Justice. Rev. 5:9. But the adversaries of the Vicarious Sacri-

fice calumniously represent orthodox Divines as placing the Father and the Son in an adverse relation. Scripture and all orthodox creeds represent the Godhead as acting in unison from the Councils of Eternity. The Father, in his boundless love for the world, sends the Son to shed his blood and offer a sacrifice, as an atonement for all who believe; the Son, comes in the fulness of time, to offer himself as a good Shepherd, giving his life for the sheep; and the Holy Spirit applies the benefits of Christ's sacrifice and intercession for all whose names are written in the Lamb's Book of Life. It is from confounding the infinite value of the sacrifice with its limited application as an atonement that many have been beguiled into those errors which explain away the vicarious sacrifice, making Christ an example only and not a victim, and introducing the fatal but delusive notions of Universal Pardon or Universal Restoration.

It is, however, supposed by many, generally sound Divines, in our days, that if they hold that Christ died only for his people the invitations of the Gospel must be restricted. On this subject the following extract is taken from Robert Haldane's Exposition of Romans 5:11:—

"Many suppose that in preaching the Gospel it is necessary to tell every man that Christ died for him, and that if Christ did not actually atone for the sins of every individual, the Gospel cannot be preached at all. But this is very erroneous. The Gospel declares that Christ died for the guilty, and that the most guilty who believe it shall be saved. 'It is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptance, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners,' even the chief of sinners. The Gospel does not tell every individual to whom it is addressed, that Christ died for him, but that if he believes he shall be saved. This is a warrant to preach the Gospel unto all men; and it is only as he is a believer that it is known to any man that Christ died for him individually. To preach the Gospel then to every man, and call on every one to believe and be saved, is quite consistent, as it is a truth that whoever believes shall be saved. If the most guilty of the human race believe in Je-

sus, there is the most perfect certainty that he shall be saved. If any man is straitened in preaching the Gospel, and find a difficulty in calling on all men to believe, except he can at the same time tell them that Christ died for every individual of the human race, he does not clearly understand what the Gospel is. It is the good news that Christ died for the most guilty that believe, not that He died for every individual, whether he believe or not. To the truth that every man shall be saved who believes, there is no exception.

“The difficulty of those who feel themselves restrained in exhorting sinners to believe the Gospel, on the ground that the atonement of Christ was not made for all, is the same as that which is experienced by some who, believing the doctrine of election, suppose it inconsistent to exhort all indiscriminately to believe the Gospel, since it is certain that they who are not chosen to eternal life will never be saved. In this they err. The Gospel, according to the commandment of the everlasting God, is to be made known to all nations for the obedience of faith. It is certain, however, that they for whom Christ did not die, and who do not belong to the election of grace, will not believe. These are secret things which belong to God, to be revealed in their proper time. We are not, then, to inquire first, either for ourselves or others, for whom Christ died, and who are chosen to eternal life, before we determine to whom the Gospel is to be preached; but to preach it to all, with the assurance that whoever believes it shall receive the remission of sins. In believing it, we ascertain for ourselves that Christ bare our sins in His own body on the tree, and that God from the beginning hath chosen us to salvation, through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth.” (Vol. I., p. 386. Eighth Edition.)]

V. 10.—For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings.

For it became him, for whom are all things...—Here the salvation of sinners, through the sufferings and death of Christ, is ascribed

as resulting from the character of God. He hath made all things for Himself. His own glory is the ultimate end of all His works. Why did He make the Captain of Salvation perfect through sufferings? Because it became Him; it was suitable to His glorious character to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings. Hence it was not possible that the cup should pass from Jesus. Matt. 26:39. This is more fully explained in other parts of the Scriptures; but here we are simply told,—it became the great Creator, who has made all things for Himself, and for whose pleasure they are and were created.

In the works of creation and providence, and especially in the work of redemption, the glorious attributes of God are manifested.

His character is perfect, His wisdom, goodness, and compassion are infinite; but the exercise of one attribute at the expense of another would derogate from this perfection, and therefore it became Him, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the Captain of their Salvation perfect through sufferings. Eternal life is the gift of God; but the boon could only be bestowed on sinners through the Savior's sufferings. The justice of God must be satisfied and His truth vindicated by the surety and representative of His people enduring the penalty of their disobedience,— grace must reign through righteousness unto eternal life by the sufferings of Christ.

Many sons.—Well might the Apostle John exclaim,—“ Behold what manner of love the Father hath bestowed on us, that we should be called the sons of God” (and it is not an empty title); “if children, then heirs; heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ.” “He that overcometh shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son.” Rev. 21:7. Believers are so inseparably united to the only-begotten, that they shall sit with Him upon His throne; indeed, they are represented as already enthroned. Eph. 2:6. They shall judge angels, and reign with Christ for ever and ever. Rev. 22:5.

Captain of their salvation.—When Israel were entering upon the wars of Canaan, Joshua, their leader, beheld a warrior with his sword drawn in his hand, who announced himself as the Captain of the Lord's Host. Joshua fell on his face to the earth, loosed his shoe from off his foot, worshipped, and received instructions respecting the siege of Jericho. He, who was in the Church in the wilderness, Acts 7:38, the Captain of the Lord's Host, after having thus appeared to Joshua, although afterwards unseen, conducted Israel to their promised rest.

The word here rendered " Captain" is elsewhere rendered " Prince," Acts 3:15; 5:31; and "Author," chap. 12:2. He is the leader and commander of His people, Isaiah 55:4; who by Him are brought to glory, are healed by His stripes, and live by His death.

But how is He said to be made perfect? Was He not absolutely perfect? He did no sin, nor was guile found in His lips. He always did the things that pleased His Father. How, then, was He made perfect through sufferings? The reference is not to moral but official perfection. In order to redeem His people from the curse of the law, it behoved Him to be made a curse for them. He could only swallow up death in victory by coming into contact with it—grappling with it—tasting it, —and thus was He made perfect through sufferings. Thus He restored what he took not away. To this He alluded in His message to Herod. Luke 13:32. The flaming sword, which turned every way, kept the tree of life; but He, having submitted to the deadly stroke, returned laden with its fruit, and dispenses it to the heirs of salvation. Having risen from the dead, He dieth no more; and because He lives, they shall live also. There is a passage exactly parallel. "Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered; and being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him." Heb. 5:8, 9. The consecration of Aaron and his sons was completed by the offering up of a ram, Lev. 8:22; which is therefore termed the ram of perfections. To consecrate a priest is to perfect him. Exod. 28:41. Now, the Captain of Salvation was made perfect through sufferings. His consecration was thus

completed, as the great High Priest of our profession. Having, according to the will of God offered the body prepared for Him, He is now fully invested with the office of our High Priest; and, having received all power in heaven and in earth, He is able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. His intercession is founded *on* the perfection of His one offering, to which His Father hath set His seal, by raising Him from the dead and giving Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God.

V. 11.—For both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one: for which came he is not ashamed to call them brethren.

For both he that sanctifieth and them that are sanctified.—Christ says: "And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also may be sanctified through the truth." John 17:19. Israel were sanctified, or set apart, as God's peculiar people, by the blood of the Sinai covenant, which could not take away sin, but only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh. Christ sanctified His people with His own blood, Heb. 13:12, which cleanseth them from all sin.

Of one.—Some explain this *of one Father*; others, *of one nature*; but it is evidently *of one family*. Christ is the seed of the woman; and all believers, in common with the rest of mankind, are born of a woman. It has been already observed, that, immediately after the fall, mankind were divided into two families, —the seed of the woman and the seed of the serpent. Christ was eminently the seed of the woman, the head of the family, and all His people are His brethren.

He is eminently the Son of the Father, 2 John 3; and, as the sanctifier and the sanctified are all of one family, He acknowledges them as His brethren, Mark 3:34; Luke 8:21; John 20:17; and, in virtue of their union with Him, they are called the sons of God, 1 John 3:1.

Sanctification means separation. Christ, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Heb. 13:12.

This is the blood of sprinkling of which the Apostle speaks. Heb. 12:24. The blood of the old covenant was sprinkled on the bodies of the children of Israel at Sinai, and thus they became externally holy. The blood of Christ is sprinkled upon the consciences of all His people, and gives them confidence in coming to God. The firstborn of the family received the Spirit without measure, and through Him it is communicated to the whole family. " But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, to redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons. And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father. Wherefore thou art no more a servant, but a son; and if a son, then an heir of God through Christ." Gal. 4:4-7.

For which cause; that is, because they belong to the same family, Christ is not ashamed to call them brethren.

V. 12.—Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee.

The Apostle here confirms his assertion by a quotation from Psalm 22:, which he applies to Christ. Indeed, it is evident that this Psalm is descriptive of the sufferings of Christ and of the glory which should follow. If it has any relation to David, it is very remote. In the passage quoted by the Apostle, Christ expressly calls His people brethren. Through Him they are all adopted into God's family, and are even now the sons of God. 1 John iii. 2. This, like other mysteries of the kingdom of God, was represented in His dealings with Israel, concerning whom He says,— "Israel is my son, even my firstborn," Exod. 4:22, in reference to which the Apostle writes,— "To whom pertaineth the adoption." Rom. 9:4.

God promised to Abraham a numerous posterity, to be a God to Him and to his seed after Him, and to give them the land of Canaan. These promises were all limited to that branch of the family from which Christ was to spring; for one great object which God had in view, was to manifest His faithfulness in the promise, that all the families of the earth should be blessed in the seed of Abraham. It was therefore necessary that this family should be kept distinct; and therefore was the middle- wall of partition set up between it and all other families.

Isaac, as being the progenitor of Christ, was the child of promise, Gal. 4:23; and for the same reason Jacob was beloved and Esau hated, Abraham had seven sons besides Isaac, but they had no part in the covenant. The Apostle teaches us that the promise, "I will be a God to thee and to thy seed," does not refer to Abraham's posterity in general, but to *one* of his descendants, namely, Christ. Gal. 3:16.

Now, the Jewish dispensation was a model of the kingdom of God; and, as only they that are Christ's are Abraham's seed and heirs according to the promise, Gal. 3:29, so the first covenant was exclusively made with that branch of the family from which Christ was to spring. That family alone, of all the families of the earth, was acknowledged of God as His people. He dwelt among them. He showed His Word unto Jacob, His statutes and His judgments unto Israel, while He suffered all the other families of the earth to walk in their own ways. The carnal relation of Israel to Christ was a shadow of the spiritual relation of the true Israel to their glorious Head; and the carnal blessings in earthly places, with which Israel after the flesh was blessed, were a figure for the time then present of the spiritual blessings bestowed on the true Israel. When our Lord was informed that His mother and His brethren stood without desiring to speak with Him, He replied,— "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?" He knew, or acknowledged no man after the flesh; but "stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!

For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother."

Matt. 12:49, 50. Hence we learn, that those whom Christ is not ashamed to call brethren are the members of His Church. The children of the new covenant, who are all taught of God, have all heard and learned of the Father; are delivered from the power of darkness, and translated into the kingdom of His dear Son. These alone are the brethren of Christ whom He is not ashamed to acknowledge.

Thy name.—The name of God is the expression of his character. One man is distinguished from another by his name. Jesus declared the name of God to His brethren, John 17:26, by manifesting His own character. God proclaimed His name before Moses. Exod. 33:19. He was alone, no man was to be seen throughout the mount, Exod. 34:3; and when he came down, Moses wist not that the skin of his face shone, so that Aaron and the children of Israel were afraid to come nigh him. Exod. 34:30. This transaction is explained by the Apostle, when he says,— " We all, with open face," or, perhaps rather, in an unveiled face, " beholding as in a glass the glory of the Lord, are changed into the same image from glory to glory, even as by the Spirit of the Lord." 2 Cor. 3:18. A view of God's character has a transforming influence. Here we see through a glass darkly; but hereafter we shall see Him as He is, and shall be satisfied when we awake with His likeness. Psalm 17:15. 1 John 3:2.

In the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee.—Jesus sang praises to God in the midst of the great assembly in the temple, which was typical of the Church. He is still present in the Churches of the saints; and through His brethren, and in the midst of them, He still praises His Father.

V. 13.—And again, I will put mg trust in him. And again, Behold I and the children which God hath given me.

And again, I will put my trust in Him.— There are several passages of Scripture in which this expression occurs, Psal. 18:2; 2 Sam. 22:3; and in Isa. 8:17 the same sense, with a slight variation, is expressed; to whatever passage the reference is made, the sense in the argument is the same. We have here a decisive proof of Christ being made like unto His brethren.

In the preceding verse he had been represented as saying, “I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the Church will I sing praise unto thee;” thus acknowledging them as His brethren, and His Church, which, we are elsewhere taught, is His body,

1 Cor. 12:27; Eph. 1:23; like the human body it is one, although composed of many members. The next quotation is either from Psalm 18:2, or Isaiah 8:17. In the Psalm the words are the same with those used by the Apostle, and in Isaiah the sense exactly corresponds. That the eighteenth Psalm is a prediction of the humiliation and exaltation of the Lord Jesus is manifest. With his dying breath the Lord Jesus cried, “Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit;” and the cry came into His ears. The earthquake which accompanied His resurrection, and His being drawn out of many waters, are then described, Psalm 18:7, 16, 17, together with the punishment which He inflicted on His enemies, ver. 37, and His being made the head of the heathen, ver. 43. Now the quotation, “I will put my trust in Him,” ver. 2; or, “I will wait upon the Lord, and I will look for him,” Isaiah 8:17, proves the unity of Christ and his people. He has left us a perfect example of confidence in God. This is plainly exhibited in innumerable passages of the Book of Psalms, which may be viewed as our Lord’s diary, describing His manifold sorrows and afflictions, and His triumph over all His enemies.

The Apostle adds another quotation, cited from Isaiah 8:18. In the preceding chapter God had given Ahaz, the idolatrous King of Judah, as a sign of the stability of the kingdom of Judah, viz., the birth of the virgin’s Son, namely, Immanuel, Isa. 7:14; Matt. 1:22,

23, at the same time informing him (Isaiah) that before his son Shear-jashub (whom he had been directed to take with him to meet Ahaz) should know to refuse the evil and choose the good, Syria and Israel should be forsaken of both her kings. Ahaz was warned at the same time of the judgments which should come upon him, although not from the quarter he dreaded. The birth of another son to the prophet, which he had predicted, is then recorded, chap. 8:1; and he is informed that, before the child was able to speak, the spoil of Damascus and Samaria should be taken away by the King of Assyria. Judah, however, is reminded that they should not escape the same scourge. They are, however, encouraged to trust in God,—to fear Him; and it is predicted that Christ should be the sanctuary of his people, but a stumbling-stone and rock of offence to both houses of Israel.

This passage is frequently applied in the New Testament to Christ. The prophecy is, no doubt, obscure; but Shear-jashub and Maher-shalal-hash-baz, the sons of the prophet, were for signs and wonders in Israel from the Lord of Hosts; and as Isaiah and all the other prophets were types of Christ, the great Prophet so long predicted, he and his children were for signs and wonders.

The Apostle does not finish the quotation; what remains was not to his purpose. He intended to prove that Christ and His people were all of one family; and this is established by His first acknowledging them as His brethren, and declaring that in the midst of the great congregation He will lead their praises, and then representing them as His children, who, along with their glorious Head, shall be God's witnesses to the ends of the earth. Acts 1:8; Rev. 1:5.

V. 14, 15.—Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage.

Having shown that Christ and His people were all of one family—that they were represented as His brethren and His children—the Apostle goes on to prove the incarnation of Christ as essential to perfect the unity which was to subsist between them. The children were partakers of flesh and blood, and he, therefore, took part of the same. As the Captain of their salvation it behoved Him to be made perfect through sufferings. As the great High Priest of His people it was of necessity that He should have somewhat to offer. Chap. 8:3.

God had declared that He had no pleasure in the burnt-offerings and sacrifices enjoined by the law, Heb. 10:6; but He prepared a body for the incarnation of Jesus, who came to do His will by offering up Himself. The children whom God had given Him were partakers of flesh and blood, and He also Himself likewise took part of the same, that He might through death destroy Him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.

Satan had introduced death, and Christ came that He might despoil Him of His usurped dominion; that He might bruise Him under the feet of His people; and by magnifying the law which they had broken and offering a full atonement for their sins, He might deliver them who were all their lifetime subject to bondage, and give them the answer of a good conscience through His resurrection.

Men are said to be, through fear of death, all their lifetime subject to bondage. This fear is natural to us. Children from their earliest age show their apprehension of danger.

Indeed, since the fall it is necessary to our preservation. Man in innocence had no apprehension of danger; satisfied with favor and full with the blessing of the Lord,—all animals subject to him,—not liable to pain,—what should he fear? But fear, the inseparable companion of guilt, effected a lodgment in the heart of Adam the moment he sinned, which is conveyed to all his posterity. The mind recoils from death; but in the atonement for sin, offered upon the cross, Christ has given His people the victory. They

look to the empty grave of Jesus, and there they see the pledge of their resurrection. "This," says the Apostle, "is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith;" and here he describes the victory of believers over the god of this world — thus are his plans defeated. His success issued in his destruction. Perhaps he imagined that the death of the Son of God secured the permanence of his dominion; but Christ being crucified in weakness, was the means of the utter subversion of his usurped power.

Now, Christ's people are enabled to say,— "It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? it is Christ that died; yea, rather, that is risen again, who also liveth to make intercession for us." He committed His spirit to God when about to quit His body; and God showed Him the path of life, and set Him as the first of many brethren at His own right-hand, where there are pleasures for evermore. He has received power over all flesh, that He might give eternal life to as many as His Father had given Him; in other words, to all who by faith should enter His family—thus proving themselves vessels of mercy.

V. 16.—For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham,

Angels as well as men had fallen, but Christ took not hold [In our version "the nature of" is supplied, but it is unnecessary and improper; both angels and men had fallen into a fearful pit He who is mighty to save passed by the former and took hold of the latter; not, indeed, of all the natural seed of Adam, but of the seed of Abraham, as the father and representative of all the faithful.] of angels, they are reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day; but the Lord hath showed light to the seed of Abraham. It has arisen from the sacrifice being bound to the horns of the altar, from the atonement of Jesus Christ. He took not hold of angels, but of the seed of Abraham. Why is there this limitation? Why is it said the seed of Abraham instead of the seed of Adam? Because He took part in flesh and blood only for the sake of the heirs of salvation, the children whom God had giv-

en Him, whom He is not ashamed to call brethren. Others, it is true, were also partakers of flesh and blood, but He never knew them. They belong to another family. He calls them not brethren. Abraham was chosen that in his seed a multitude, whom no man should be able to number, might be eternally blessed. The Savior sprang from Abraham; and in God's dealings with Abraham's descendants he exhibited a pattern of His dealings with his spiritual children, with those who are of faith, who are blessed with faithful Abraham. Israel after the flesh were redeemed from bondage, were taken into covenant, guided through the wilderness, fed with the emblem of the body of Christ, made to drink from the smitten rock, which the Apostle tells us was Christ, 1 Cor. 10:6, and were brought to the promised land flowing with milk and honey. And thus God's love and care of the true Israel, who are Christ's and heirs according to the promise, Gal. 3:29, were strikingly exhibited. The whole plan of salvation is embodied in the history of the descendants of Abraham. Every doctrine of the Gospel is exhibited in God's dealings with them. God's chosen Israel sprang from an idolater; they were a perverse and crooked generation. They were separated from all other nations by the blood of their covenant;

God's Spirit remained among them. He chastened them as a man chasteneth his son; and, at length, wrath came upon them to the uttermost, and God cast them off. But they have not stumbled that they should fall; they shall be restored to the favor of God, and serve Him in the land He gave to their fathers. Such is the parable.

The interpretation of it is God's unchanging love to the true Israel, whom He hath loved with an everlasting love, and with loving-kindness hath drawn unto Himself; whom He guides by His counsel, and will afterwards receive to glory.

The wisdom of God is apparent in representing spiritual and eternal things in types and figures, thus bringing the truth down to our capacity. By the folly of mankind this has been the grand

means of corrupting the Gospel and carnalizing the doctrine of Christ. The spiritual ordinances of the New Testament have been changed into a system of external observances, which give an utterly fallacious view of the character of the religion of Christ.

V. 17.— Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

Having taken hold of the seed of Abraham, it behoved Him to be in all things made like unto his brethren, in order that He might be a merciful and faithful high priest. Brethren are of the same family, their hearts are fashioned alike, Psalm 33:15; and in order to Christ being a merciful and faithful high priest, He must in all things be made like unto His brethren, and thus it was with our Lord Jesus Christ. He not only, as the Apostle had already stated, took part with them in flesh and blood, Heb. 2:14, but was touched with a feeling of our infirmities, and was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Chap. 4:15. The prince of this world came to Him in all his malignity and in all his power. He attempted to prevail over Him through hunger, to which He was subject in common with His brethren; he held out to Him the prospect of admiration; he proposed to Him the sovereignty of the world, but by the Word of God's lips He kept Himself from the paths of the destroyer. Psalm 17:4. He not only baffled the adversary, but, in doing so, He taught His people how they might successfully resist the devil by opposing truth to falsehood. But he was also to make reconciliation for the sins of the people,—that is, to expiate the sins of the people; and this could only be done by the sacrifice of Himself. The sin-offering under the law must be perfect to be accepted. Now, Jesus was holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners; he was a lamb without spot or blemish, under the law, which was the figure of good things to come—without shedding of blood there was no remission. Now, Christ reconciled His Church unto God by His own blood. The word "reconcile," in Scripture, means "to make atonement." Lev. 6:30;

16:20; 8:15. 2 Chron. 29:24. Ezek. 45:15. Daniel 9:24. Rom. 5:10. 2 Cor. 5:19. Now, Christ, by the sacrifice of Himself, made reconciliation, or atonement, for the sins of His people; they are all covered by His blood, and, when sought for, shall not be found.

V. 18.—For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.

Chap. 5:2. Now though Christ had no sin, yet, as we have seen, He was in all things tempted as we are. He was truly man, and therefore had all those inclinations and dispositions which His brethren have, although in entire subjection to the will of His heavenly Father.

Chap. 4:15. As God, He knew all things, all our pains and sorrows; but by assuming our nature, by being tempted like as we are, yet without sin, He has become a merciful and faithful High Priest.

In God being manifested in the flesh, we have an exhibition of the full restoration of man to the favor of God, and learn how we may pour out our hearts before that sympathizing One who knoweth our frame, and remembereth we are dust, and how we can thus put our case into the hands of Him who, although perfect and almighty, yet experienced the temptations to which we are subject, and triumphed over them all, when He put His foot on the neck of our adversary, in proof of that complete victory which He achieved, and in which all His people shall participate.

When entering on His last conflict, He said to His persecutors, "This is your hour, and the power of darkness." His soul was exceeding sorrowful, even unto death. He met with no sympathy, even from his chosen disciples; they were overcome with sleep. His agony is described in Psa. 88:13-18: "But unto thee have I cried, O Lord; and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. Lord, why casteth thou off my soul? why hidest thou thy face from me? I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up: while I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me; thy terrors have cut me off. They came round about me daily

like water; they compassed me about together. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." At length He exclaimed, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!" proving that He was tasting all the bitterness of death, that He felt the sword of justice entering His soul; but still His confidence in His Father's love was unshaken; with His dying breath He exclaimed, "Father, into thy hands I commit my spirit;" and, at its departure, Satan fell as lightning from heaven. His power was broken, whilst the resurrection and exaltation of Immanuel to the throne of the universe, as the supreme Judge of men and angels, showed the magnitude of the work which He had accomplished, and the perfection of that sacrifice which had finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness. Truly His glory is great in having accomplished this salvation. Honor and majesty are laid upon Him; and, because He humbled Himself, took on Him the form of a servant, and became obedient unto death, God hath highly exalted Him, and given Him a name that is above every name; "that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; and that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father." Phil. 2:10, 11.

Chapter Three

V. 1.— Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.

From the considerations which he had suggested, the Apostle urges the Hebrews to fix their attention upon Christ Jesus, under the character of the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. The considerations alluded to are His superiority not only to the prophets but also to the angels, inasmuch as He was “over all, God blessed for ever.” Rom. 9:5. By Him the Gospel was first promulgated. He ruled the new dispensation in the character of the Son of man, having been for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor.

He was not the Savior of angels, but of sinners, of mankind, with whom He united Himself in the closest bonds, becoming a member of the human family, taking part with them in flesh and blood, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death, that is, the devil, and thus free His brethren from the tyranny of the king of terrors. This unity with His brethren was necessary in order to His being a merciful and faithful High Priest, able to make atonement for their transgressions, and to make intercession for them, through His perfect atonement, which magnifies and makes honorable the law of God. Being Himself a man of sorrows and acquainted with griefs, He was also well qualified to sympathize with His afflicted people.

He addresses them as holy brethren; he had represented them as sanctified, chap. 2:11; as separated from the rest of mankind by their union with Christ, who took part in flesh and blood with the children whom God had given Him. Believers are represented as sanctified by the blood of Christ, chap. 13:12, as Israel was sanctified or set apart as God’s peculiar people by the blood of the Sinai covenant. There was, however, an essential difference: the latter was the blood of bulls and goats, and could never take away sin;

the former was the blood of Immanuel, which cleanseth those for whom it was shed from all sin. Believers are also represented as sanctified by the Holy Spirit, of which they are all made partakers, 1 Pet. 1:2; 2 Thess. 2:13; and as sanctified through the truth, John 17:17. In one sense they are at once all equally and completely sanctified, they are all washed in the blood of Christ, all partakers of His Spirit, and all are of the truth which dwelleth in them, which they have of God. Hence Christ is said not only to be made of God unto them righteousness, but sanctification. Every believer, from the first moment of his new life in Christ, has thus the germ of perfect holiness, although sanctification is also represented as a growth in holiness, and advancement in conformity to God, 1 Thes. 4:3, 4; 5:23.

Believers are called to follow after holiness, Heb. 12:14; to mortify their members which are upon the earth, engrossed with earthly objects, Col. 3:15; and we are assured that all shall be judged according to their works, Rev. 20:12; Gal. 6:7, 8; 2 Cor. 5:10. So that, while all boasting is excluded, Christ's doctrine is manifestly according to godliness.

They are also represented as partakers of the heavenly calling. The privileges of the Sinai covenant were peculiar to Israel, Amos 3:2; but the Gentiles were fellow-heirs, Eph. 3:6; and therefore the Hebrew believers are described as partakers of the heavenly calling. It was not exclusively directed to them. In giving of the law God spoke on earth, but He now speaketh from heaven. Heb. 12:25. Believers are frequently described as called, Rom. 8:28; 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:24; and here described as partakers of the heavenly calling, for it is a call to His kingdom and glory, 1 Thess. 2:12.

They are exhorted to consider Jesus Christ under the character of the Apostle and High Priest of our profession. Christ is eminently the sent of God. John 6:29, 40; 17:18. Hence He is termed the Apostle of our profession, and is thus contrasted with Moses, whom God sent to deliver Israel. Exod. 3:10. While Moses was in an eminent degree the Apostle of God to Israel, Aaron was the

High Priest; but both these high offices were united in Christ, and the Hebrews are here exhorted to consider the Lord Jesus as uniting the offices both of an Apostle and a Priest.

V. 2.— Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

The Apostle was far from intending by the contrast to lower the character of Moses; on the contrary, he quotes the most honorable testimony borne to him in the Scripture, that he was faithful in all his house. He was not only the lawgiver of Israel, but the laws were executed under his direction; such was the confidence with which the God of Israel was pleased to treat his illustrious servant. Aaron and his sister Miriam spoke slightly of Moses, specially condemning his marriage with a woman who was not of the daughters of Israel. It is to be observed that this marriage was solemnized before the middle wall of partition was set up between Israel and other nations; and probably it was a prophetic intimation of the Gentiles by union with Christ being admitted into the Church of God.

From the extraordinary meekness of Moses, which is mentioned in connexion with their speaking against him, it is probable that he was disposed to pass over their presumption; but the Lord was pleased at once to rebuke any appearance of rivalry. He suddenly commanded them to stand before the tabernacle, and, coming down in the pillar of the cloud, informed them that He would communicate His will to the prophets by a vision or a dream. Not so with His servant Moses; with him He would speak mouth to mouth, and that he should even behold the similitude of the Lord. Probably there is here a reference to the manifestation made to Moses on the occasion of the molten calf. Exod. 33:11, 21, 23. When this took place, no man was to be with him, nor was any to be seen throughout the mount. In the close of Deuteronomy we are informed that there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face. Deut. 34:10. He was

the only lawgiver in Israel; but at length a prophet was raised up unto him of their brethren, like unto Moses. Deut. 16:15.

V. 3.—For this man was counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as he who hath builded the house hath more honor than the house.

The Apostle, in contrasting the old and new dispensations, while he admits the glory of the old, observes that it had no glory in comparison of the new, 2 Cor. 3:10; and here he illustrates the inferiority of Moses, as constituting a part of that house in the government of which he celebrates his faithfulness. Now a house may be very glorious, but it is evident that the builder has more honor than the house. It owes its magnificence to his skill.

V. 4.—For every house is builded by some man: but he that built all things is God.

Every house is builded by some man; it owes its existence to the skill of the architect; while God is the great architect of the universe, and the greater the glory of creation the greater the glory of the Creator. Perhaps there is here a reference to chap. 1:8, and 10:12, in order to establish more fully the glory of the Son of God, as being the Creator and Proprietor of the house over which He presided. This is confirmed by Psalm 115:5, 6. He is the great Shepherd, who feeds and nourishes His sheep.

V. 5.—And Moses verily was faithful in all his house, as a servant, for a testimony of those things which were to be spoken after.

And according to the testimony which he had quoted, Moses was faithful in all his house, “as a servant,” as had been specifically noticed in the testimony borne to his faithfulness.

“My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house.” Numb. 12:7. But the house in which Moses was “a faithful and wise servant” was erected for the purpose of bearing testimony to those things which were afterwards to be spoken. “For the law

made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God." Chap. 7:19. It was a scaffolding for the erection of a building.

The Jewish dispensation was a "shadow of good things to come," of the spiritual kingdom which God was afterwards to establish. "the law and the prophets," says Jesus, "were until John: since that time the kingdom of God is preached, and every man presseth into it." Luke 16:16. "For had ye believed Moses, ye would have believed me: for he wrote of me." John 5:46. Moses and the Apostle taught precisely the same thing; only Moses taught with a vail on his face, and the Apostle used great plainness of speech.

V. 6.—But Christ as a son over his own house; whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end.

While Moses was faithful as a servant in the house of God, Christ was faithful as a Son over His own house. It was erected by His power. He is heir of all things, Col. 1:16; Heb. 1:2; He is Lord of all. Acts 10:36. "The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into His hand." John 3:35. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John 5:22. All things, without exception, are put under Him, chap. 2:8, whose house are we.

The house over which He rules is a spiritual house, composed of living stones, built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, He Himself being the chief corner-stone. Christ is the fountain of life to all His people, and this life is communicated through faith; in other words, by resting on Him, as the stones of a building rest on the foundation.

The loadstone communicates its properties to iron; had it pleased God, it might have done so to stone; and we might conceive of a loadstone so powerful as to impart its qualities to every stone in the building erected upon it.

The supposition is realized in the house of God; it rests upon Christ; and, by faith, Christ dwells in every heart. "Now," says one Apostle, " we are His house, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end."

Faith, or confidence, and hope are inseparably connected, and, indeed, may be used interchangeably. Believers are " begotten again to a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead," 1 Pet. 1:3; and this hope is founded on the immutable promise of God, confirmed by His oath. Heb. 6:17, 18.

" This is the promise that He hath promised us (believers), even eternal life." 1 John 2:25. "This is the record, that God hath given to us eternal life, and this life is in His Son." 1 John 5:11. Now the Apostle says, " Whose house are we, if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm unto the end." As when a stone ceases to rest on the foundation, it is no longer a part of the building; so, if a man abide not in Christ, he is no longer of the house of God. " The just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition, but of them that believe to the saving of the soul." Heb. 10:38, 39.

V. 7.— Wherefore (as the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice.

Wherefore.—From the consideration of the privileges connected with keeping the faith, the Apostle delivers a very solemn exhortation, in a quotation from Psalm 95: In order more powerfully to enforce it upon the minds of the Hebrews, he describes it as the saying of the Holy Ghost.

We have here a conclusive proof of the plenary or verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. The words referred to are represented as spoken by the Holy Ghost, which exactly corresponds with what the Apostle says:—"Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth." 1 Cor. 2:13. The Psalm referred to was written by Da-

vid, Heb. 4:7; but "the Spirit of the Lord spake by him, and his word was in his tongue." 2 Sam. 23:2. To this also our Lord testifies, in the question which He asked the Pharisees, how David called Messiah Lord. David might have spoken erroneously; but David, in or by the Spirit, called Him Lord. He is the Spirit of truth, and therefore must here, as on every other occasion, have spoken truth.

The words of the Holy Ghost, to which the Apostle directs the attention of the Hebrews, are, "*Today if ye will hear His voice.*" In the Psalm there is a reference to Israel's rebellion in the wilderness. The account of their journey is calculated to be very useful to those who profess the faith of Jesus, and is therefore repeatedly referred to in the New Testament. 1 Cor. 10: Jude, in foretelling the departure from the faith which should take place, puts those whom he addressed in remembrance "how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that believed not." Jude 5. They are described as having tempted the Lord ten times, and not hearkened to His voice. Num. 14:22. But, after they had got possession of the land, they are warned "today" to listen to the voice of God, which evidently implies that their entrance into Canaan did not supersede the necessity of the exhortation. We are taught that Israel's provocations and punishment are recorded for our admonition, on whom the ends of the world are come. 1 Cor. 10:11.

V. 8.—Harden not your hearts, as in the provocation, in the day of temptation in the wilderness.

Men not listening to the voice of God proceeds from the hardness of their hearts, which, as appears from the conduct of the Israelites, will too frequently neither be melted by kindness nor subdued by suffering. Israel's conduct in the wilderness was a tissue of provocations. The object which God had in view in all His dealings with them was to humble them and to prove them, and to know what was in their hearts, whether they would keep his commandments or no. Deut. 8:3. Now the Apostle warns the He-

brew believers by their example not to harden their hearts and provoke God, as their fathers had done in the wilderness, in the day of temptation.

V. 9.— When your fathers tempted me, proved me, and saw my works forty years.

We have seen that God's object in his dealings with Israel was to prove them, and bring out the hidden evil of their heart; but we are warned against tempting the Lord. Israel had many proofs of the long-suffering of God; but, instead of its leading them to repentance, it emboldened them in sin. Presuming upon His long-suffering, they seemed to be trying how far it would extend. Now we are particularly cautioned against tempting the Lord. We are to cherish the most entire conviction of His perfection, and to place the most unlimited confidence in Him, which necessarily implies our being guided in all things by His wisdom. The day of temptation may refer to the whole period of their sojourning in the wilderness. During that period God was proving them, bringing out what was in their heart, while by their rebellion they constantly provoked Him.

V. 10.— Wherefore I was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart; and they have not known my ways.

Here we have the result of Israel's provocations and temptations of God. He "was grieved with that generation, and said, They do always err in their heart, and have not known my ways." They were so blinded by their love of sin, that they always erred in heart, and refused to be guided by Him. It is the character of the wicked that they know not God; and such was the case with the generation whose carcasses fell in the wilderness.

V. 11.—So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest.)

So I swear in my wrath...—In consequence of which, God swore in His wrath that they should not enter into His rest. We have a full account of what God said on this occasion, Num. 14:28-35. The expression here is elliptical, “If they shall enter into my rest.”

Our translators have given the meaning correctly. It is an oath; God swears by Himself. “I am not God if they shall enter into my rest.”

V. 12.—Take heed, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Upon the quotation which the Apostle had made from Psalm 95:, he founds an exhortation against there being in any of the believing Hebrews an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God. Israel were excluded from Canaan by unbelief. They had the promise of God on which to rely; but, on hearing the report of the spies, respecting the fortified cities, and the prowess of the Canaanites, they determined to make a captain and return to Egypt.

There could not, therefore, have been a more suitable foundation for the exhortation against an evil heart of unbelief. The fears and apprehensions of Israel led them to disregard the promises of God, and to determine to act in direct opposition to their deliverer. The believing Hebrews stood by faith, and, if they let slip the truth, must necessarily fall.

V. 13.—But exhort one another daily, while it is called Today; lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin.

They were not only each to mind his own things, but every man also the things of others. The Lord has commanded his people to associate together, that they may support and strengthen each other. Eccl. 4:9, 10. They are not only individually to beware of an evil heart of unbelief, but to exhort one another; to be aware of the dangers to which they are exposed, and to watch over one another in love, and daily to exhort each other, lest they should be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. Satan first entered

the hearts of our first parents in the form of a lie, and he insinuated it in the most ensnaring manner. He at first questioned whether our first parents had rightly understood what God said. "Yea, hath God said?" as if he said, It cannot be; surely God could not lay you under this restraint. Had Eve spurned the insinuation—had she rested on the glorious perfections of the Divine character—had she considered that it was her honor and happiness to be implicitly guided by her Creator in all things, Satan would have been baffled, and would have fled from her, James 4:7; but she chose to argue the matter, to explain to the tempter the liberty bestowed on them to eat of the trees of the garden with one exception. This emboldened Satan directly to contradict the Almighty, and to assure the woman that, instead of dying, they should become as gods. Thus was Eve hardened through the deceitfulness of sin; the tempter, by his subtlety, led her not only to expect impunity, but an increase of rank and happiness; and thus, by the hope of impunity, and the prospect of enjoyment, are men in every age hardened by those lusts which are gendered by the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of the heart of fallen man. There is but one safeguard, to which we have already alluded:—"Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer." Psalm 17:4.

V. 14.—For we are made partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast unto the end.

The Christian life is compared to a race, a warfare, in which we are exhorted to strenuous exertion, while we habitually recollect that in the Lord alone we have righteousness and strength, and that, while we are called to work out our own salvation with fear and trembling, it is God who worketh in us to will and to do of His good pleasure. We are apt to err, either by trusting in our own heart, which is a sure proof of folly, or to think that we are something, and that, by our resolutions and exertions, we are able to overcome. But, in either case, we are hardened through the deceitfulness of sin, not holding the beginning of our confidence firm unto the end. Faith worketh by love; it overcometh the world

and its snares. Hence this verse is connected with the preceding by the particle "for," reminding us how prone we are to let slip the truth.

This verse is exactly similar to Heb. 2:6; in the former the Apostle says,—“Whose house are we;” in the verse before us,—“We are made partakers of Christ”—of those benefits which He bestows on His people, by their dwelling in Him and He in them, communicating to them of His fulness, leading them by His counsel, and afterwards receiving them to His glory. If we are Christ’s house He dwells in us, and thus we are made partakers of Christ; so that the two verses express the same idea, while, by the variation of the expression, our views of the mutual relationship of Christ and His people are more fully exhibited.

The pronoun *our* is not in the original; it is simply the beginning of the confidence exactly corresponding with holding fast the confidence. We may notice that the word rendered "confidence," both in vers. 6 and 14, are not the same in ver. 14; it is the same word rendered "confidence in." "The *confidence* of things hoped for." The word, in ver. 6, signifies boldness; openness, 2 Cor. 7:4. It is connected with the rejoicing of hope. A bold avowal of the truth exposed the disciples to persecution; but this is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith. 1 John 5:4.

When the Apostles were commanded by the Jewish rulers not to speak or teach in the name of Jesus, they replied, "for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard;" and when they had been beaten for not complying with the commandment to hold their peace, "they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name." Acts 5:41. Here we have an illustration of the boldness, or confidence, and the rejoicing of the hope enjoined by the Apostle. Believers are begotten to a lively hope, but there are stony-ground hearers, who for a time appear to believe, and the Scriptures frequently speak of things according to their appear-

ance; but he that endureth to the end shall be saved. In due season we shall reap if we faint not.

V. 15.—While it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts, as in the provocation.

The Apostle here recurs to the quotation already made from Psalm 95:, which demonstrates that the word of the Lord endureth for ever, and that its warnings and exhortations are applicable to every age; for the Psalmist says to the men of his generation, “Today, if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts as in the provocation,”—referring to a transaction which took place hundreds of years before.

V. 16.—For some, when they had heard, did provoke: howbeit not all that came out of Egypt by Moses.

Some of the children of Israel, who had not only heard the commandments and promises of God delivered by Moses, but had heard the voice of God at Sinai, provoked him by their disobedience, although not all that came out of Egypt under the guidance of Moses; for, not only Caleb and Joshua, but all the tribe of Levi, all under twenty years of age, and, probably, many of the women, from not being numbered, were not excluded from Canaan. Numb. 14:29.

This illustrates the Apostle’s doctrine, that there was a remnant according to the election of grace. Thus it was in the days of Elijah, in the days of Malachi (chap. 3:16, 17), and also in the days of Paul. Rom. 11:4-5.

V. 17.—But with whom was he grieved forty years? was it not with them that had sinned, whose carcasses fell in the wilderness?

With whom was God displeased during forty years? was it not with them whose carcasses fell in the wilderness? Num. 26:63-65.

V. 18.—And to whom aware he that they should not enter into his rest, but to them that believed not?

And to whom did He swear that they should not enter into His rest, but to them that believed not. Numb. 14:11. All the rebellions of Israel sprang from unbelief. Their making the calf, their murmuring against God and against his servant Moses, and their refusing to enter Canaan, all proceeded from unbelief.

V. 19.—So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

Thus we see that they could not enter the promised land because of unbelief. Faith in God was essentially necessary to their expelling the Canaanites, who were by far more warlike than themselves. They indeed quitted Egypt under the assurance that they should inherit Canaan; they followed the leader whom God had appointed through the sea, but they were at this period escaping from the house of bondage, where their lives had been embittered by oppression; besides, Pharaoh's army was behind them, and to stop was certain destruction. Such were the motives by which they were induced to enter the path through the mighty waters which God had opened for them. But their circumstances on the borders of Canaan were very different. They were, so to speak, naturalized in the wilderness; albeit there was neither earing nor harvest, all their wants were richly supplied. The spies had given a description of the warlike condition of the Canaanites; they represented it as certain destruction to invade the land, so that every natural principle forbade their making the attempt. There was a lion in the way; and thus it is that the conduct of men is often ascribed to their faith, when, in fact, they are walking by sight influenced by worldly motives, while they give themselves, and receive from others credit for being actuated by confidence in God. Such was the case with Israel at the Red Sea. There was, doubtless, a remnant whose dread of the sea was overcome by faith in God; but the great body of Israel were children in whom

there was no faith, while their conduct on some occasions appeared to result from this Divine principle.

Chapter Four

V. 1.—Let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of you should seem to come short of it.

The fear of God is often put for the whole of religion. Prov. 1:7. There are two kinds of fear; one is strongly inculcated on believers, and is necessarily produced by just views of the glorious majesty of God. "Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; and let him be your fear, let him be your dread." Isa. 8:13. It is opposed to hardening the heart. "Happy is the man that feareth always: but he that hardeneth his heart shall fall into mischief." Prov. 28:14. The other is condemned and represented as a characteristic of the wicked. The slothful servant feared his master, because he viewed him as an austere man. Luke 19:21. The fearful are classed with the unbelieving. Rev. 21:8. David on one occasion, under the influence of fear, abandoned his purpose of bringing up the ark. 1 Chron. 13:12.

Here the Hebrews are enjoined to take warning from the example of their ancestors, and to beware lest, a promise of entering into rest being left on record, any of them should seem to come short of it. Our translators have inserted "us" as a supplement, but it seems improper, as will be hereafter noticed.

The Apostle had directed the attention of the Hebrews to their forefathers, who were excluded from Canaan through unbelief, and now he proceeds to make a more particular application of this circumstance.

Let us therefore fear. Fear is used both in a good and a bad sense in the Word of God. The Lord promises to put His fear into His people's hearts, that they may not depart from Him. The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Believers inhabit a world in rebellion against God, their hearts are deceitful above all things and desperately wicked; they are surrounded with temptation, and they have no strength to resist their numerous foes. The smallest

temptation is sufficient to overcome them, and their only security is confidence in God. In this confidence there are two essential ingredients—a sense of our own weakness, and of the power and goodness of God. If destitute of a sense of weakness, we trust in ourselves; and the Scripture tells us, "He who trusteth in his own heart is a fool." If we trust in God, except as sinners saved by grace, we trust in a lie. In Christ alone God is revealed as just, and the justifier of those who believe. Mercy flows in no other channel than through the atonement of Christ. By this the law was magnified and made honorable. He appeared as the substitute of His people and bore their sins in His own body upon the tree. With His dying breath He proclaimed that the work of expiation was finished, and the Father re-echoed the declaration from the bounds of the everlasting hills by raising Him from the dead and placing in His hands the reins of universal dominion, and exalting Him at the right-hand of the throne of God a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel and the remission of sins.

They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick; and, unless we feel our own weakness, we shall not depend on Christ. The Scriptures contain many precious promises and many solemn warnings. By the promises we are encouraged to hope in God, by the warnings we are cautioned against those dangers with which we are surrounded.

Both ought to have an effect on our minds. The one exhibits Christ as a refuge from the storm—a hiding-place from the tempest; the other points out the dangers through which many have made shipwreck of faith and of a good conscience.

Our comfort and safety depend upon the due admixture of hope and fear. We read of those who feasted themselves without fear; and it is written, blessed is he that feareth always. The principle of fear is implanted in our constitution, without it our natural life could not be preserved; we might from principle avoid what is dangerous, but dangers arise where there is no time for reflection, and we shrink from them instinctively. The same principle is

applicable to the spiritual life. There is an instinctive fear implanted in the mind in the day of regeneration, which is as essential to our safety as the natural principle of fear is to the preservation of our life. In the fear of the Lord there is strong confidence. A sense of His glory and majesty, His purity and holiness, with our liability to fall into sin, necessarily produce circumspection and watchfulness, and lead to that fear which, so far from being opposed to the life of faith, are essential to its preservation.

It was well that the Israelites should be aware of the power of their enemies, but they lost sight of the power of God. He who had opened the sea for them to pass through, who had given them manna and water from the rock, who had guided them through the pathless wilderness in a pillar of cloud by day and fire by night, could easily have given them the victory; but they walked by sight, they looked at the Canaanites and refused to attack them. They had the promise of God pledged to their fathers Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, their own triumph over the Egyptians at the Red Sea to assure them of victory; but all the proofs of His power in the wilderness were forgotten, and they only thought of the prowess of the Canaanites, and, by refusing to enter the land, they came short of the promised rest.

God had said to Moses, "My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest;" but, notwithstanding, they came short of it, and never obtained that rest.

On this the apostolic exhortation is founded; Canaan was a shadow of the better country, and Israel after the flesh, at least that generation, could not enter because they believed not God, nor trusted in His salvation. This is an example for those who are travelling to the better country, the heavenly Canaan, which teaches them that although a promise is left that the people of God should inherit it, still all are to see to it that they do not even seem to come short of the rest presented to their view. The word *us* is inserted in our version improperly; a promise is left that certain persons shall enter into rest, and this promise must be ful-

filled, but it is not made in the Word of God to individuals any more than it was to that generation of the Israelites, with the exception of Caleb and Joshua, who came out of Egypt.

The Lord knoweth them that are his; they shall inherit the land, the elect shall obtain it; but we are exhorted to fear lest we should seem to come short of it, lest the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches should choke the word; lest believers, being led away by the error of the wicked, should fall from their own steadfastness. Blessed is the man who is so convinced of his proneness to depart from God that he is ever stirring up his soul and all that is within him to trust in God, knowing that safety is only to be found in Him.

The exhortation is similar to that of using diligence to make our calling and election sure, and of using diligence to the full assurance of hope to the end, proving that we are of the truth, and assuring our hearts before him. The Apostle is far from giving encouragement to that fear which hath torment, which is cast out by perfect love. Here we see the analogy to which we have referred between the natural and spiritual life. In our social intercourse or relations, we may be so convinced of the love of a fellow-creature that we have the fullest confidence in him, while in the same proportion we are afraid of doing anything that should offend him, or prevent him from bestowing on us any kindness which we expected from him. In short, if the natural fear implanted in our constitution be excessive, it will render our life very uncomfortable; so if, from defective views of the truth and not knowing the things which are freely given to us of God, our apprehension of our future state be painful, we shall be kept in bondage, destitute of the joy of the Lord, which is our strength. The Apostle, who tells the Hebrews to fear lest a promise being left of entering into rest any of them should seem to come short of it, teaches the Philippians to rejoice in the Lord always, and again He says, Rejoice.

V. 2.—For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it.

Literally, we were evangelized as well as they. That the Gospel was preached to the Hebrews was undoubted, but it was not so palpable that, it had been preached to their progenitors. Some render the passage, the same good tidings were preached to us as to them: namely, of entering into rest. In consequence of Israel's making the golden calf God threatened to forsake them; but, at the intercession of Moses, he promised them his presence, and that he would give them rest. Exod. 33:14. This promise was made to the nation of Israel, and to the nation it was fulfilled, although that generation fell in the wilderness; the promise was not made to any individual, but to Moses in the character of mediator and representative of Israel; consequently there was no breach of promise in that, the carcasses of those who had been numbered, fell in the wilderness. But all God's dealings with Israel were a parable for the time then present, a pattern of heavenly things. Hence we might rather have expected it to be said, unto them was the Gospel preached as well as unto us. There could be no question of the Gospel being preached to us, but although it was also declared to them it was only in types and shadows. The Apostle's assertion is, we were evangelized as well as they; the word evangelized denotes receiving good news of any kind, although it has long been appropriated to the glad tidings of salvation. The meaning here obviously is, the same good tidings are preached to us, which were formerly preached unto them, namely, of entering into rest. When God threatened to disinherit Israel the intercession of Moses prevailed, and he obtained the promise, " My presence shall go with thee, and I will give thee rest," Exod. 33:14.

This is the promise to which the Apostle refers, 5:1. It had been left, not to any individual, but to Moses in the character of mediator and intercessor, and by him made known to Israel. So it is with the Gospel, all the promises of which are yea and amen in Christ. Eternal life is the promise which God has given to believers. This is

the record that God hath given us eternal life, and this life is in his Son, and he who hath (the knowledge of) the Son hath life, and he who hath not the Son hath not life. But the word of hearing— the word which Israel heard—did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in the hearers. God brought his people to the borders of Canaan, and told them to go up and possess it, Deut. 1:20, 21; but having no confidence in the promise of the land which God had made them, in other words the promise not being mixed with faith, it did not profit them. A promise may be absolute altogether, independent of faith in the person to whom it is made; but such is not the promise of which the Apostle treats.

It was a promise which could only be fulfilled by Israel judging him faithful who had promised, and in this confidence disregarding all the power of the inhabitants of the land. Such is also the case with the promise of the heavenly country. It can only be fulfilled by our treading in the steps of the great Captain of our Salvation. He endured the cross despising the shame, and is now set down at the right hand of God, girded with universal power, to bestow eternal life on all who will receive it as the gift of God through Christ. Nothing therefore can be more appropriate than the illustration of the Apostle, of the people of God entering into rest through faith.

V. 3.—For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world.

For we who have believed do enter into rest; this is apparent from the oath already adverted to declaring that the unbelievers should not enter into his rest. We have already mentioned that chap. 3:11, which is rendered in our version “They shall not enter into my rest,” is in the original an elliptical expression, *if they shall enter into my rest*. Our translators would have done well to have retained the same rendering when the expression recurs, but they have here rendered it literally, *If they shall enter*, which introduces confusion.

The Apostle, however, was proving that Israel was excluded from God's rest; but it might be objected that they did enter into God's rest, for the work in which God was engaged as Creator was finished from the foundation of the world.

V. 4.—For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest the seventh day from all his works.

And God rested the seventh day from all his works. Hence the seventh day might be considered as God's rest, and as such was strictly enjoined on Israel; so that in one sense they did enter into God's rest.

V. 5.—And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest.

Yet God swore that they should not enter into his rest.

V. 6.—Seeing therefore it remaineth that some must enter therein, and they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief

God gave not his promise in vain; the promise implied that some must enter it, and they to whom it was first preached did not enter through unbelief, as had been proved. Chap. 3:19. In verse 6 the Apostle only states the premises without drawing the conclusion, which is not mentioned till verse 9, "there remaineth therefore a rest for the people of God." The reason of not drawing the conclusion was, that the Apostle intended to prove not only that the Sabbath was not the rest referred to by the Psalmist, but that the land of Canaan was not that rest. Had he drawn the conclusion at the end of verse 6 it would have been necessary to draw it a second time, and this did not suit the rapidity of his ideas. But the reader may draw it for himself,

V. 7.—Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today if ye will hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today, after so long a time; as it is said, Today... This abundantly proves that as the observance of the Sabbath was not the rest from which unbelievers were excluded by the oath, neither was the enjoyment of Canaan. For so long a time, after speaking by David, he says, to-day, after Israel had so long dwelt in Canaan, which not only excludes the seventh day, but also the land of Canaan, as the rest referred to,

V. 8.—For if Jesus had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day.

For if Joshua had given them rest, he would not afterward have spoken of another day, long after the rest had been obtained.

V. 9.—There remaineth therefore a rest to the people of God.

There remaineth... Here is the conclusion drawn from the premises laid down, which are that neither the Sabbath, on which God rested from all his works, nor the land of Canaan, where Israel ceased from their wanderings, was the rest spoken of by the Psalmist, for that was still future after Israel had possessed the land for so long a period.

We must observe that the Apostle here changes the word he had hitherto used and substitutes the word *Sabbatism*. The reason is, that God having rested on the seventh day and blessed and sanctified it, admitted man to a participation with him in his rest. This privilege he lost by his rebellion.

There is no reason to doubt that the Sabbath-day was observed by those who feared God from Adam to Moses, although this is not recorded until God separated for himself a peculiar people, and visibly placed a middle wall of partition between them and all other nations. He gave them his Sabbaths to be a sign between him and them.

The rest of mankind were toiling through the whole week for their daily food, but the return of the Sabbath on which Israel were

commanded to abstain from all servile work, reminded them of the restoration of fellowship between God and his people. The same instruction was given them in the rest from their journeying in the wilderness and possession of the land of Canaan, the rest into which they then entered was a shadow for the time then present; but there still remains a rest for the people of God, as is evident from the language of David, who, after so long a period, cautions the men of his generation against coming short of God's rest, which is prepared for his people.

V. 10.—For he that is entered into his rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from his.

The Israelites enjoyed rest from labour on the Sabbath, and when they reached the land of Canaan they rested from the fatigues of their journey through the wilderness, but still they were subject to that labour and toil to which man is doomed during his pilgrimage here below; so that their fellowship with God in his rest was incomplete, but he that is entered into that rest which remaineth for the people of God hath ceased from his own works as God did from his. His fellowship with God is complete. As God rested on the seventh day from all his works, so does he that is entered into his rest cease not only from the sore travail which God hath given to the sons of men to be exercised therewith, but from the warfare in which the believer is engaged in journeying to the Heavenly Canaan. In short, his fellowship with God is complete, he hath ceased from his own works as God did from his; to the same purpose it is written: "And I heard a voice from heaven saying unto me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yea, saith the Spirit, that they may rest from their labours." Rev. 14:13. Into this rest Christ hath entered as their forerunner, having finished the work which the Father had given him to do; the everlasting doors were thrown open, and he entered as the forerunner of his people, to prepare for them those mansions in which they shall for ever dwell, where each shall exclaim, with joyful lips, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, for the Lord hath dealt bountifully with thee."

V. 11.—Let us labour therefore to enter into that rest, lest any man fall after the same example of unbelief

This is the practical improvement of what had gone before, believers are exhorted to labour to enter into that rest which remaineth for the people of God, lest any should fall after the same example of unbelief—viz., of the generation of Israel which fell in the wilderness. They could not enter into God's rest because of unbelief, and thus the Apostle illustrates and enforces the exhortation previously given to the Hebrews, to give the more earnest heed to the things which they had heard lest at any time they should let them slip.

V. 12.—For the word of God is quick, and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a discern-er of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Here the Apostle intimates the impossibility of the unbelief of the heart escaping detection. Some by the Word of God understand Christ, who is the judge of all; but it rather seems to refer to the word, which he declares shall judge us. John 12:48. It is described as living and abiding for ever. 1 Pet. 1:23. Thy word, saith the Psalmist, hath quickened me, Psalm 119:50; and Christ describes His words to be spirit and life. John 6:63. It is powerful, mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds, casting down imaginations, and every high thing that exalteth itself against the knowledge of God, and bringing into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ. 2 Cor. 10:5. Where the word of a king is there is power, this is the word of the King of kings. It is sharper than a two-edged sword. It pierces even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, of the joints and marrow; a sword may be so sharp as to sever the joints and marrow, but the Word of God is of such ethereal temper as to sever even soul and spirit. Man is represented as composed of soul, body, and spirit. 1 Thess. 5:23. The body was made of dust, a living soul was given to it in common with those animals in whom was the breath of life; but besides

this man has an immortal spirit, which raises him above all the creatures, and by which in his first estate he was capable of knowing and holding intercourse with his Maker. Now the Word of God is living and powerful, and discerns and discovers the secrets of the heart. It is compared to a refiner's fire and fuller's soap.

V. 13.—Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

The Apostle had been treating of the Word of God, but here he passes to God himself, and declares that all things are naked and opened unto the eyes of Him with whom we have to do; or, as some render it, to whom we must give account.

V. 14-15.—Seeing then that we have a great High Priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an High Priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin.

For we have not a High Priest who cannot be touched with or cannot sympathize with ***our infirmities***; for, having assumed our nature, He was in all things tempted like as we are, yet without sin. The Lord Jesus was truly a man, born of a woman, and consequently had all the feelings of a man; but these were under such entire subjection to the will of God, that He had no sin, but was entirely conformed to the will of God. In every situation He did the things which pleased His heavenly Father. He suffered, being tempted, for instance, when He was hungry; the devil tempted Him to change the stones into bread. His hunger prompted him to comply; but, while His Father had given Him power to accomplish many mighty works, in proof of His having come forth from God, had He employed that power for the supply of His own wants, it would have interfered with the example which He has left us of confidence in God, being assured that He will withhold from us no good thing. We cannot imitate the signs and wonders which He wrought. These were peculiar to Himself, and to those upon

whom He thought fit to bestow them, for the confirmation of the word of the truth of the Gospel; but He was in all things conformed to His brethren, so that He hath afforded us a perfect pattern for our conduct during our pilgrimage; and, had He not in all things been made like unto His brethren, this could not have been the case. In all things, therefore, "it behooved Him to be made like unto His brethren, that He might be a merciful and faithful High Priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that He Himself hath suffered being tempted, He is able to succor them that are tempted." Chap. 2:17, 18. Christ's entire submission to His Father's will, and not pleasing Himself, may be represented as inconsistent with His supreme divinity; but on the contrary it was His Divinity that enabled the man Christ Jesus thus to glorify His Father. He thought it not robbery to be equal with God; but, having taken on Him the form of a servant, He was in all things obedient to the will of His Father. It was His meat and His drink to do His will; and at last, in obedience to the commandment which He had received, He laid down His life and took it again. A sin-offering must be perfect to be accepted; and He offered Himself without spot or blemish; and although He had no sin, yet was He made sin for His people, that they might be made the righteousness of God in Him; that, having by His blameless life and meritorious death, as the Head and Surety of His people, atoned for their sins, and brought in everlasting righteousness, that righteousness might belong to all the seed of the woman, with whom He took part in flesh and blood. Thus God's eternal purpose was accomplished by His own Son manifest in the flesh. The Son of God made His soul an offering for the sins of an unnumbered multitude, who were chosen in and given to Him by His Father; and thus grace reigned through righteousness unto eternal life, by Christ Jesus. Had His people broken the holy law? He obeyed it in all its extent, and endured its penalty. Had they come under the curse? He redeemed them by being made a curse for them, and opened a new and living way for their entering into life through His obedience unto death.

Chapter Five

V. 1.—For every high priest taken from among men is ordained for men in things pertaining to God, that he may offer both gifts and sacrifices for sins.

The Apostle had said that under the Gospel believers have a great High Priest who is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, chap. 4:14; and, referring to the institution of the Jewish law, he says, “Every high priest taken from among men.” That reference is here made to the Jewish law, appears by the Apostle speaking of a high priest. This was peculiar to Israel. Previously to the giving of the law, the head of each family seems to have acted as its priest. Thus we read of Noah, Abraham, Job, and Jethro, chap. 13; Exod. 18:2, offering sacrifices; but it does not appear to have been confined to them, for Cain and Abel both offered; and we read, “And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt-offerings, and sacrificed peace-offerings of oxen unto the Lord,” Exod. 24:5, Here the *young men* were the offerers; but, after the giving of the law, Aaron and his family were exclusively appointed to the priesthood. They alone were permitted to enter the tabernacle, or house of God, and to burn incense, and sprinkle the blood of the sacrifices. The tabernacle was divided by a vail into two compartments—the holy, and holiest of all. Into the former the priests had daily access. The chief or high priest alone was admitted within the vail, and that only upon one day of the year, when he made an atonement for all Israel, and sprinkled with blood the mercy-seat which covered the ark, and which was the throne of the God *of Israel*, intimating that mercy could only flow to sinners through an atoning sacrifice.

The first time the priesthood is mentioned in Scripture is in the case of Melchisedec, who, as the Apostle afterwards teaches us, was a remarkable type of Christ, who is said to be a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, for the priesthood of Aaron was but temporary. Even among the heathen the office of priest was

known. Thus we read of the Egyptian priests, Gen. 47:22; and of the priest of Midian, Exod. 2:16.

The Lord took Israel to be his peculiar people, and he chose Aaron and his sons to be His priests. The great object of the institution was that they might offer gifts and sacrifices, and for this purpose they were selected and set apart. The office of the priesthood was also an intimation that fallen man could have no immediate access to God, but that he required a daysman, an intercessor. He was to offer gifts and sacrifices; this is repeated, chap. 8:3. Gifts, as distinguished from sacrifices for sin, were expressions of gratitude to God for His goodness in general, or for any manifestation of it on a particular occasion.

V. 2.—Who can have compassion on the ignorant, and on them that are out of the way; for that he himself also is compassed with infirmity.

Being himself a man, he could have compassion on the ignorant and erring, being conscious that he was compassed with infirmities.

This is probably mentioned by the Apostle, because no sacrifice was appointed or accepted for presumptuous sin. Psalm 51:16. This is one of the many proofs of the inferiority of the Jewish to the Christian dispensation—of the shadow to the substance.

The man who sinned presumptuously was to be taken from God's altar and put to death; of this we have an example in the case of Joab; but the blood of Jesus cleanseth the believer from all sin. However aggravated our guilt, pardon is proclaimed to us through faith in Jesus.

V. 3.—And by reason hereof "he ought, as for the people, so also for himself, to offer for sins.

Since the high priest was himself compassed with infirmities, it was necessary that he should offer sacrifices not only for the people but for himself.

V. 4.—And no man taketh this honor unto himself, but he that is called of God, as was Aaron.

The office of the priest, more especially of the high priest, was peculiarly honorable; he stood between God and the people. He was, as it were, brought nigh to God. This was indeed the case with the whole tribe of Levi, who are described as brought near to God. Numb. 16:9. They alone had access to the Tabernacle, the royal pavilion.

They were, so to speak, the household servants of the King of Israel, but the High Priest was the head servant, so far as the worship of God was concerned; he was the chief, the ruler of all God's house, and no man took the honor to himself. What should we say of a man who entered the palace of an earthly king, and assumed authority to give directions to the servants? Such conduct would not be tolerated, and how much less that any one should assume the office of High Priest in Israel, without a special call similar to that given to Aaron? Exod. 28:1. His appointment to the office was conducted in a very solemn manner. He was distinguished by a peculiar dress emblematic of his office, and minute directions were given him as to the mode of executing his office. In causing his rod to bud, to bring forth blossoms, and bear almonds, God confirmed his appointment; and again, by consuming Korah and his company, who dared to burn incense, and whose censers were made broad plates for a covering of the altar. Numb. 16:39, 40. This was a standing memorial that no stranger, who was not of the seed of Aaron, should come near to offer incense before the Lord.

V. 5.—So also Christ glorified not himself to be made an high priest; but he that said unto him, Thou art my Son, today have I begotten thee.

This, like all the other ordinances of Moses, had its fulfilment in the Kingdom of God, for Christ did not glorify Himself by assuming uncalled the office of High Priest. He received this high office from Him who declared him to be His only begotten Son, and thus set-

ting Him far above all principality and power, and every name that is named not only in this world but in that which is to come.

V. 6.—As he saith also in another place, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

And in another place he pronounces him to be a priest for ever, after the order of Melchisedec. This is taken from Psalm 110:, and is applied by the Lord to himself, and by his Apostle, Acts 2:34, 35; and also in a previous part of this Epistle, Heb. 1:13, under Melchisedec.

V. 7.— Who in the days of his flesh, when he had offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears unto him that was able to save him from death, and was heard in that he feared.

In the days of his fleshy during his abode in this world, John 1:14:, he offered up most earnest supplications and prayers to him with whom are the issues from death, Psalm 68:20, with strong crying and tears, as we find in the Garden of Gethsemane, and was heard in that he feared; hearing prayer implies receiving a favorable answer. 1 John 5:16, 18.

No man took the life of Jesus from him, he laid it down of himself. To the last he asserted his power to rid himself of his enemies. His death was an act of obedience to his Father, as indeed was every action of his life and every word that he spoke. John 12:49. My doctrine, says he, is not mine, but His that sent me. In John 8:16 it is said, To Him that was able to save him from death. If we understand this to mean to prevent him from dying, the Lord's prayer was not heard, for he actually tasted death. When he said, "Now is my soul troubled; and what shall I say? Father, save me from this hour," he adds, "but for this cause came I unto this hour." John 12:27. He knew that he came forth from God and was going to God, and that the Son of Man was to be glorified and that his death was essential to this consummation, for he says: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground

and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit." John 12:24. When, therefore, we read of his supplications and tears to be delivered from death, we cannot understand him as meaning that he might not die, for the Father heareth him always, and had not his death been perfectly voluntary he would not have died; but his being saved from death refers to his resurrection, being brought from the fearful pit and miry clay. Psalm 40:2. He knew that his soul was not to be left in Hades, nor was the Holy One of God to see corruption. In the regions of death, the path of life was to be shown him, and at his Father's right hand he was to enjoy pleasures for evermore.

We have an account of his agony in the garden, and the supplications and prayers which he offered up, but these are to be found more fully in the Book of Psalms,—a book by which we are admitted into our Redeemer's closet and learn his entire submission to his Father's will, together with the keenness of his feelings when, as the surety and representative of his people, he bore the sins of his people, which, as a heavy burden, were too heavy for the man Christ Jesus, and brought him to the dust of death. But he could not be held under the power of death, and his resurrection to the power of an endless life was the pledge of his having magnified the law and made it honorable, having finished transgression, made an end of sin, made reconciliation for iniquity, and brought in everlasting righteousness.

With his dying breath he exclaimed, it is finished or perfected, and his Father re-echoed the declaration by raising him from the dead and crowning him with glory.

His resurrection is ascribed sometimes to the power of the Father, sometimes to his own power, and sometimes to the power of the Spirit. These three are one in operation, whatever is done by one is done by all. We especially see their unity in the plan of salvation, each taking a share: " Now there are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but

the same Lord; and there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which worketh all in all." 1 Cor. 12:4-6.

While the subsistence of the Eternal Jehovah in three persons, who are one, is an unfathomable mystery, it is essential to the right understanding of the plan of salvation, which indeed is founded upon it. The Father chooses his people and gives them to the Son, whom he sends to deliver them from condemnation, and, as their head and representative, to communicate to them a new and endless life. The Son takes part with them in flesh and blood, thus becoming a member of Adam's fallen race, and having the right of redemption as the near kinsman of the children whom God has given him. The Spirit is given to him without measure, and as the precious oil poured on the head of Aaron ran down to the skirts of his garments, so the Spirit is through him communicated to all whom he is not ashamed to call brethren. They are all accepted in the beloved, are saved with an everlasting salvation, and thus the eternal purpose of God, the manifestation of his manifold wisdom, is accomplished.

V. 8.—Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered.

Though he were a Son, yet learned he... He was the Son of God, the object of the worship and adoration of the angels of God, the Creator of the ends of the earth, yet he learned obedience, &c. In all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, and therefore, like them, it was necessary that he should yield obedience to the law which they had broken, and thus he practically learned obedience by suffering the just for the unjust, that he might bring them to God.

From them obedience to the holy law of God was required; but from him it was obedience unto death. He received a commandment to lay down his life, and he was not disobedient.

V. 9.—And being made perfect, he became the author of eternal salvation unto all them that obey him.

Christ was absolutely perfect, holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners. The prince of this world came, and found nothing in Him. The perfection here spoken of refers to His priesthood. The Apostle had previously spoken of Him as the Captain of His people's salvation, being made perfect through sufferings, chap. 2:10. How else could He atone for sin? Thus we are taught that it was necessary that He whom God gave as a leader and commander of the people should be fully qualified for the office through sufferings. Under the law there was no remission of sins without shedding of blood. Now the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin. The Church could only be ransomed by the blood of Christ. The wages of sin is death; and, in order to show to His people the path of life, it was necessary that He should tread the path of death, and give His life a ransom for many.

In this passage we are taught that, as our great High Priest, He was made perfect, that is, His consecration was completed. There is a reference here to the process of the consecration of the Jewish high priest. In the first place, the holy garments were to be prepared and put upon Aaron and his sons, after they had been washed with water. They were then to be anointed with oil. A bullock was next to be brought, on which they were to lay their hands, which was then to be killed, and the ram was to be burned upon the altar. The ram completed the consecration of Aaron, and there fore was called the sacrifice of consecration or of perfection, because by it the consecration of the priest was perfected or completed. So the consecration of the great High Priest being completed by His death, and the pouring out of the blood of the everlasting covenant, He became the author of eternal salvation to all them that obey Him.

To obey and to believe are synonymous; for Christ saves all believers from their sins; He writes the law upon their hearts; and, under the constraining influence of His love, they deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, walking in newness of life. Eternal salvation is here mentioned in contrast with the temporal salvation of Israel from the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage.

V. 10.—Called of God an high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

In His discourse with the Pharisees, Matt. 22:43, 44, the Lord Jesus applies the 110th Psalm to Himself. In it He is described as a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. This appellation was given Him by God. It may be observed that in the Psalm it is said, "Thou art a priest for ever." The Apostle gives Him the title of High Priest because, although all the Levitical priests were types of Christ, yet the high priest was the most eminent. And as there is but one priest in the kingdom of God, the Lord Jesus is here and in many other parts of this epistle described as a High Priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec. The Apostle afterwards points out the superiority of the priesthood of Melchisedec to that of Aaron, Here he merely quotes from Psalm 110:, where the priesthood of Christ is said to be after the order of Melchisedec, which implies what is afterwards fully stated, that our Lord's priesthood was far superior to that of Aaron.

V. 11.—Of whom we have many things to say, and hard to be uttered, seeing ye are dull of hearing.

The Apostle, however, does not immediately enter upon the subject of the difference of the order of the priesthood of Aaron and Melchisedec, but takes occasion to rouse the attention of the Hebrew believers by informing them that he had much to say concerning Melchisedec which was not easily explained, not so much from the difficulty of the subject, as from their slow apprehensions of spiritual things.

V. 12.—For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which he the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.

Considering the time during which they had been in the school of Christ, they ought to have been capable of teaching others, but they required to be taught the first principles of the oracles of

God. This appears to refer to their ignorance of the types and shadows of the Mosaic dispensation, which are termed by the Apostle rudiments or elements, the misunderstanding of which prevented many from discerning the truth. The Mosaic ordinances were a kind of hieroglyphic, having a hidden meaning. They are termed weak and beggarly elements, and the elements of the world, because they were only the shadow of heavenly things.

The whole Mosaic dispensation was a parable for the time then present, in which spiritual and heavenly things were represented by earthly things. But the carnality of men's minds led them to rest in the shadow and overlook the substance.

We see in the history of the beginning of the Gospel, and in Paul's Epistles, especially that to the Galatians, the pernicious consequence of not understanding the nature of the Mosaic dispensation. It was a parable for the time then present, in which spiritual and heavenly things were set forth under the emblems of those which were carnal and earthly, with which we are most conversant.

To those by whom this was fully understood the old dispensation was a prophetic, and consequently obscure, intimation of the establishment of the spiritual and eternal kingdom of Messiah, together with the ordinances to be observed by its subjects.

The observance of the laws of Moses was calculated to maintain the expectation of the appearing of Christ, and thus preserve Israel in a state of separation from all other nations, as well as to present spiritual things in a palpable form to men in every age; and not only so, but to remain, till the consummation of all things, a conclusive evidence of the truth of the Scriptures, by the perfect correspondence of the two parts into which they were divided, which appeared at first sight very dissimilar.

But while the wisdom of God strikingly appears in his dealings with Israel, this has been in every age the great stumbling-block in the way both of the Jews and of the followers of Christ. The

Jews have adhered with an unaccountable obstinacy to the shadow, disregarding the substance; while the great body of nominal Christians, and many of the true disciples of Christ, have blended Judaism with Christianity; and to this we owe the great apostasy, in which Heathenism, Judaism, and Christianity are blended together, and by which the pure and holy doctrine of Christ has been converted into a system of gross superstition and idolatry.

The apostles foresaw the revelation of the man of sin, and prescribed the only infallible preservative from his wiles: "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." 2 Thess. 2:15. But the false principle that, while in regard to the great doctrines of the Gospel we are bound to abide by the rule of Scripture, we are at liberty, in what are termed external things, to be guided by circumstances, has induced the generality even of Protestants to go back to the weak and beggarly elements of Judaism. This system will continue till the great overturning predicted by the Word of God, Ezek. 21:27, shall take place. The Lord will then "turn to the people a pure language, that they may all call upon the name of the Lord, to serve Him with one consent." Zeph. 3:9.

The object of this Epistle is to preserve believers to the end of the world from this snare of the devil, as well as to check the apostasy which it appears had taken place among many of the Jews who had professed the faith to which the Apostle repeatedly alludes. To the misunderstanding of this subject the Apostle attributes the little progress which the Hebrews had made, and that they had become as those that had need of milk, and not of strong meat.

V. 13.—For every one that useth milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe.

Every one that feeds on milk is unskilful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. The Apostle uses similar language to the Corinthians. 1 Cor. 3:1, 2. They are thus characterized on account of their disposition to follow different leaders. Sometimes the term babes, or little children, is used in a good sense. We are

commanded, as new-born babes, to desire the sincere milk of the word. In malice we are to be children, but in understanding to be men. If we do not receive the kingdom of heaven as little children we cannot enter therein. Our high imaginations must be cast down and our thoughts brought into subjection to Christ.

But here the word babes is not used in a good sense. The Apostle charges the Hebrews with being weak in the faith, babes in understanding. There is, probably, a reference to their attachment to Jewish observances, and their desire to remain under the bondage of the Jewish observances, which he elsewhere terms the elements of the world, Gal. 4:3, weak and beggarly elements.

V. 14.—But strong meat belongeth to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.

As grown up persons do not feed upon milk, but are able to digest strong meat; so those who are perfect, [The word rendered "of full age" is, literally, *perfect*, a word which is very frequently used in this Epistle, and means well instructed. The Apostle uses the same word Phil. 3:15, where it has probably a reference to those who were initiated in the heathen mysteries. They were termed perfect.] well instructed, who have their senses exercised to discern good and evil, view the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation in their true light, as what they really are: shadows; as shadows of good things to come, chap. 10:1, and thus discern the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the world unto our glory. 1 Cor. 2:7.

Chapter Six

V. 1.—Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

The Apostle had said that he had many things to say concerning Melchisedec, which were hard to be uttered, in consequence of the Hebrews being dull of hearing. As it is difficult to speak to a deaf man, so it was difficult to explain to them the mystery contained in his history. This was not owing to the subject being new to them, for, considering the time they had been in the school of Christ, they ought to be teachers, and yet they required to be taught again the elements or first principles of the oracles of God, and needed to be fed with milk, and not with strong meat; as milk is suitable for babes, and strong meat for grown up persons. Now the Hebrews, from the advantages which they had enjoyed, ought to have their senses exercised to discern true and false doctrine.

But, considering the advantages which they had already enjoyed, and the progress they ought to have made, he would leave the elements or principles of the doctrine of Christ (literally the word of the beginning of Christ, which seems to be the same as what is termed the first principles of the oracles of God, chap. 5:12, literally the elements of the beginning of the oracles of God), he would go on to perfection: that is the explanation of what had been darkly shadowed forth in the Old Testament. He would not again lay the foundation of repentance from dead works [Dead works, mean works deserving death.] and of faith in God, which were so frequently inculcated by Moses and the prophets.

V. 2.— Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

It may seem strange that the doctrine of baptism and laying on of hands should be introduced along with repentance and faith. But repentance and faith were enforced in the Jewish economy, in which there were divers baptisms, Heb. 9:10, signifying the necessity of repentance. In like manner, the laying on of hands on the

sacrifice about to be offered, represents faith. The worshipper, by laying his hands on the victim, confessing his sins, expressed his faith of remission through the shedding of blood. Heb. 9:22. [The *baptisms* here spoken of cannot refer to the ordinance of Christ, for there is but *one* Christian baptism. Eph. 4:5. The resurrection of the dead, which is a most prominent part of the doctrine of Christ, was plainly taught by Moses and the prophets, and generally believed by the Jews. Acts 24:15; John 11:24; Acts 23:6; Mark 12:23, 27; while the Sadducees denied it. Acts 23:8. The faith of the resurrection implied the future judgment. Indeed the future judgment was implied by mankind after the fall being divided into two classes, while all were to return to the dust. The separation must be made after death, so that the resurrection and the judgment were clearly taught from the beginning. All go to one place whatever be their character, the grave receives them all; in dividing mankind into two classes after the fall, God clearly intimated the general judgment. It is called eternal judgment, because its decisions will never be reversed.]

V. 3.—And this will we do, if God permit.

This, therefore, was the course, which, by Divine permission, he intended to follow.

V. 4.—For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,....

It appears from this and other parts of the Epistle that there had been a great apostasy among the Hebrews who had professed the faith of Christ, but had returned to Judaism, and their case was so hopeless that the Apostle would not occupy time by addressing himself to them. They are described as having been once enlightened. When the Lord divides the hearers of the Gospel into four classes, one class is represented as receiving the word with joy, but having no root, and therefore only enduring for a time. The same persons are described—"For if after they have escaped the pollutions of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and

Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered unto them." 2 Peter 2:20, 21. See also Heb. 10:26, 27. Whence it appears that a great external reformation may be produced by the Gospel, and the feelings of the hearers may be greatly excited while they are destitute of saving faith. This is the gift of God, and the gifts and calling of God are without repentance. Rom. 11:29.

There may, however, be a temporary impression made by the Gospel, whence some are described as believing for a time, Luke 8:13; which is explained in next clause, *and have been made partakers of the Holy Ghost*. This refers to the miraculous gifts conferred by the laying on of the Apostle's hands. Men thus receiving the Holy Ghost did not imply that they were truly converted. Hence our Lord says: "Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?" Matt. 7:22. And the Apostle supposes the case of men possessing a faith by which they might remove mountains, 1 Cor. 13:2, while destitute of love, and therefore ignorant of God. 1 John 4:8.

V. 5.—And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come.

Tasted the good word of God, felt somewhat of its sweetness: "How sweet are thy words unto my taste! yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!" Psalm 119:103. "More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey, and the honeycomb." Psalm 19:10. "Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by thy name, O Lord God of Hosts." Jer. 15:16. The persons referred to have tasted somewhat of this excellence and the power of the world to come. What is rendered the Everlasting Father is in the LXX. the Father of the age to come,

and we read of the world to come, that is the Gospel dispensation. Heb. ii. 5. Now the power of the world to come means the diversity of miraculous gifts under the new dispensation, referred to by the Apostle. 1 Cor. 12:4, 10. We are unable accurately to distinguish these, because we do not possess miraculous gifts; but there are the powers conferred under the Gospel dispensation. What is rendered in our version working of miracles, 1 Cor. 12:29, is working of powers. Again in Matt. 7:22, 23, wonderful works, is in the original, powers.

V. 6.—If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame.

There is no *if* in the original; it is "and having fallen away;" for it is coupled with the preceding participles, enlightened, tasted, made partakers of, after all had fallen away. [This does not imply that the people of God shall ever fall away. We have already seen that the gifts and calling of God are without repentance; indeed this must be the case, because believers were chosen in and given to Christ. Eph. 1:4; John 17:6; and shall never perish. John 10:28, 29. Where God begins a good work he will carry it on till the day of Christ; but believers as well as others require cautions and warnings, and it is not improbable that there may be here an intentional obscurity in regard to the feelings excited by the truth as it is in Jesus, which is intended to serve as a beacon against any tendency to backslide from God. Our comfort ought not to be derived from our past feelings or fancied acquirements, but from the habitual contemplation of Christ as our Savior. We can only enjoy the assurance of hope by the contemplation of the glory of the sacrifice of Christ, and the absolute freeness of the great salvation. Let the apparent genuineness of our Christian experience be what it may, we can only have proof of our being living members of Christ by abiding in him and holding fast the truth.] While this is a solemn warning to him who thinketh he standeth, to take heed lest he fall, 1 Cor. 10:12, it throws no doubt upon the perseverance of the saints, although we can only know that such is our

character by holding fast the truth. It is evident from this and many other passages that men's natural feelings may be much excited, and such a change in their habits and sentiments produced as may strikingly resemble the fruits of the Spirit, while they are imposing on themselves and others.

But it may be asked, why is it impossible to renew such persons again to repentance? It is not impossible for God thus to renew them, for with Him all things are possible. The impossibility appears to be the same as for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. "It is easier," says the Lord, "for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom," and adds, "with man it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible." However, their case was so, very hopeless that the Apostle would not attempt to recover those who had apostatized, since by that act they had justified the conduct of the Jews in reviling and crucifying the Son of God as a blasphemer and an impostor, and thus, as it were, putting him to an open shame, or making him a public example. Matt. 1:19. They, as it were, set their seal to all the insults and injuries which were heaped on Jesus, and that after the fullest evidence had been given of his divine character and mission, not only by his resurrection but by the outpouring of the Spirit, of whose miraculous gifts they had been made partakers. Acts 2:33. We find a parallel passage in chap. 10:26, 29, where apostates are represented as treading under foot the Son of God, and counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified ["Sanctified" may either apply to Christ, who says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified through the truth." He was set apart, like the paschal lamb, that his people might be set apart through the truth; or it may refer to the apostate, for the Scripture often speaks of them as they appear, for instance Simon Magus is said to have believed.] an unholy thing; and, having done despite to the Spirit of Grace, by rejecting the testimony he bore to Jesus. These passages confirm the observation already made that many of the Hebrews who had professed the truth had returned to Judaism; and the Apostle wrote this Epistle with a view of putting a stop to the

apostasy by teaching the Hebrews the nature of the Mosaic law, by the misunderstanding of which they had been misled, and showing them that it was a temporary dispensation, a shadow of good things to come.

V. 7.—For the earth which drinketh in the rain that cometh oft upon it, and bringeth forth herbs meet for them by whom it is dressed, receiveth blessing from God.

The Scriptures both of the Old and New Testament frequently illustrate spiritual by temporal things, and not uncommonly by a reference to the operations of husbandry. See John 15:1, 2. Here we are taught that the fertility of the earth proceeds from the blessing of God, Gen. 1:11 and 27:27; Psalm 65:9, 11. This does not, however, preclude the labours of the husbandman, which is essential to the production of the fruits of the earth, Gen. 3:19; but all man's labour is vain without the blessing of God, Psalm 127:1, to which alone we are taught to look for success. When he crowns the year with his goodness, causing the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man, bringing forth fruit out of the earth, Psalm civ, 14, we see the effect of his blessing.

V. 8.—But that which beareth thorns and briers is rejected, and is nigh unto cursing; whose end is to be burned.

But that which beareth thorns and briers is given up by the husbandman, who finds it vain to waste his strength without obtaining any return, and therefore lets it alone, only removing the surface as fuel. We have a beautiful representation of God's dealings with sinners, of mankind, in that striking parable in which Israel is compared to a vineyard on which the greatest care had been lavished, Isaiah 5:1, 2, but it produced wild grapes, on which account the Lord declared his intention of laying it waste, so that it should only produce thorns and briers. We have another illustration of this passage in the prophecies of Ezekiel. He describes the waters which flowed from the threshold of the house, which gradually augmented. The water was at first to the ankles, then to the knees, afterwards to the loins, and then a river which could not be

passed over. In these waters there were exceeding many fishes, and fishermen spreading their nets: "And it shall come to pass, that every thing that liveth, which moveth, whithersoever the rivers shall come, shall live: and there shall be a very great multitude of fish, because these waters shall come thither: for they shall be healed; and every thing shall live whither the river cometh. And it shall come to pass, that the fishers shall stand upon it from Engedi even unto En-eglaim; they shall be a place to spread forth nets; their fish shall be according to their kinds, as the fish of the great sea, exceeding many. But the miry places thereof and the marishes thereof shall not be healed; they shall be given to salt." Ezek. 47:9-11. Ezekiel's vision of the temple is very obscure, but it is evident that the waters issuing from the house of God denote the Gospel, and the fishers the Apostles and those who succeeded them as preachers of the Gospel.

Every thing lived whither the waters came, but the miry places and the marshes thereof were not healed: "They shall be given to salt," ver. 11.

The Gospel is not only the savour of life unto life, but of death unto death, and of such it will prove to apostates of whom the Apostle treats. To such we may apply the words of the prophet respecting Jerusalem: "In thy filthiness is lewdness; because I have purged thee, and thou wast not purged, thou shalt not be purged from thy filthiness any more, till I have caused my fury to rest upon thee." Ezek. 24:13; and again, "But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels." Psalm 81:11, 12.

V. 9.—But, beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.

Having delivered this solemn warning the Apostle proceeds to encourage his brethren who had stood fast in the faith. He was persuaded better things of them, although he thus spoke. It was necessary for him to set before them the awful state of those who

had apostatized, but he had confidence in those whom he addressed. He was persuaded better things of them, even things that accompany salvation, although he had found it necessary to use the language he had done. It may be asked, What are the better things to which he refers? and he answers the question, Things which accompany salvation, which are the evidence of our union with Christ, and which are therefore far superior to these gifts to which he had referred, and to which apostates may attain. We have here an instance of the wisdom and tenderness with which the Apostle addressed his brethren. He had set before them the awful doom of apostates, and he now returns to the strongest expressions of confidence and brotherly love. Of this we have another instance, 2 Thess. 2:13. There also he speaks of apostates, whom in righteous judgment God gave up to strong delusion, that they should believe a lie, but adds: " But we are bound to give thanks always to God for you, brethren beloved of the Lord, because God hath from the beginning chosen you to salvation through sanctification of the Spirit and belief of the truth." 2 Thess. 2:13. So also Eph. 4:20. He had described the wickedness of the Gentiles, who had abandoned themselves to all uncleanness with greediness, but adds: " Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ." Eph. 4:13.

V. 10.—For God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have shewed toward his name, in that ye have ministered to the saints, and do minister.

Here, as elsewhere, brotherly love is described as far superior to all spiritual gifts, which the Apostle had shown might be possessed by hypocrites and apostates. "Beloved," says another Apostle, "let us love one another: for love is of God; and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love,

not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us." 1 John 4:7-12. Christ condescends to acknowledge what is done to his brethren as having been done to himself, Matt. 25:45, and here the Apostle says God is not unrighteous. He acknowledges himself as having been laid under an obligation by their work of faith and labour of love, which he will not forget, in having in time past ministered, and still continuing to minister, to his saints. We can have no claim upon God, we have nothing but what we receive from his bounty; but he has engaged to reward the services of his people, and he is faithful who hath promised and will also do it. 1 Thess. 5:23, 24. The same line of argument is pursued by the Apostle: "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing. And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not charity, it profiteth me nothing." 1 Cor. 13:1-3. Hence we learn that gifts, however great, are inferior to love; and we may observe that the Apostle supposes a man to give his goods to feed the poor and his body to be burned, for attachment to the profession which he has made, and yet to be nothing because destitute of love; he then proceeds to describe the love which he so highly commends. 1 Cor. 13:4-7. It is the very Spirit of Christ; God is love. There is no inconsistency in this declaration with our God being a consuming fire. The God of love is described as being jealous, and revenging, and being furious; his fury is poured out like fire. Nehem. 1:3-6. Sin has brought misery and confusion into his universe; and, as he swore that he would have war with Amalek from generation to generation, he hath sworn irreconcilable war with sin. But this, so far from being inconsistent with God's being love, is essential to the perfection of his character as the God of love. It

is in his righteous indignation against sin that his character is fully brought out. He is indeed angry with the wicked every day, he will in no wise clear the guilty; but the full manifestation of the love of God consists in his sending his only begotten Son into the world that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9.

The Hebrews had shown great liberality in ministering to the saints in the beginning of the Gospel, Acts 2:45, 4:34, and they had compassion of himself in his bonds, Heb. 10:34, ministering to him when he was prisoner at Caesarea, and, not only so, but they still persevered in the same course.

V. 11.—And we desire that every one of you do shew the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end.

Yet they required to be admonished not to be weary in well doing, and the Apostle speaks to them as it were individually, *every one of you*.

This was much calculated to impress their minds and to teach them the importance of the exhortation. Attention to this precept was intimately connected with their possessing the full assurance of hope unto the end. Faith and hope may be distinguished, but are inseparable. If we believe the Gospel, in proportion to our faith will be our hope of the enjoyment of eternal life. The Gospel exhibits a sure foundation of hope to the most unworthy. It is a proclamation of pardon through faith in the Lord Jesus. By it we are begotten to a lively hope of the enjoyment of the eternal inheritance. The moment we perceive the truth concerning the perfection of the atonement connected with the freeness of the Gospel invitation, we must be filled with joy and peace. Thus it was with the eunuch, Acts 8; and with the jailor, Acts 16: The Lord manifested himself to them in a way he doth not to the world, and they felt themselves safe in the everlasting arms. But it is essential to the continuance of this comfort that we be fruitful branches of the true vine. The truth works effectually in all that believe, and if our faith is genuine such will be the case with us. Hence it is evident that although the full assurance of hope is not

based on our bringing forth the fruits of righteousness, these are essential to its continuance. It is a part of the testimony of God that Christ saves his people from their sins, and consequently that sin shall not have dominion over those who are under grace. If we experience the sanctifying influence of the truth it is a proof that it is the true grace of God in which we stand; and while, as we have observed, the full assurance of hope may be enjoyed totally independent of the consideration of our conduct, in order to its continuance it is absolutely necessary that our conduct should correspond with the precepts of Christ.

Faith worketh by love, it purifieth the heart and overcometh the world; and, if our faith is genuine, such will be its effect on us. Hence the Apostle, while commending the Hebrews for their liberality to their brethren, exhorts them to show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. Some would render it *in* the full assurance of hope, &c.; and, perhaps, the preposition will bear this signification, but the rendering in our version is borne out by parallel passages, 2 Peter i. 10, 11; here the brethren are exhorted to give diligence to make their calling and election sure, by abounding in courage, knowledge, temperance, patience, godliness, brotherly kindness, and love, that they might not be unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ, at the same time representing those who lack these things as blind and short-sighted, and as having forgotten that they were purged from their old sins. This does not seem to refer to unbelievers, but to those who had backslidden.

We say of a person who is very shortsighted, that he is blind,—not absolutely, but comparatively.

Another Apostle, after exhorting the believers not to love in word and in tongue, but in deed and in truth, adds: “And hereby we know that we are of the truth, and shall assure our hearts before him,” 1 John 3:19. This exactly corresponds with the passage under consideration, that we should use diligence to the full assurance of hope unto the end. Our hearts are deceitful above all

things, and we are prone to take comfort from considering ourselves as believers; this is very common, and many substitute faith for the great object of faith. We see people utterly destitute of the knowledge of Christ shocked with the sentiments of infidels; they believe that the Scriptures are true, as king Agrippa believed the prophets; but as he did not believe what the prophets testified, neither do they believe the Gospel of Christ, but a figment of their own brain. I may ask a man the road to a particular place, with the full assurance that he knows it well; but, if I mistake his directions, this will not lead me to the place. So we may believe that the Gospel is true, while we substitute a fable for the truth as it is in Jesus; and what will such faith profit us? Now we are guarded against error, not only by the great plainness of speech used by the Lord and His Apostles, but by being informed what effects the faith of the Gospel must necessarily produce, and the more these effects are produced in us the greater evidence we have that it is the true grace of God wherein we stand. Nothing is more insisted on in Scripture than brotherly love. It is Christ's new commandment, and the possession or the want of it is represented as the decisive test of our belonging to him, or being of the world that lieth in the wicked one. Matt. 25:34, 40.

While the Word of God pours contempt on our own righteousness, declaring that by the deeds of the law no flesh living shall be justified, it enforces the duty of obedience, declaring that without holiness no man shall see the Lord; and so inseparably connected are faith and obedience, that all shall receive of the deeds done in the body, whether they be good or bad, The grace of God teaches the believer that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, he should live soberly, righteously, and godly; and, while we are justified by grace through faith, we are taught the inseparable connexion of faith and works, by the declaration that Abraham, the father of believers, James 2:, was in one sense justified by works.

Hence we are commanded to examine ourselves, to prove ourselves, comparing our conduct with the fruit of the Spirit, as described in the Scripture. While the Apostle gloried only in the

cross, having no confidence in the flesh, he tells us our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience that, in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world. Hence he urged the Hebrews to continue diligently in their work and labour of love, that they might continue to enjoy the full assurance of hope unto the end. Two things are essential to the full assurance of hope; a clear view of the fulness and freeness of the salvation of Christ, and walking humbly with God, yielding obedience to His holy will. The former cannot be enjoyed without the latter. If we grieve the Holy Spirit by a careless walk, we must lose in proportion our perception of the glory of the truth. The Spirit will no longer bear witness with our spirit that we are born of God; and, instead of knowing the things that are freely given to us of God, we shall be brought under the spirit of bondage.

V. 12.—That ye be not slothful, but followers of them who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

Sin naturally engenders slothfulness, so that we move slowly in the race set before us. The constraining influence of the love of Christ is wanting. We lose the joy of the Lord, which is our strength. The word “slothful” here is the same that is rendered “dull,” chap. 5:11. In opposition to slothfulness, he urges them to be followers of them who through faith and patience are now inheriting the promises. The Old Testament saints had finished their course, and were now inheriting the promises. Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had fallen asleep, and, according to the sentence pronounced on fallen man, had returned to the dust; but the spirit had returned to God who gave it. God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. They were absent from the body, but present with the Lord. He assured the dying thief that he should be with Him in paradise that night; and although those who now inherit the promises have not entered on the full enjoyment of what God has prepared for His people, still they are with the Lord, and are enjoying the fulfilment of those promises which from the beginning were all yea and amen in Christ, all wrapped up in the first

parable—that declaration, "The seed of the woman shall bruise the head of the serpent."

V. 13.—For when God made promise to Abraham, because he could swear by no greater, he swore by himself.

The Apostle here refers to what took place when, in obedience to the Divine commandment, Abraham offered Isaac upon the altar. Never did faith triumph so remarkably as on this occasion. Abraham, sustained by the promise of a numerous posterity, and of all the families of the earth being blessed in him, had left his father's house, having become an alien from his brethren.

For many subsequent years he had no child. At length, Ishmael was born of Hagar, the bond-woman; and, some years afterwards, Isaac, the child of promise, was born of Sarah. In consequence of Ishmael's mocking Isaac, he was put out of the family, so that all Abraham's hopes centred in Isaac. Yet, as a trial of his faith, God commanded him to offer his son for a burnt-offering, thus reducing him to ashes. Abraham well knew that upon the life of Isaac depended the fulfilment of the promises which had been his stay and support during all the days of his pilgrimage. Yet he did not hesitate; he set out for the place which God had said He would show him; and, leaving his servants, accompanied by his son, he proceeded to the mountain which God pointed out, which seems to have been Moriah, or which the temple was afterwards built, and the sacrifices offered. There he bound Isaac upon the altar, lifted up the knife to slay him, but was stopped by the angel of the Lord, who expressed his approbation of Abraham's conduct, at the same time renewing the promise, and confirming it with an oath. Thus, after many years of patient endurance, he obtained the irrevocable confirmation of the promise, by the oath of Him who cannot lie. He could swear by no greater, and therefore He swore by Himself.

V. 14.—Saying, Surely blessing I will bless thee, and multiplying I will multiply thee.

Assuring Abraham of His blessing and a numerous posterity.

V. 15.—And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

Abraham is here exhibited as our pattern of faith and patience. He is the father of believers, who, like him, have need of patience. They walk by faith, not by sight, and are taught by the example of Abraham, though the vision tarry, to wait for it, because it will surely come, it will not tarry. Hab. 2:3.

V. 16.—For men verily swear by the greater: and an oath for confirmation is to them an end of all strife.

Men swear by the greater, by some one superior to themselves; and, when other evidence cannot be obtained, an oath settles the matter. Israel were commanded to swear by the name of the Lord, Deut. 6:13, so that the strife is brought to an end. The example of God, with the Apostle's observation, decides the question of the lawfulness of oaths, which has been denied. Can we for a moment suppose that God, in His transactions with men, should by His own example sanction what is unlawful, and direct the Apostle to speak of an oath as putting an end to strife? Strife arises now as formerly, and an oath for confirmation is as necessary now as it was before. There are two passages in the New Testament which are alleged as a proof of the unlawfulness of oaths. In the sermon on the mount, the Lord says, "Swear not at all;" but it is more evident, from the connexion, that the Lord there condemns the confirmation of a vow by an oath. "Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord *thy* vows. [There is no reference here to transactions between men.] But I say unto you, Swear not at all." We have an example of a vow without an oath in the history of Jacob at Bethel, Gen. 28:20-22. The Apostle James likewise forbids swearing, chap. 5:12; but it is evident, from the connexion, that he is also treating of vows. Not only were oaths regulated by the Jewish law, but the Lord Himself, when questioned by the high priest, gave no answer till, put upon His oath, He heard "the voice of swearing." And not only so, but the

Apostle Paul frequently appeals to God for the truth of what he asserts; so that none of the followers of Jesus ought to hesitate, on proper occasions, to confirm their testimony by an oath.

V. 17.—Wherein God, willing more abundantly to shew unto the heirs of promise the immutability of his counsel, confirmed it by an oath.

Wherefore God, willing to give the heirs of promise (Rom. 4:13-17; Gal. 3:27) the fullest assurance of the unchangeableness of His counsel, confirmed His promise with an oath. Num. 14:22; chap. 3:17; Isa. 45:23.

V. 18.—That by two immutable things, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we might have a strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us.

That by two immutable things, the promise and the oath of God, in which it was impossible for God to lie, we who have fled for refuge [The word refuge is not in the original. It is, literally, Who have fled away to lay hold. Probably the appointment of the cities of refuge—to which, indeed, there appears to be a reference, Num. 35:11, 12—has led our translators to the insertion of the word.] to the hope set before us might have strong consolation.

The promise of God, which He confirmed by an oath to Abraham, is, that He would bless and multiply him. This was, no doubt, most satisfactory to the patriarch; but, although the promise may be considered to include the heirs of promise, they are not specifically mentioned, which may be accounted for by the Apostle directing the attention of the Hebrews to the promise, by quoting a part of it, and leaving them to supply the rest from the book of Genesis, in which the heirs of promise are particularly mentioned. “And in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice.” Gen. 22:18. So that the promise was confirmed to them as well as to their father Abraham.

V. 19.—Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil.

The hope set before us is the blessing of Abraham, which has come upon the Gentiles (as well as Jews) through Jesus Christ, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith, Gal. 3:14, and thus be sealed to the day of redemption. This hope is compared to an anchor, and the figure is most appropriate and beautiful. The anchor, which holds the ship, and prevents her from drifting with the wind and tide, is out of sight, fixed in the ground by its form and weight. Thus it is with the believer; the Lord Jesus Christ, who has entered within the vail, is his hope, 1 Tim. 1:1, and this keeps him steadfast and immovable, preventing his being led away by the lying vanities of this present evil world. When about to remove from her anchorage, the ship is drawn forward to the anchor, which is then weighed, and comes into sight. In this world we hope for what we see not, and with patience wait for it; but, when we receive the adoption, to wit, the redemption of the body, our hope will be swallowed up in enjoyment; then we shall see what, while on earth, we only hoped for.

Besides preserving a ship from drifting, the anchor is used to remove her from one part of a river or harbour to another; and thus, while the hope of the believer keeps him steadfast, it at the same time serves to draw him nearer to the object of his hope, till he shall no longer see through a glass darkly, but face to face; and shall no longer hope for eternal glory, but enter on the full possession of it.

V. 20.— Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec,

Christ, the great object of our hope, has, in the character of our forerunner, entered within the vail, thus taking possession, as it were, on our behalf, of the heavenly inheritance, and giving us the assurance of being with Him.

He is gone to prepare a place for His people, and He says, "And if I go to prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also." John 14:3. Having offered an all-sufficient sacrifice, and being brought again from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, He has entered into the most holy place with His own blood, as the glorious head and representative of His body the Church. He is made forever a high priest after the order of Melchisedec.

Chapter Seven

V. 1.—For this Melchisedec, king of Salem, priest of the most high God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings, and blessed him,

The Apostle now proceeds to unveil the face of Moses in the account which he gives of Melchisedec. We have formerly adverted to the depth and fullness of the instruction contained in the Word of God. We have seen how much instruction our Apostle elicits from what is recorded of the oath in Psalm 95:11, and the same observation applies to the history of Melchisedec, respecting whom we may observe that we can know no more than what Moses records in the Book of Genesis, and the commentary on the account given by our Apostle. All conjectures which we may form on the subject are out of place. We must take the narrative of Moses just as it stands. The Apostle had repeatedly spoken of Christ as our high priest, chap. 2:17, 3:1, 4:14, 15, 5:5, 6. To this effect he had been called of God, and his priesthood was after the order of Melchisedec, which is proved by a quotation from Psalm 110: Chap. 5:6. This was a subject of great importance, and is therefore repeated v. 10. After some preliminary observations the Apostle again describes Jesus as made an high priest after the order of Melchisedec, Chap. 6:20, and at the same time enters more fully into the account given of him, explaining the mystery and what Moses records concerning this very eminent personage.

Before entering upon this subject we may advert to the opinion which has been advanced that Melchisedec was the Son of God. This notion is sufficiently refuted by his being said to be made like unto the Son of God; language which could not be employed if he were actually such: a thing cannot be said to be like to itself. Again, Christ was a high priest after the order of Melchisedec; if then he were Melchisedec he was made a high priest after his own order. It is true Christ in the character of the angel Jehovah, the angel of the Covenant, appeared in the likeness of man to the patriarch, but Christ was not incarnate till he was born of Mary,

and therefore could not be a priest; for every high priest is represented as taken from among men, chap. 5:1, and it “behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest,” chap. 2:17, not merely having the appearance of a man, but being actually such.

Melchisedec, after whose order Christ had been declared to be a priest, was king of Salem. This was, probably, Jerusalem, but of this we can have no certainty, nor is it of the smallest importance in order to our entering into the meaning of the Apostle. He was also priest of the most High God, Gen. 14:19, so that he united in his own person the offices of king and priest; he was, therefore, a royal priest. He met Abraham and blessed him, after the slaughter of the kings who had taken Lot, his nephew, prisoner.

This was a part of the duty of a priest in Israel. He offered the sacrifices, burnt incense, and blessed the people. Numbers 6:22, 27. The blessing which he pronounced on the patriarch is recorded. Gen. 14:19, 20.

V. 2.—To whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all; first being by interpretation King of righteousness, and after that also King of Salem, which is, King of peace,

Abraham gave to Melchisedec tithes of all, viz., of the spoils of the kings whom he had slain. This is the first time that we read of tithes in the Scripture, and, no doubt, this was the example followed by Jacob when he vowed a vow at Bethel, Gen. 28:22, although it does not appear to whom the portion devoted by him to God was to be given.

There is a mystery in the name of Melchisedec. [Names in Scripture were frequently, if not always, given to denote something characteristic concerning them, such as Noah, Gen. 5:29; Isaac, Jacob, &c.; and sometimes their names were changed in token of some favor vouchsafed to them, such as Abraham, Sarah, Israel, Solomon.] Its interpretation is king of righteousness. This is descriptive of the Son of God, Psalm 45:6, Hab. 1:8, Luke 19:38, Isai-

ah 32:1, John 1:49, 18:37. He was also king of Salem, which is by interpretation king of peace, which completed his resemblance to the Son of God. Psalm 72:1, 3, and 7.

V. 3.— Without father, without mother, without descent, hating neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually.

We have already observed that Melchisedec was a man; he must, therefore, have had a father and a mother, but his priesthood was not by descent like that of the sons of Aaron, “having neither beginning of days nor end of life.” We may again observe that in the description given of Melchisedec no conjecture is admissible; we must suppose nothing, but take the account given in Scripture as we find it, without addition or diminution. Now in regard to his parents the Scripture is silent, and it was not the intention of the Holy Ghost by the Apostle to add to the information already given. We read nothing of his father or mother, or of his descent. We read of Aaron and his sons being consecrated to, and entering on, the priest’s office, and of their deaths, but nothing of this kind is related of Melchisedec. He appears in the Scripture as a royal priest executing his office, and there he remains a remarkable type of the Son of God whose priesthood is everlasting.

V. 4.—Now consider how great this man was, unto whom even the patriarch Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

Having directed the attention of the Hebrews to this royal priest, who in so many particulars was an emblem of the high priest of our profession, the Apostle pauses to consider how great this man was to whom even the patriarch [The word patriarch means head of the fathers, and is so translated in the Syriac version.] Abraham gave the tenth of the spoils.

V. 5.—And verily they that are of the sons of Levi, who receive the office of the priesthood, have a commandment to take tithes of the people according to the law, that is, of their brethren, though they came out of the loins of Abraham.

The priests in Israel were of the tribe of Levi and of the family of Aaron. By Divine appointment they received tithes of their brethren, who were, like themselves, descendants of Abraham.

V. 6.—But he whose descent is not counted from them received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him that had the promises.

But he whose descend it not counted from them, and who, consequently, did not derive his title to receive tithes from them, *received tithes of Abraham, and blessed him*, to whom God had given the promises of being the progenitor of Christ and the father of all believers.

V. 7.—And without all contradiction the less is blessed of the better.

Upon this there can be no question, a father blesses his children, a priest blesses those for whom he ministers, and Abraham, by receiving Melchisedec, blessing and paying him tithes, acknowledged himself his inferior.

V. 8.—And here men that die receive tithes; but there he receiveth them of whom it is witnessed that he liveth.

Under the Jewish economy men that die receive tithes, but in the account of Abraham's intercourse with Melchisedec he received tithes, of whose death we have no account, it is only testified that he lived. [*He received them*; this is a supplement, and should be in the imperfect tense, as likewise *lived* instead of *liveth*. The Scripture testifies of Melchisedec, as living and exercising his priesthood. It gives no hint of his death.] Of all the Jewish priests we read that they died and were succeeded by others, but we find Melchisedec engaged in the discharge of the duties of his office, and there we leave him.

V. 9.—And as I may so say, Levi also, who receiveth tithes, payed tithes in Abraham.

And indeed Levi may be said to have paid tithes in Abraham, the progenitor of the whole family of Israel.

V. 10. For he was yet in the loins of his father, when Melchisedec met him. If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

We have already noticed that the word perfect occurs very frequently in this Epistle, it means the fulfilment, or completion, of an object.

Here our Apostle argues the weakness and insufficiency of the Levitical priesthood, from the Scripture foretelling that another priest should arise after the order of Melchisedec and not after the order of Aaron.

V. 12.—For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law.

For the priesthood being changed, there is necessarily a change also of the law. Sacrifices were to be offered and incense offered only by the family of Aaron. Theirs was an everlasting priesthood coeval with the Mosaic dispensation, and therefore the change of the priesthood necessarily involved a change of the law.

V. 13.—For he of whom these things are spoken pertaineth to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar.

For he was declared a priest after the order of Melchisedec, Heb. 3:1, 4:14-15, and 5:4-10, and pertained to another tribe of which no man officiated at the altar. We have seen that the priesthood had been expressly limited to the family of Aaron, and the appointment was confirmed in a very remarkable manner. When Izhar, the son of Levi, and Dathan and Abiram, the sons of Eliab, and On, the son of Peleth, sons of Reuben, sought the priesthood, Num. 16:3-31, alleging that all the congregation was holy, and complained that Moses and Aaron lifted up themselves above the

congregation of the Lord, they took their censers and put fire in them, and laid incense thereon, standing in the door of the tabernacle. The earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and of their censers were made broad plates for a covering of the altar,—“To be a memorial unto the children of Israel, that no stranger, which is not of the seed of Aaron, come near to offer incense before the Lord; that he be not as Korah, and as his company: as the Lord said to him by the hand of Moses.” Num. 16:40. And not only so, but by the Lord’s commandment the rods of the princes of the congregation, twelve rods, were laid before the Lord in the Tabernacle, and next day Aaron’s rod was budded and bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds, Num. 17: This settled the matter; the children of Israel said, “Whosoever cometh anything near unto the tabernacle of the Lord shall die.” Num. 17:13.

V. 14.—For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

The language of the Apostle merits special attention. We have seen that the priesthood in Israel was irrevocably limited to the family of Aaron. Here we are told that Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood in the tribe of Judah. [One of the greatest of the kings of the same tribe presumed to offer incense, and was struck with leprosy to the day of his death. 2 Chron. 26:21.] At first sight this may appear but a negative proof, but the proof that the priesthood was exclusively confined to the family of Aaron was most positive. The family of Aaron was expressly designated to this office, and we have seen that the earth opened and swallowed up 250 chief men of the congregation for presuming to burn incense, and that the priesthood was further established in Aaron’s family by his rod blossoming and bearing almonds. Why then does this Apostle say that Moses *spake nothing* concerning priesthood in the tribe of Judah? No doubt to show the fallacy of the assertion that if such a thing is not prohibited it may therefore be practiced.

Here we are guarded against this sophistry, and taught that whatever is not enjoined in the worship of God is virtually forbidden. There are two ways in which any religious observance is enjoined, precept and example. When we have an express precept nothing more is necessary; but apostolic example is equally binding. The Apostles delivered the same directions to every church, 1 Cor. 4:17, 7:17; of this we have conclusive evidence in what is written on a comparatively unimportant subject. In the Church at Corinth some of the women, probably from the false principle that there was neither male nor female in Christ Jesus, and that therefore there should be no distinction in the Church, prayed and sang praises with their heads uncovered. The Apostle showed that this was improper, and concludes his argument,—“But if any man seem to be contentious, we have no such custom, neither the churches of God.” 1 Cor. 11:16. It is impossible for language more clearly to prove that we are to be guided by the recorded example of the apostolic churches. This is all that is necessary to put a stop to the endless divisions which prevail among the disciples of Christ.

But it has happened to them, as to mankind after the fall, God revealed himself in the seed of the woman, that is Christ, and appointed ordinances of worship. This is evident from the sacrifices of Cain and Abel. Through faith Abel offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, and faith must have respect to the Divine testimony; but when they thus knew God they glorified him not as God, by receiving and acting upon the instructions which he was pleased to deliver. They professed themselves to be wise, and capable of discovering the most acceptable mode of worshipping God, and their wisdom issued in their changing the image of the incorruptible God into an image made like unto corruptible man, and birds and beasts and four-footed things; and as the meet reward of their folly and wickedness God gave them up to every moral abomination.

Precisely the same course has been adopted since the promulgation of the Gospel, and this has issued in the manifestation of the

man of sin, and the innumerable divisions of the people of God, fully realizing the description of what took place when there was no king in Israel; every man did what seemed right in his own eyes. Now as Moses, speaking nothing concerning priesthood in the tribe of Judah, precluded our Lord from acting as a priest under that dispensation, so the Lord and His apostles, speaking nothing of any ordinance of worship, is tantamount to a positive prohibition.

Here we may observe the directions given by the Apostle to guard the Thessalonians against being involved in this mystery of iniquity:— "Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word or our epistle." 2 Thess. 2:15. This is a sufficient, and, in fact, the only security against their being involved in the apostasy. It originated in the fancied liberty of introducing into the worship of God ceremonies He had not enjoined, but which appeared calculated to have a good effect on the worshippers. This principle, once introduced, opened the floodgates of corruption. The doctrine of Christ is embodied in the few and simple ordinances which He has appointed; but, when these ordinances were changed, a new and false doctrine was exhibited, and gradually the Gospel of Christ was transformed into a system of will-worship and idolatry. The only remedy for this state of things was to adhere, without addition or diminution, to what is prescribed by the apostles, or exhibited in their practice, as recorded in their epistles.

V. 15.—And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest.

It is still more evident that another priest was to arise after the similitude of Melchisedec. This was plainly declared in the 110th Psalm. In chap. 5:6 the Apostle describes the Lord Jesus as a Priest after the order of Melchisedec, here He is said to be after the similitude of Melchisedec. The resemblance holds in a variety of particulars. He united in Himself the kingly and priestly offices; He did not succeed to them by birth, nor had He any successor. There

are also other particulars of resemblance to which the Apostle adverts.

V. 16.—Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.

The Aaronic priesthood was made after the law of a carnal commandment, the son succeeding his father as death opened the succession; but the priesthood of Christ was after the power of an endless life, enduring in immortal strength.

V. 17.—For he testifieth Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

For He (the Father) testified of Him, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, which the Apostle had proved was altogether different from the order of Aaron.

V. 18.—For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof

For there is verily a disannulling of the commandment going before, which the Apostle had described as a carnal commandment, and, consequently, weak through the flesh. Rom. 8:3. This, however, is applicable to the whole law, the stability or removal of which depends on the continuance or abolition of the priesthood, which we have seen was to be coeval with the dispensation, of which it formed the most important part.

V. 19.—For the law made nothing perfect, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.

The Apostle had previously inquired if perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, under which the people had received the law—they were closely and inseparably blended—why another priest was foretold after a different order? Here he says the law made nothing perfect, it was merely the introduction of a better hope, [Our translators have inserted the supplement *did*, but it evidently should be *was*. This passage generally corresponds with chap.

10:1.] by which we draw near to God. It was no more than a shadow of good things to come, chap. 10:1, and of that glorious dispensation under which believers draw nigh to God, having access by one Spirit to the Father. Eph. 2:18; 3:12; Rom. 5:2.

V. 20.—And inasmuch as not without an oath he was made priest.

Here the Apostle proceeds to another point of superiority of the priesthood of Christ, proceeding still to comment on Psalm 110. The Apostle's object is to prove the superiority of the priesthood of Christ to the Levitical priesthood, from the description given of the former in Psalm 110. He had shown that Christ's priesthood was everlasting, while the Levitical priesthood passed from father to son; and here he proceeds to another argument for its superiority—it was made with an oath. Our translators have inserted a supplement, "He was made a priest," which is necessary for completing the sense.

V. 21.—(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.).

This is a parenthesis, and contains a proof of the superiority of the priesthood of Christ from the Levitical priesthood, which was made without an oath, because it was only temporary; but the priesthood of Christ with an oath, which rendered it, and, consequently, the covenant with which it stood connected, everlasting.

V. 22.—By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

By so much Jesus was made the surety of a better covenant.—The word rendered "surety" does not occur in any other passage of the New Testament; it is derived from the word *near*, and is equivalent to mediator—one through whom we draw near. Israel drew near to God through the Levitical priests; but the Apostle

had shown that the Mosaic dispensation was temporary, and merely introductory to a better, even an eternal covenant, of which Jesus is the Mediator. It had been previously proved that the continuance of the law depended on the continuance of the Aaronic priesthood, ver. 12. Aaron had four sons, two of whom died immediately after they had entered on their office; so that the continuance of the Jewish dispensation depended on the lives of the survivors, and their leaving male children. The priests might, therefore, with great propriety, be called the sureties of the Sinai covenant; while Jesus, whose priesthood is everlasting, is the Surety of a better covenant. Our translators have rendered the word *διαθήκη* in this place *testament*. The LXX. [The Septuagint translation of the Old Testament into Greek was made about three hundred years before Christ.] uniformly translates the Hebrew word *Pruth*, by covenant, and in the Old Testament they are followed in our version.

It occurs thirty-one times in the New Testament, and is translated covenant, excepting in seven places; and it would have been much better if it had been uniformly translated covenant, and there is no good reason for this not having been done.

V. 23-24.—And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death. But this man, because he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood.

The priesthood of the house of Aaron comprehended many individuals, because they were mortal, which implied the temporary nature of the Sinai covenant, to which they were attached, and of which they were the sureties.

But this man, because, according to the oath, he continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood, which, in like manner, implies the stability of the covenant of which He is the Surety.

V. 25.—Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come unto God by him, seeing he ever liveth to make intercession for them.

In consequence of His unchangeable priesthood, He is able to save to the uttermost, or for evermore, those that come unto God by Him, seeing He ever liveth to make intercession for them. The intercession of Christ is founded on His atonement, whereby He hath magnified the law of God, and made it honorable, restoring what He took not away. He bore the sins of His people in His own body on the tree. He once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring them to God. " Forasmuch, then, as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage." Heb. 2:14, 15. "He gave himself for them, an offering and a sacrifice unto God of a sweet-smelling savour." Eph. 5:2.

Had it so pleased God, the whole race of mankind might doubtless have been saved by His death. It was a sacrifice of infinite value; and, had it so pleased God, might have expiated the sins of all men. Had such been the case, however, it might have been alleged that mankind had been hardly dealt with; but a part of them, like the rebel angels, perished, while an innumerable multitude of our fallen race chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, are washed in His blood, and created anew in Him who is to them the spring and source of their spiritual, as the first Adam was of their natural life; and as their first father's death was the death-knell of the whole family, so the eternal life to which Christ has risen is the assured pledge of all His people, even those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren, in contradistinction to those to whom He will declare, "I never knew you," living and reigning with Him for ever and ever.

V. 26.—For such an High Priest became us, who is holy, harmless, undefiled, separate from sinners, and made higher than the heavens.

The Apostle then proceeds to describe the character of our High Priest. "Such an High Priest became us." We have the same ex-

pression, chap. 2:10, "For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings." It corresponded with and necessarily resulted from His character, that the Captain of our salvation should be fully qualified for His office through sufferings. In exercising mercy, God could not cease to be just and true. There could be no jarring of His glorious attributes. He had denounced death as the wages of sin, and fallen man must die after a life of sorrow and suffering. When He constituted His only-begotten Son the Head of the seed of the woman, it was necessary that this second Adam should take part with the children whom God had given Him in flesh and blood; that He should be a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and not only so, but that He should be made free among the dead, because the wages of sin is death.

The full penalty was exacted of Him. The first man had violated the law of God, as if its burden was too grievous to be borne; and it behoved the second Adam, the surety and representative of God's chosen family, to wipe off the foul aspersion by cheerfully obeying that law; although now, in consequence of sin, his obedience was connected with self-denial and suffering. He tasted all the bitterness of death, as the expiator of the guilt of His brethren, and as the reward of His obedience unto death, receiving a new and endless life, which He communicates to all His brethren.

In the passage under consideration, we are taught that it necessarily resulted from our circumstances that our High Priest should be holy; not merely separated from His brethren, to stand between them and God; not only free from any bodily defect or blemish; but holy, perfectly and absolutely holy, as God is holy, harmless, and undefiled even in passing through this polluted world. [The priests under the law were liable to contract defilement, both by contact with anything unclean, and by bodily infirmities; but our High Priest is undefiled. He was purity itself; nothing could render Him unclean. It is remarkable that our Lord proved this by laying hands on lepers, and touching the dead.

Matt. 8:2, 3; Luke 7:14. Temptation proved like the application of fire to an incombustible substance.]

The prince of this world came, but he found nothing in Jesus on which his venom could fix; neither the pangs of hunger, the desire of admiration, nor the possession of power led Him for a moment to swerve from that undeviating obedience which the holy law required. He could challenge His enemies to convict Him of sin, and He could appeal to His Father for His love to the law. It is exceeding broad; it extends to the thoughts and intents of the heart; but He felt no wanderings of desire that the obedience it required should be less extensive. Being Himself infinitely holy, as Immanuel, God with us, the image of the invisible God, an image so exact that he who saw Him saw the Father, the law was in His heart on account of its perfect purity. Psalm 119:140.

Another qualification essential to our High Priest was that He should be made higher than the heavens. The Apostle had already proved the superiority of Christ to the angels. He had by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they, Heb. 1:4; nay, had been described as God seated on His eternal throne, Heb. 1:8. He had ascended far above all heavens, that He might fill all things. Eph. iv. 10. In delivering their commission to His Apostles, He informed them that all power was committed to Him in heaven and in earth.

Matt. 28:18. As God over all, He ever possessed this power; but, in the passage referred to, he speaks of it as given to Him in the character of Mediator. Power was given Him over all flesh, that He might give eternal life to as many as the Father had given Him. John 17:2. As the Father raiseth the dead, and quickeneth them, so the Son quickeneth whom He will. John 5:21. All that are in the grave shall hear His voice, and receive from Him their irreversible sentence. Such is the matchless glory of our High Priest, and such an high priest became us. It is the property of wisdom in the use of means neither to employ such as may prove insufficient, nor such as are redundant. This is exemplified in the character of our

High Priest; all His power and glory are essential to the discharge of His office. Such an high priest became us.

We see, then, in our great High Priest every necessary qualification; unspotted holiness, to meet the utmost demands of the law. We are taught that the heavens are not clean in the sight of God, but He is ever well-pleased in His beloved Son. He sees all His own perfections fully reflected by Him. Those whom He came to deliver were dead; the curse of God lay heavy on them; and so great was the work of redeeming His people, that the whole creation was, so to speak, put in motion for their recovery; and therefore angels, principalities, and powers were made subject to Him, and thus He was made higher than the heavens.

V. 27.—Who needeth not daily, as those high priests, to offer up sacrifice, first for his own sins, and then for the people's: for this he did once, when he offered up himself.

It follows that he had no occasion, like the Jewish high priests, to offer many sacrifices; first, for his own sins, and then for those of the people. Sins he had none; his hands were clean, his heart was pure, and he fully expiated the sins of his people by once offering himself as a Lamb without spot or blemish.

The grave had not ceased to cry, Give, give, and those who entered its gloomy chambers mouldered to dust; but the Holy One of God could see no corruption, the earth cast forth her dead, thus declaring that the dominion of death was at an end; that, in fact, it was abolished, being deprived of its sting, and the grave converted into a bed of rest from which all the redeemed shall come forth, that in one body they may occupy those mansions which the Firstborn is gone before to prepare.

V. 28.—For the law maketh men high priests which have infirmity: but the word of the oath, which was since the law, maketh the Son, who is consecrated for evermore.

The law constitutes men high priests which have infirmity, and who, by reason of death, cannot continue in their office; but the word of the oath, which was uttered since the law, Thou art a high priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec, constitutes the Son of God a priest for evermore.

Chapter Eight

V. 1.—Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens.

The Apostle had proposed to leave the elements , or first principles, of Christian doctrine, (chap. 6:,) which we have interpreted of the types and figures of the Mosaic law. That such was his meaning is evident from the course he actually pursues; in the first place proving the security of the heirs of promise, from the oath by which the blessing was secured to Abraham and his seed; then proceeding to unveil the mysteries of the priesthood of Melchisedec, and to show its accomplishment in the everlasting priesthood of Christ, together with the benefits derived from him by those to whom he stands in the relation of their High Priest. He now sums up what he had previously taught, by giving a comprehensive view of the superiority of the new covenant over the covenant of Sinai.

The sum of what he had said of the priesthood of Christ was that believers have an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of God, according to the promise in the 110th Psalm, which he had so fully illustrated.

V. 2.—A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle which the Lord pitched, and not man.

He was a minister of the holy places, *τῶν ἁγίων*, in distinction to the tabernacle, or royal tent, in which the God of Israel represented himself as dwelling among his chosen people, first in the wilderness, and then in the land of Canaan.

The true tabernacle may either be understood of heaven, or of the body which was prepared for the incarnation of Christ, which was essential to his unity with his people, chap. 2:11, and being qualified to act as their high priest, chap. 5:1. The tabernacle was the habitation of the God of Israel, and we find Jesus, when the

Jews desired a sign, saying, "Destroy this temple and in three days I will raise it up, but he spake of the temple of his body," John 2:18-21, or, perhaps, it rather means heaven itself, in distinction from the worldly sanctuary. He afterwards teaches that Christ is not entered: "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us," chap. 9:24.

V. 3.—For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer.

As every high priest is ordained to offer gifts, free will offerings, and propitiatory sacrifices, it is therefore necessary that this High Priest have somewhat to offer.

V. 4. For if he were on earth he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law.

For if he were on earth he could not be a priest, seeing an order of priests were already constituted who offered gifts and sacrifices according to the law.

V. 5.— Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, saith he, that thou make all things according to the pattern showed to thee in the mount.

The services of these priests were an example and shadow of heavenly things, which was intimated to Moses by the charge given him to make all things according to the pattern showed him in the mount. Some suppose that we are here taught that not only minute directions were given to Moses respecting the tabernacle and the services of the Levitical priesthood, but that he received an explanation of the mystery or parable which he was employed to communicate to Israel, and this interpretation receives countenance from what the Lord said on the occasion of the difference which arose between Moses and Aaron and Miriam: "Hear now

my words: If there be a prophet among you, I the Lord will make myself known unto him in a vision, and will speak unto him in a dream. My servant Moses is not so, who is faithful in all mine house. With him will I speak mouth to mouth, even apparently, and not in dark speeches; and the similitude of the Lord shall he behold: wherefore then were ye not afraid to speak against my servant Moses?" Numbers 12:6-8. Now it may be alleged that if Moses only beheld a pattern of the tabernacle and the vessels of the ministry of Aaron and his sons, the Lord only made his will known to him in a vision. From the language employed, however, that he was to make all things according to the pattern showed to him in the mount, it would appear that he did not see the reality, but simply a pattern, namely, the tabernacle complete in all its parts, and the priests performing their various services, which was "an example and shadow of heavenly things." This interpretation appears to be confirmed by what the Lord said to his servant when he besought the Lord to show him his glory:

"And he said, Thou canst not see my face: for there shall no man see me, and live. And the Lord said, Behold, there is a place by me, and thou shalt stand upon a 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 while I pass by: And I will take away mine hand, and thou shalt see my back parts: but my face shall not be seen." Exod. 33:20-23. Had it been given to Moses to behold the true tabernacle, and our great High Priest ministering therein, he would have seen God's face, or, in other words, the glory of the Lord in the unveiled face of Jesus Christ; 2 Cor. 3:18; according to our Lord's words, "He that hath seen me hath seen the Father," John 14:9. Hence we conclude that a vision of the tabernacle and its services was given to Moses in the Mount, and that, as in the case of David, all this the Lord made him, understand in writing by His hand upon him, even all the works of this pattern. 1 Chron. 28:19.

If it be asked, how Moses was admonished of God that what was enjoined was an example and shadow of heavenly things, by be-

ing charged to make all things according to the pattern showed to him in the Mount? it is replied, that the care enjoined not to deviate in any particular from the pattern shown to him evidently implied that it was an emblem of heavenly things, for how otherwise would God have enjoined such minute attention to services which, considered in themselves, were unworthy of his notice?

V. 6.—But now hath he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises.

The Apostle had shown that it behoved our great High Priest to have somewhat to offer, since the very object of the priestly office is to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins, ch. 5:1. He also argues that this offering could not be made upon earth, because priests were already appointed exclusively to offer gifts according to the law, whose services are an example and shadow of heavenly things, as had been plainly intimated to Moses. He therefore concludes that our great High Priest hath obtained a more excellent ministry, being the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. He thus introduced what he intended to say of the new covenant, the difference between which and the Sinai covenant is the grand object of the Epistle.

Jesus is here described as the mediator of a better covenant. We are taught that the first covenant was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator, Gal. 3:19, referring to Moses, who stood between God and the people Israel, went up to the mount with God, and received the instructions which he was pleased to deliver. But the Apostle is here speaking of the priesthood of Christ, and although Moses was the mediator of the Sinai covenant, yet when he was removed the high priest acted as mediator, for he presented the gifts and sacrifices which were enjoined, burned incense, and blessed them, and inquired of God upon any emergency which arose; but Jesus had obtained a more excellent ministry, being the mediator of a better covenant, established upon better promises.

The better promises of the new covenant are salvation from sin and eternal life. The promises of the Sinai covenant were all earthly, such as long life in the land of Canaan, plentiful harvests, victory over their enemies, and national prosperity. This may be ascertained by consulting Lev. 26.; Deut. 28.; and therefore that covenant was ratified with the blood of bulls and goats which can never take away sin, and only sanctifies to the purifying of the flesh. The new covenant, as has been already stated, is established upon better promises and was ratified with the blood of Christ, which cleanseth the children of the covenant from all sin. They shall all be presented faultless before the presence of God's glory with exceeding joy.

V. 7.—For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second.

Had the first covenant been faultless there would have been no place for a second. It has been already observed, ch. 7:19, that God does nothing in vain. In his dealings with mankind there are no works of supererogation.

V. 8.—For finding fault with them, he saith, Behold, the days come, saith the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.

In God's dispensations towards Israel we perceive the highest wisdom. The misunderstanding of it has been indeed the great means of corrupting the religion of Jesus. The folly and wickedness of man perverts and abuses the goodness of God. "All the words of his mouth are in righteousness, there is nothing perverse or froward in them." Prov. 8:8. The Sinai covenant was very glorious, and this was signified by the glory of Moses' countenance, but this glory not enduring, imported the vanishing away of the glory of the first covenant, when it had answered the purpose of introducing the second. The first covenant fully attained its Divine end, namely that of introducing the second covenant; but it was never intended to give eternal life, and therefore, considered in itself, it was not faultless nor adequate to the exigencies of fallen

man. Hence the Lord, finding fault, says to the Israelites, “Behold the days come when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah.” [When the Lord promised to make a new covenant, he was not finding fault with Israel. Jer. 31:31. The Apostle had said, if the first covenant had been faultless, then no place should have been found for the second. The promise of a new covenant was virtually finding fault with the old, declaring its insufficiency.] The first covenant was made with Israel after the flesh, the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; the new covenant is made with those that are Christ’s, who are Abraham’s seed and heirs according to the promise. Gal. 3:29. God adopted Israel after the flesh to be his peculiar people, in virtue of their being the seed of Abraham, and consequently related to Christ; but it was a carnal relation; hence Israel were blessed with all carnal blessings in earthly places, namely, the land flowing with milk and honey. But the true Israel, in virtue of their spiritual relation to Christ, are blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Eph. 1:3.

V. 9.—Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; became they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, saith the Lord.

Here we have a characteristic of the new and better covenant. It is first described negatively. It was not to be according to the covenant that God made with their fathers, [Although the believing Gentiles were not descended from Israel after the flesh, yet they are here spoken of as their children. We And the Apostle using the same language, 1 Cor. 10:1.] when He took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt. [The redemption of Israel was temporal, from the bondage of Egypt, as were all their temptations in the wilderness.]

Before forty days had elapsed since they trembled under the voice of God, they broke the covenant by bowing to the golden calf; and their whole history was a continued course of rebellion.

Hence the judgments executed on them, and their present state of dispersion among all nations. They refused to hearken to their covenant God, who had distinguished them above all other nations; and therefore they largely experienced the curses denounced against disobedience, until they were cast out of their inheritance.

V. 10.—For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people.

Here the covenant is described positively. God engages to put His laws into their minds, and write them upon their hearts. The law delivered to Israel was written on tables of stone, plainly showing them, their duty, saying, "This is the way; walk ye in it;" but it gave no strength, no disposition to obey, and is, therefore, described by the Apostle as the letter, or writing, which killeth. The children of the new covenant, on the other hand, are described as the epistle of Christ, written with the Spirit of God in fleshly tables of the heart. They are exhorted to work out their own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God that worketh in them to will and to do of His good pleasure.

They are chosen unto obedience through sanctification of the Spirit and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ. 1 Pet. 1:2. They are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God had before ordained that they should walk in them. "Moses describeth the righteousness which is of the law, That the man which doeth those things shall live by them. But the righteousness which is of faith speaketh on this wise, Say not in thine heart, Who shall ascend into heaven? (that is, to bring Christ down from above) or, Who shall descend into the deep? (that is, to bring up Christ again from the dead.) But what saith it? The word is nigh thee, even in thy mouth, and in thy heart: that is, the word of faith, which we preach; that if thou shalt confess with thy mouth the Lord Jesus, and shalt believe in thine heart that God

hath raised him from the dead, thou shalt be saved." Rom. 10:5-9. The children of the old covenant were under the law, and were a stiff-necked people; but the children of the new covenant were under grace, and therefore sin shall not have dominion over them. They are the temple of the Holy Ghost which dwelleth in them, which they have of God. "The law," says the Apostle, "was given by Moses; but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ." John 1:17.

And I will be to them a God...—By the Sinai covenant God proclaimed Himself the God of Israel, and required their obedience; but they broke the covenant, by making the golden calf; and although the tables were renewed, still they were rebellious, and brought upon themselves many severe judgments; and not only so, but their rejection was foretold "Ye are not my people, and I will not be your God," Hosea 1:9; and again, "The Lord God shall slay thee, and call his servants by another name." But, amidst all their rebellions, there was a remnant according to the election of grace; and "as the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not, for a blessing is in it; so the Lord did for his servants' sakes, that he might not destroy them all" Isa. 65:8. But when they filled up the measure of their iniquities, by not only killing the Lord Jesus, but rejecting the evidence of His resurrection and ascension, in the outpouring of the Spirit on the day of Pentecost, wrath came upon them to the uttermost. The Lord, according to His threatening, slew them, and called His servants by another name. Acts 11:26.

By the new covenant God is the God of His people, in a higher sense than He was to Israel after the flesh. The privileges which the children of both covenants enjoyed were in virtue of their relation to Christ. The one was a carnal relation; of them, according to the flesh, Christ came, and, in consequence, they were blessed with all carnal blessings in earthly places.

They were redeemed from Egyptian bondage; they were fed with manna, preserved in the wilderness, put in possession of a land

flowing with milk and honey. Thus were they blessed with all carnal blessings in earthly places. The children of the new covenant are spiritually related to Christ, and are consequently blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places. Their redemption is spiritual; their citizenship is in heaven; their inheritance is incorruptible, undefiled, and fadeth not away.

V. 11.—And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest.

This is another part of the blessing bestowed on the children of the new covenant. They all know the Lord, from the least to the greatest. This knowledge is not communicated by every man teaching his neighbour. "It is written in the prophets," says our Lord, "They shall be all taught of God. Every man, therefore, that hath heard and hath learned of the Father cometh to me." John 6:45. And in exact correspondence with this, the Apostle John says, in writing to believers, "I have not written unto you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it, and that no lie is of the truth;" and again, "These things have I written unto you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which ye have received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teacheth you of all things, and is and is no lie, and even as it hath taught you, ye shall abide in him." 1 John 2:21, 26-27. It is unnecessary to add, the expression, "They shall not teach every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, Know the Lord," does not mean that believers are not to teach and admonish one another, which is so frequently enjoined by the apostles; the passage means that the knowledge of the Lord, which all the children of the new covenant possess, is not derived from human instruction, but from the Spirit of Christ taking of the things of Christ, and showing them unto us. All the children of the new covenant have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit that is of God, that they might know the things that are freely given to us of God. 1 Cor. 2:12.

God commanded Moses to make a covenant with the children of Israel in the land of Moab, besides the covenant which He made with them in Horeb. Deut. 29:1. In this covenant He not only warned them against disobedience by denouncing the awful consequences which would follow, but informed Israel that when all these things, the blessing and the curse, had come upon them, they should be brought into the land which their fathers possessed, and that He would circumcise their hearts, and the hearts of their seed, to love the Lord their God. Deut. 30:1, 6. Part of this chapter is quoted by the Apostle, who describes it as the language of the righteousness which is of faith, in contrast with the righteousness which is of the law. Rom. 10:5, 9. It is here the Apostle uses greater plainness of speech than Moses, who taught with a vail upon his face; but still he tells us that in the words quoted from Moses there is the language of the righteousness of faith, obscurely communicated by the Jewish lawgiver, but clearly taught under a more glorious dispensation. The account of the new covenant is taken by our Apostle from Jeremiah; but the same truth had been more darkly intimated by Moses, before Israel entered Canaan.

V. 12.—For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more.

The sacrifices offered by the law only brought sin to remembrance. Heb. 10:3. They could not remove it; but the prophet, as quoted by the Apostle, foretells that, under the new covenant, God would be merciful to the unrighteousness of His people, and no longer remember their sin. This refers to the perfection of the atonement of the Son of God. The sins of His people are for ever buried in their Savior's grave, and when they are sought for they shall not be found. Jer. 1. 20; Col. 2:14. Thus is fulfilled the prediction that our great High Priest should finish transgression, make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness. His salvation shall be for ever, and His righteousness shall not be abolished. Isa. 51:6. Such is the superiority of the new dispensation, to which the old was merely pre-

paratory. Moses and the apostles of Christ spoke the same things, only Moses taught in parables, representing spiritual and heavenly things under the vail of things which were carnal and earthly. The first covenant was made with the posterity of Abraham, in the line of Isaac and Jacob; the second with those that are Christ's, who are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

V. 13.—In that he saith, A new covenant, he hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

We have had occasion to notice how much instruction the Apostles deduce from words and statements in the Scriptures which we should be very apt to overlook. For instance, from Psalm 95:11; and from the account of Melchisedec, chap. 7:1-3. Here we find another instance of the same thing.

God had promised a *new* covenant, and from this the Apostle draws the palpable conclusion of the abolition of the first, or old covenant. Should it be asked, Is it worthy the character of the unchangeable God to establish a temporary dispensation? Does He not know the end from the beginning? Certainly He does. But in the establishment and abolition of the Sinai covenant, there was no change of purpose. The Mosaic economy was intended as an introduction of the new covenant; and, instead of its establishment and abolition being derogatory to the wisdom of God, like every other part of the Divine providence it is a striking manifestation of His manifold wisdom, and affords the most satisfactory evidence of the truth of revelation.

Had the Scriptures consisted only of one part, it would naturally have been committed to one class; and it might have been alleged that it had been tampered with, and the recorded events been made to suit the predictions which went before. But this cavil is completely cut off.

By choosing the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob as His peculiar people, of whom, as concerning the flesh, Christ came, and com-

mitting to them the living oracles which testify of Christ, and afterwards rejecting them on account of their unbelief; taking the kingdom of heaven from them, and giving it to those who, by faith, were spiritually united to Christ; to whom the New Testament was committed; every possibility of collusion was prevented, and an unimpeachable proof given that the prophecies which went before were not the word of man, but that holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost; and not only so, but all the burdensome rites of Jewish worship, and, indeed, the whole history of that singular people, had their fulfilment in the kingdom of God.

In promising a new covenant, the first was made old; for when anything is said to be *new* in comparison of another thing, that must be *old* in comparison of it; and it is self-evident that what decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.

We have seen that a new and better covenant was made known to Israel by Moses, a covenant of which the token was not circumcision of the flesh, but of the heart, which is explained by Jeremiah, of writing His law in their hearts, and being to them a God in a higher sense than He was to Israel. Jer. 31:33.

The same thing was made known by the prediction that the Lord would raise up to them a prophet like unto Moses, to whom they must hearken, on pain of condign punishment. Deut. xviii. 18, 19. Now we are taught that "there arose not a prophet since in Israel like unto Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face." Deut. 34:10. This was fulfilled in the manifestation of the Son of God. Acts 3:22, 23. Thus we find the abrogation of the Mosaic economy clearly and repeatedly made known to Israel. Indeed, how could it be otherwise, when the blood with which the Sinai covenant was ratified was that of bulls and goats, which can only sanctify to the purifying of the flesh? Now, as all flesh is grass, and all human glory like the flower of grass, so all the splendour of the Jewish worship, being carnal and earthly, necessarily gave place to that king-

dom which cannot be moved, and, like its great Author, is the same yesterday, today, and for ever.

The everlasting doors have been thrown open for the entrance of the King of Glory. He has for ever sat down at the right hand of the majesty of the throne in the heavens, and is engaged in preparing mansions for all his blood-bought sheep, whom He is successively receiving into everlasting habitations; and when the mystery of God shall be finished, they shall all be made perfect in one, and, enriched with the spoils of death and the grave, shall surround His exalted throne through the revolving ages of eternity, reigning with Him in the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness.

Chapter Nine

V. 1.—Then verily the first covenant had also ordinances of divine service, and a worldly sanctuary.

The Apostle having proved that the establishment of the new and better covenant, of which Christ is the mediator, had been clearly predicted, proceeds to contrast the ordinances of the old with those of the new covenant.

Then verily...—The word covenant is properly supplied by our translators, as in verses 7 and 13 in the preceding chapter. Some would supply tabernacle, but this would occasion an awkward repetition in the end of the verse, and also in verse 2. The ordinances to which the Apostle refers were enjoined by the first covenant. There were ordinances of Divine service, or, rather, of worship, and a worldly sanctuary, or holy place, not only made of worldly materials, but erected in this world, and, as it had been stated, chap. 8:5, a shadow of heavenly things.

V. 2.—For there was a tabernacle made; the first, wherein was the candlestick, and the table, and the showbread; which is called the sanctuary.

For there was a tabernacle made, in the first compartment of which was the candlestick. The candlestick was beaten out of a talent of gold. It had seven lamps, and gave light to the tabernacle. In the vision with which John was favored, he saw seven golden candlesticks, Rev. 1:12, which are said to be the seven Churches. Rev. 1:20. The people of God are the light of the world; and perhaps this was shadowed forth by the candlestick with its seven lamps enlightening the tabernacle. Zechariah also saw a golden candlestick with seven lamps. These were supplied with oil by two olive-trees, which are explained by the angel as signifying the supply of the Spirit, by which the truth is maintained in this dark world.

The table.—On this the shewbread was placed; it was of shittim wood, overlaid with gold, and had a cornice, which prevented the leaves from falling off. It was carried by staves of shittim wood, overlaid with gold. It was consecrated by sprinkling of blood, and anointed with oil.

And the shewbread; which is called the sanctuary, or holy place. Exod. 26:33, 35. [The shewbread consisted of twelve loaves, according to the number of the tribes of Israel, which were placed on the table. They were renewed every Sabbath, and were eaten only by the priests in the holy place. The tabernacle was the royal pavilion in which the King of Israel represented himself as dwelling in the midst of his people. The shewbread seems to have been an intimation of the coming of the Lord Jesus as Immanuel. Human food was provided.]

V. 3.—And after the second vail, the tabernacle which is called the Holiest of all.

And after the second vail...—The first vail was the hanging for the door of the tent. Exod. 26:36, 37. The second vail, within which no man in Israel, with the exception of the high priest, was permitted to enter, separated the holy place from the holiest of all.

V. 4.— Which had the golden censer, and the ark of the covenant overlaid round about with gold, wherein was the golden pot that had manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant.

In the most holy place was the golden censer. This was used by the high priest when he went into the holy of holies, for he was not to enter till the cloud of the incense covered the mercy-seat. As the Apostle tells us, it was within the second vail; and, as the high priest was required to burn incense, no doubt it must have been placed so that he could reach it without entering. This golden censer appears not to have been used on any other occasion than when the high priest entered the holiest of all. In the temple we read of censers of pure gold. 1 Kings 7:50.

And the ark of the covenant...—The ark was a chest, and it is called the ark of the covenant because in it the two tables of the law, written with the finger of God Himself, were deposited. It is also called the ark of the testimony, because it was a witness of the covenant which God made with Israel, avouching Himself to be their God, and requiring of them obedience. The ark was overlaid round about with pure gold, and had a crown of gold round about it.

Wherein was the golden pot that had manna. —Moses, by Divine commandment, laid up in a golden pot an homer of manna, as a memorial of the bread with which Israel had been fed in the wilderness. The Apostle cannot mean that the pot of manna was within the ark; for it is written, "There was nothing within the ark, save the two tables of stone, which Moses put there at Horeb." 1 Kings 8:9; 2 Chron. 5:10; and, therefore, "wherein," or "in which," must refer to a remote antecedent *schene*, called the holiest of all. Ver. 3.

And Aaron's rod that budded.—We have already referred to the sedition of the sons of Korah, who claimed a right to the priesthood, and were consumed, and noticed that the rod of the chief of each tribe was laid up before the Lord, to ascertain to which tribe the priesthood belonged. All the other rods were unchanged; but Aaron's rod put forth blossoms, and bore almonds, after which there was no further dispute about the priesthood. Moses, by Divine commandment, brought Aaron's rod before the testimony, to be kept for a token against the rebels, Numb. 17:10; and the Apostle here informs us it was placed in the holy of holies.

And the tables of the covenant.—We have already seen that they contained the two tables which contained God's covenant with Israel.

V. 5.—And over it the cherubim of glory shadowing the mercy-seat; of which we cannot now speak particularly.

The mercy-seat was the covering of the ark. Moses having been informed by God that Israel had made the golden calf, came down with the two tables in his hand; and, when he witnessed the idolatrous feast in which the people were engaged, cast down the tables, and broke them at the foot of the mount. This, no doubt, was done in anger, but it was a significant action, showing that the law of which Moses was the minister can only condemn the sinner. Rom. 3:20.

When the covenant was renewed through the intercession of the mediator, Moses prepared two tables like the first, upon which God again wrote the ten commandments, for the law is unchangeable; and, by God's commandment, prepared the ark for their reception, the covering of which was called the mercy-seat, which was also of pure gold. It was the throne of the God of Israel, from which He spoke to Moses. Exod. 37:6. No covering had been provided for the first tables, and they were broken before they reached the camp. The ark being covered with the mercy-seat, intimated that there was forgiveness with God, and that, while He would by no means clear the guilty, He was the Lord God, merciful and gracious. The tables being covered with the mercy-seat, showed that, in God's dealings with His people, mercy and truth have met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Hence we find the Psalmist, quoted by the Apostle, speaking of the blessedness of the man whose sins are *covered*, to whom the Lord will not impute sin.

Christ is the true propitiatory, or mercy-seat, Rom. 3:24, in whom God is revealed as just, and the Justifier of all who believe. Through faith in His blood, pardon is proclaimed to the chief of sinners; while a more awful manifestation of the justice, purity, and holiness of God is given, than if all Adam's race had been turned into hell, and, like the rebel angels, reserved unto judgment against the great day.

Whether the cherubim, as some suppose, are an order of angels, we know not, although it seems probable; but the cherubim of

glory, or the glorious cherubim, were of gold, beaten out of the mercy-seat, one at each end. They overshadowed the mercy-seat, spoken of by the Apostle, and their wings met in the middle. Their faces were turned towards each other, toward the mercy-seat. There appears to be an allusion to their posture, 1 Pet. 1:12, "Which things the angels desire to look into." They are represented as contemplating the wonders of the love of God to sinners of mankind, which, in its height and depth, its breadth and length, passeth knowledge.

Of which we cannot now...—The Apostle intended to go on to what these emblems shadowed forth, and therefore would not further insist on the patterns of things in the heavens.

V. 6.—Now when these things were thus ordained, the priests went always into the first tabernacle, accomplishing the service of God.

Now when these things were thus arranged, the priests went daily into the first tabernacle or compartment, performing the appointed service.

V. 7.—But into the second went the high priest alone once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the errors of the people.

But the high priest alone entered the second compartment, and he only once in the year, not without blood. He then sprinkled the blood of the sin-offering upon the mercy-seat, and also the blood of the goat. Thus he offered first for his own sins, and then for those of the people.

V. 8.—The Holy Ghost this signifying, that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest, while as the first tabernacle was yet standing.

By giving those directions, and excluding every man in Israel from entering the most holy place, the Holy Ghost, by whom all these directions were given to Moses, 1 Chron. 28:, intimated that the

way into the holiest of all was not yet laid open. The truth was but darkly intimated by these shadowy ordinances.

The word rendered here by our translators "holiest of all," is τῶν ἁγίων, literally "holies," and this is the same word in chap. 8:2, and there rendered "sanctuary." This is evidently the true sanctuary, even heaven itself; and the holiest of all, or holy places, in this verse, has evidently the same meaning. It is placed in contrast with the first tabernacle. This expression is employed, verse 6, to signify the first compartment of the Jewish tabernacle; but here it must be understood of the whole of the tabernacle worship instituted by Moses. This exactly corresponds with what the Apostle says, verse 24, of Christ having entered into heaven itself, there to appear in the presence of God for us. Here the Apostle speaks of the first tabernacle as he had formerly done of the first covenant. While it stood, the way into the true sanctuary was not made manifest.

V. 9.— Which was a figure for the time then present, in which were offered both gifts and sacrifices, that could not make him that did the service perfect, as pertaining to the conscience.

The Mosaic tabernacle was a figure or parable for the time then present, in or during which time [*Which* may refer either to the time, or, as our translators appear to have understood it, to the tabernacle; but, by the gender of the pronoun, the former appears to be intended.] both gifts and sacrifices were offered, which could not give the worshipper the answer of a good conscience, because the blood of bulls and goats could never take away sin; they only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, removing ceremonial uncleanness, and fitting the Israelites to unite in the Mosaic worship,

V. 10.— Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation.

Our translators have added *which stood*, to connect this with the preceding verse; but this is not necessary. The meats and drinks may be connected with the worshipper, or him that worshippeth (as, indeed, the words stand in the original), with meats and drinks. This has been objected to because the meats and drinks do not comprehend all the Mosaic institutions. But the gifts and sacrifices, verse 9, and the meats and drinks, and divers baptisms, and carnal ordinances, include the whole Mosaic system of worship. The breaking down of the middle wall of partition which separates Jews and Gentiles was intimated to Peter by the great white sheet let down from heaven, with all manner of beasts, and his being commanded to arise, and kill and eat. The Gentiles were now to be fellow-heirs, and of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ by the Gospel. The sheet being let down from heaven, and being received up again, might intimate that the Mosaic dispensation, although having no glory, by reason of the glory that excelleth, as exhibited in the new dispensation, was from God, and should remain for ever, a proof of His manifold wisdom, in giving a pattern of spiritual and heavenly things, before the full manifestation of His glory in the unveiled face of Jesus Christ.

V. 11.—But Christ being come an high priest of good things to come, by a greater and more perfect tabernacle, not made with hands, that is to say, not of this building.

But Christ being made an high priest of good things to come.—We have seen that the Gospel dispensation is termed the world to come, chap. 2:5; and this appears to be the meaning of good things to come. All the blessings of the old covenant were carnal; they referred to this world, as may be seen in the blessings promised for obedience, and the curses pronounced for disobedience. Lev. 26:; Deut. 28: But Christ is made an High Priest of a dispensation which conveys spiritual and eternal blessings.

The comforts and the blessings of time perish with the using; the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are un-

seen are eternal, and such are the blessings conveyed to us by our great High Priest. He is made an High Priest of good things to come —an High Priest for ever, chap. 6:2, and after the power of an endless life. Chap. 7:16. The Apostle had shown the superiority of our great High Priest to the priests under the law; and here he contrasts the tabernacle in which he ministers, with that erected by Moses. It was a greater and more perfect tabernacle. The former was only a pattern, the latter was the thing represented. The one was of human workmanship, the other was made by God Himself. The Apostle explains, “Not made with hands,” by not of this building, or, more literally, not of this creation. The Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. Acts 7:48. “Thus saith the Lord, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?” Isa. 66:1.

Some consider the greater and more perfect tabernacle, in which Christ ministers, to mean His body, in which He ministers as a priest, in which all the fulness of the Godhead dwells bodily, and this receives some countenance from Christ terming His body a temple, John 2:19-20; and from His being charged with saying that He would destroy this temple made with hands, and build another made without hands, Mark 14:58; but still it cannot be said that Christ entered once into the tabernacle of His own body, or that he is the minister of His human nature, as He is said to be of the true tabernacle. He is set at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens. Heb. 8:1. This is the sanctuary of which He is minister. This is the true tabernacle into which He has entered by His own blood. Chap. 9:12. Heaven itself is, then, the sanctuary where Christ ministers.

V. 12.—Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by his own blood; he entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us.

In all respects the ministry of our great High Priest is superior to the service of the Mosaic high priest. Jesus is an High Priest of

good things to come, not of things present which are seen and temporal, but of those which are unseen and eternal. He ministers in a greater and more perfect tabernacle, Heb. 8:2; He entered once for all into the most holy place, even heaven itself, having obtained eternal redemption for us. So glorious is His sacrifice that it neither requires nor admits of being repeated. It secures eternal redemption for all for whom it was offered. The Jewish sacrifices could only remove ceremonial uncleanness. The most solemn sacrifice, that on the great day of atonement, had only respect to sins committed during the preceding year; but the sacrifice of Christ hath removed all our sin from us as far as East is distant from the West. When the sins of those for whom the sacrifice of our great High Priest was offered are sought for, they shall not be found. He offered one sacrifice which never can be repeated, because it hath fully satisfied justice, answering all the demands of the law, so that Jesus proclaimed on the Cross, "It is finished" —eternal redemption is now secured to all the Israel of God. As the Jewish high priest bore the names of all the tribes on his shoulders and breastplate when he entered with the blood of the sin offering into the holiest of all, the names of the true Israel are engraved on His heart, and His intercession for them is founded on His having magnified and made honorable the law which they had broken. Such is the unity between Him and them that they all died in His death, rose in His resurrection, and are seated with Him in heavenly places.

V. 13.—For if the blood of bulls and of goats, and the ashes of an heifer sprinkling the unclean, sanctifieth to the purifying of the flesh.

The Jewish sacrifices being that of bulls and goats, could never take away sin, they could only remove ceremonial uncleanness, sanctifying to the purifying of the flesh; but by the Divine appointment they had this effect.

V. 14.—How much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without spot to God, purge your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?

How much more shall the blood of Christ purge the consciences of his people from dead works?— [Dead works, or works which merit death. Chap. 6:1. All are by nature dead in trespasses and sins, hence all their works are dead works. John 14:4.] The sacrifices appointed by Moses had in themselves no efficacy, but they did sanctify to the purifying of the flesh, they fitted the Israelites who had contracted uncleanness to come into the court of the tabernacle, and to unite in the tabernacle worship.

This was a parable for the time then present. It prefigured the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ in giving the believer the answer of a good conscience that he might draw near to God with childlike confidence. He who appointed the legal sacrifices, and gave them efficacy to answer the end of their appointment, hath provided a better sacrifice, which gives the true Israel boldness and access with confidence to approach to God. Christ is said to have offered Himself without spot to God.

Reference is here made to the sacrifices offered by the law. A sin-offering must be perfect to be accepted. Lev. 22:21; Matt. 18:13, 14. This was an emblem of Christ's spotless purity, chap. 4:15. He is a lamb without blemish and without spot, 1 Pet. 1:19. Christ offered Himself through the eternal Spirit. He was truly man born of a woman, while all the fulness of the Godhead dwelt in Him bodily. He was also the Father's servant to "raise up the tribes of Jacob, and to rest on the preserved of Israel;" and, as all Adam's posterity received natural life from Him, which was forfeited by sin, so all the people of God, all whom He had chosen in Christ, were to receive spiritual and eternal life from their great Head. When He entered upon His public work, and was manifested to Israel by a figurative burial and resurrection, the Holy Spirit descended upon Him in a bodily shape like a dove, and abode upon Him. Thus was He sealed as the Son of God, the source and foun-

tain of spiritual life. As the precious oil poured on the head of Aaron ran down to the skirts of his garments, so is the Holy Spirit which he received beyond measure communicated to all His people, who were dead in trespasses and sins, but are now made alive through their glorious Head; hence their life is said to be hid with Christ in God, and because He lives, they shall live also. By one Spirit they are all baptized into one body, and are all made to drink of that one Spirit. All He did and said was under the guidance of the Spirit. He said, "My doctrine is not mine, but the Father's who sent me." He represents Himself as casting out devils by the Spirit of God. In short, all He did and said upon earth was in obedience to His Father's will, communicated through the Spirit; and the last scene of His eventful life was consequently by the eternal Spirit through which He offered Himself without spot to God. So entire is the unity of the persons of the Godhead, that whatever is done by one is done by all. For instance, Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, He laid down His life and took it again, and He was quickened by the Spirit. Here we are told that through the eternal Spirit He offered Himself without spot to God, and the perfection of this sacrifice cleanseth believers from all sin, and gives them boldness and confidence before God. "Who," they exclaim, "shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifieth, who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea, rather that is risen again, who is even now at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us." The Father heareth him always, for His intercession is founded on that sacrifice of a sweet smelling savour, in which His Father is ever well pleased. The eternal covenant between the Father and the Son ran thus:—"When thou shalt make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand." Isaiah 53:10. Never was a service so hard as that which Jesus served, and never was reward so glorious as that which He received in recompense. All things are put under His feet; all power in heaven and in earth is committed to Him; the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son, in order that His prayer may be ful-

filled in all its extent—"Father, I will that those whom Thou hast given me may be with me where I am, that they may behold my glory, which Thou hast given me;" and thus, according to His own declaration, is He preparing mansions for them, even an eternal inheritance.

V. 15.—And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament, they which are called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

And for this cause he is the mediator of the new testament.—The word διαθήκη is uniformly rendered by our translators Covenant, except in the account of the institution of the Supper, and in 2 Cor. 3:6, Heb. 7:22, and in this passage, verses 15, 16, 17, 18, 20, where, following the Vulgate, they have rendered it Testament. But certainly this is improper. The Hebrew word Berith is always rendered covenant by the translators of the Old Testament, and there ought to have been no deviation from this practice in the New Testament.

The first covenant was ordained of angels in the hand of a mediator, Gal. 3:19. But there is no room for a mediator in a testament, or last will. On this passage a commentator inquires, "Was it ever known, in the practice of any nation, that a testament needed a mediator? Or that the testator was the mediator of his own testament? Or that it was necessary the testator of a new testament should die to redeem the transgressions of a former testament? Or that any testament was made by sprinkling the legatees with blood? These things, however, were usual in covenants. They had mediators who assisted at the making of them, and were sureties for the performance of them; [Hence, when Israel broke the Sinai Covenant, Moses, the Mediator, offered to die in their room.] they were commonly ratified with sacrifices, the blood of which was sprinkled on the parties. We know that if a former covenant was infringed by the parties, satisfaction was given by making a second covenant. By calling Christ *the mediator of the new testa-*

ment our thoughts are turned away entirely from the view which the Scriptures give at His death as a sacrifice for sin. Whereas if he is called the Mediator of the new covenant, which is the true translation of *διαθήκης καινῆς μεσίτης*, that appellation directly suggests to us that the new covenant was procured and ratified by his death as a sacrifice for sin.

For this cause he is the Mediator of the new covenant, that by means of death for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first covenant, they who were called might receive the promise of eternal inheritance. The sacrifices prescribed by the law could not take away sin, and therefore, and as God is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, neither can evil dwell with Him, in order that those who had sinned might receive the promise of an eternal inheritance, it was necessary that their sins should be expiated by the death of the Mediator of the new covenant. So that, under every dispensation, sin has been pardoned only through the blood-shedding of Christ. To the same purpose, the Apostle having stated that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God, and are only justified by his grace, through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, proceeds, "Whom God hath set forth as a propitiation," (or mercy seat, [The word here used is that translated mercy seat in the law of Moses.]) "through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God." Rom. 3:25. Here we have a plain intimation that the sins which are past, namely those committed under the first covenant, are remitted only through faith in the blood of Christ. The forbearance of God had waited during that dispensation, although no sacrifice had been provided that could expiate sin, Rom. 9:23, 24, or through which the people of God could receive the promise of eternal inheritance.

V. 16.—For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator.

Where a testament is, there is of necessity the death of the testator. It is true that a testament, or last will, is liable to be altered so long as the testator liveth; but there may be a valid testament executed and in force for years while the testator survives. But we have already seen, and shall find further proof, that the Apostle's reasoning does not apply to a testament. The word rendered in our version testator is a participle of the verb which signifies to appoint. It may be rendered the *appointed* (victim or sacrifice), or that by which the covenant is confirmed, which is the same.

That the Apostle is speaking of a covenant is certain, both from what goes before and what follows. We find instances in which a covenant was made without any sacrifice; on the other hand, sacrifices were frequently offered. Thus we find the covenant made with Abraham. Gen. 15: By the Divine commandment, Abraham took an heifer, a goat, a ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon, dividing them in the midst with the exception of the birds, and when it was dark a smoking furnace and a burning lamp, the emblem of the Divine presence, Heb. 12:29, passed between the pieces. Thus God made a covenant with Abraham, to give his posterity the land of Canaan. The heifer, goat, &c., were the appointed victims, whose death was essential to the ratification of the covenant. It was confirmed by their death.

We have another striking instance in Jeremiah 34: During the siege of Jerusalem the Jews made a covenant to let their servants go free, a calf was the appointed victim or sacrifice; it was slain, and those who made the covenant passed between the pieces. When they considered the danger to be passed they again brought the servants into bondage, and for this wickedness God denounces his judgments upon them; they are described as having "passed between the parts of the calf," thus confirming the covenant. These instances fully explain the language of the Apostle.

V. 17-18.—For a testament is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth. Whereupon neither the first testament was dedicated without blood.

For a testament is of force when men are dead. There is nothing in the original about men. The assertion of the Apostle is that a covenant is firm or confirmed upon the dead; for instance, the sacrifices employed by Abraham, and the calf by the inhabitants of Jerusalem. Till the death of these sacrifices, or victims, respectively, neither Abram's covenant, nor that of the Jews, was ratified or confirmed. This clearly illustrates the Apostle's meaning.

In perfect correspondence with this, the first, or Sinai covenant, was not dedicated, or ratified, without blood.

V. 19.—For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book and all the people.

When Moses had written all the words of the Lord he builded an altar, and took the blood of calves and bulls with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, in which the words of the covenant were written, and all the people. It may be asked, how the blood could be possibly sprinkled on such a multitude? The answer is, the twelve pillars represented the twelve tribes, and on them the blood was sprinkled. That *all* of such a multitude should be individually sprinkled appears impossible, but the twelve pillars which represented *all* the people might easily be sprinkled. There are some things mentioned by the Apostle which are not recorded by Moses, who informs us that having told the people all the words of the Lord and all the judgments, they answered with one voice and said, "All the words which the Lord hath said we will do." He then wrote in a book all the words of the Lord, builded an altar, and offered burnt offerings and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen unto the Lord. He then read the book of the covenant in the audience of the people, who said, "All that the Lord hath said will we do, and be obedient." Half the blood

was sprinkled on the people and half on the altar; and Moses said, "Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord hath made with you concerning all these words." Exod. 24:3-8. There is some variation in the account given by the Apostle, although it is substantially the same.

The goats mentioned by the Apostle seem included under the burnt offerings mentioned by Moses; Moses does not mention the water nor the scarlet wool and hyssop; but the Apostle wrote under Divine inspiration as well as Moses, and there is an entire correspondence between the account given by the Lawgiver and the Apostle.

V. 20.—Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God hath enjoined unto you.

When Moses sprinkled the blood on the book and on the people, he said, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord hath enjoined upon you." We may observe the correspondence between the words of Moses and those employed by the Lord at the institution of the Lord's Supper, "This is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins." Matt. 26:28. The blood of the old covenant was that of bulls and goats, by which the first covenant was ratified. The blood by which the new covenant was ratified was that of Christ. By the old covenant the nation of Israel became God's peculiar people, who dwelt among them and gave them a land flowing with milk and honey. God dwells in the hearts of all the children of the new covenant, and bestows on them an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and that fadeth not away.

V. 21.—Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry.

In the account given of setting up the tabernacle only the anointing oil is mentioned, but we find that the altar was sanctified with blood, Lev. 8:15; and the Apostle informs us that both the tabernacle and all the vessels of the ministry were sprinkled with blood,

and that under that dispensation there was no remission without shedding of blood, which clearly intimated that the wages of sin is death, and that the blood maketh atonement. Lev. 17:11.

V. 22.—And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission.

Almost all..—There were some exceptions; some things were purified with fire, others with water and the ashes of the red heifer, Numb. 31:23, 19:9, and without shedding of blood there was no remission. Hence the morning and evening sacrifices, and on the great day of atonement, Lev. 16:30, of which it is said, “On that day shall the priest make an atonement for you, to cleanse you, that ye may be clean from all your sins before the Lord.”

V. 23.—It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these.

Thus we see it was necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens, for the ordinances of the Mosaic dispensation were no more, should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves were better sacrifices than these. The whole of the Mosaic dispensation was a shadow of good things to come. The covenant and all its ordinances was a parable for the time then present. The moral law, even the ten commandments, were uttered in the hearing of all Israel by God himself, and were written on tables of stone, intimating their perpetual obligation. Thus the unchangeableness of God was the foundation of the covenant into which God brought the children of Israel. Hence it is frequently called the covenant, and the ark in which the tables were kept was called the ark of the covenant or of the testimony, because they testified the peculiar relation into which Israel were brought by the covenant. The people, not being able to endure that which was commanded, besought that God would not speak to them any more; accordingly, after the ratification of the covenant with the blood of bulls and of goats, God delivered to Moses the stat-

utes and judgments, and the sacrifices and purifications which Israel was to observe.

That the whole system was figurative, appears,

1st. From its being delivered to one nation, although all nations are made of one blood, and with God there is no respect of persons.

2d. Their obedience was required from the consideration of the peculiar relation in which God stood towards them, and of the temporal deliverance vouchsafed to them. "I am the Lord thy God, that brought thee out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of bondage, therefore thou shalt have no other gods before me."

3d. From God, whom the heaven of heavens cannot contain, commanding the tabernacle to be erected as the royal tent, in which he represented himself as dwelling in the character of the King of Israel in the midst of the people, from which he directed all their movements by the pillar of cloud by day and of fire by night.

4th. From the sacrifices which were enjoined, which could not possibly take away sin, and were offered from year to year continually, thus bringing sin to remembrance, at once testifying the necessity of atonement, and showing the inadequacy of the legal sacrifices, by their constant repetition.

5th. From the purifications, which only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, removing ceremonial uncleanness.

6th. From the system of religion enjoined being evidently local. All the males in Israel were required to appear three times in the year at a particular place, which might be suitable for one nation, but was impracticable as an universal system.

7th. From all the promises and threatenings, and the inheritance bestowed on Israel being carnal and earthly, Levit. 26:, Deut. 28:, Exod. 3:8.

The necessity of which the Apostle speaks arose—

1st. From the design of God to exhibit a pattern of that heavenly and eternal kingdom which it was his purpose to establish, in order to keep up the expectation of the appearance of the great King.

2d. Of separating the family from which he was to spring from all other nations; thus manifesting his faithfulness, in the fulfilment of his promise to Abraham, of affording a demonstration of the truth of the Gospel, for which so great preparations were made and so exact a pattern prepared; and, finally, of illustrating all the great doctrines of the Gospel, from their being embodied and placed before us in a tangible form. But, considered in themselves, these were all weak and beggarly elements, having no glory by reason of the glory that excelleth. By heavenly things we are not to understand literally things in the heavens, but those spiritual and eternal things revealed without a veil under the new and better covenant, ratified with the blood of the Son of God, which reveals a complete atonement for sin, consequently not to be repeated. During the old and introductory dispensation, while all the perfection of the Divine character was revealed, Jehovah appeared as the God of one nation, but this was only to make way for that glorious system by which all the families of the earth are invited to the enjoyment of an eternal inheritance by faith in Christ.

It is true that the religion of Jesus has been corrupted by blending the institutions of the new with those of the old dispensation, but by means of the Gospel, which we possess unadulterated in the Scriptures of truth, the kingdom of the man of sin shall be destroyed, and the Church of Christ, extended over all nations, shall appear fair as the sun, clear as the moon, and terrible as an army with banners.

V. 24.—For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself now to appear in the presence of God for us.

The Apostle here returns to our great High Priest, who hath not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are but figures of the true, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us. The priest daily entered the holy place, where incense was burnt on the golden altar; but on the great day of atonement the high priest entered the holiest of all, and sprinkled the mercy seat with the blood of the bullock for his own sins and of the goat for the sins of Israel. Our great High Priest had no sin, but has entered into heaven itself with his own blood shed for the remission of the sins of his people. There he appears in the midst of the throne as a Lamb that had been slain. And as the people of Israel watched for the high priest coming out from the most holy place that they might receive the blessing, so do believers wait for the second coming of the Lord Jesus, who shall then receive them into the everlasting mansions which he has prepared for them, saying, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

V. 25.—Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with blood of others.

Nor yet *was it necessary* that he should offer himself often, as the high priest entereth into the holy place every year with the blood of the sacrifice.

The Jewish worship was a shadow of good things to come. In order to keep up the expectation of the sacrifice by which Christ was to finish transgression, make an end of sin, make reconciliation for iniquity, and bring in everlasting righteousness, the high priest year by year, on the great day of atonement, entered the holiest of all with the blood of the sin-offering.

V. 26.—For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world hath he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself

In that case He must often have suffered since the foundation of the world; but now once in the end of the world, 1 Cor. 10:11, He hath appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself. When the tabernacle was reared, and when Aaron and his sons were consecrated, fire came down and consumed the burnt-offering upon the altar. Thus the Lord testified his approbation of the conduct of Moses in obeying the instructions which he had received.

This fire was not to be extinguished. It alone was to be employed in consuming the sacrifices, and two of Aaron's sons were struck dead for using strange fire. Many sacrifices continued to be offered in Israel; but still the Lord's fire, and His furnace in Jerusalem, continued to demand its victims. It did not say, "It is enough; from day today and from year to year," it still cried, "Give, give." Like the grave, it was not satisfied: but now once in the end of the world Christ appeared effectually to remove sin by the sacrifice of Himself. Thus the demands of justice were fully satisfied, and Christ by His resurrection abolished death and showed His people the path of life.

V. 27.—And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment.

And as it is appointed unto men once to die —to return to the dust from whence they were taken—***but after this the judgment.***— This passage is generally misquoted. As it is appointed for *all* men once to die, but there is no such appointment. Enoch before the law, and Elijah under the law, did not taste death, and the Apostle tells us those who remain to the coming of the Lord shall not all sleep, but shall all be changed; [This is the change for which Job says he will wait It does not refer to death, but to the resurrection, when this corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality. This is evident from the context: "Thou wilt call, and I will answer thee; thou wilt have respect to the work of thy hands." When the body is cast into the grave, God appears to have no respect to the work of His hands; but after the leprous house has been cast into an unclean place, it will

be raised spiritual and incorruptible, like Christ's glorious body.] but it is appointed to men once to die. It is the law of our fallen nature. The exception of Enoch and Elijah is a mystery which the Apostle explains, 1 Cor. 15:51, 52, of the change which shall take place on those who are alive at the coming of the Lord.

The judgment was intimated immediately after the fall. Sentence was passed on fallen man that he should return to dust; but mankind were divided into two families—the seed of the woman and of the serpent. The former were to prove victorious over their enemy, and we see him who was born of a woman, in His resurrection, trampling on the neck of Satan, and giving those whom He is not ashamed to call brethren the assurance of sharing his victory.

V. 28.—So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation.

Christ was made in all things like unto his brethren, yet without sin. In exact correspondence with the appointment that man should once die, Christ once suffered to bear the sins of many (even the children whom God had given Him). The Apostle Peter says,—“His own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.” 1 Pet. 2:24. Such is the unity between Christ and His people, that they all died in His death and rose in His resurrection; nay, they are represented as seated with Him in heavenly places. Eph. 2:6. Their citizenship is in heaven, whence they look for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the head, they are the members; His suffering is their suffering. They were created in Adam, who is the source of natural life. It is dried up; the Second Adam is the source of spiritual and eternal life, and He says,—“Because I live ye shall live also. Thus their life is hid with Christ in God; and when He, who is their life, shall appear, then shall they appear with Him in glory. Sin had doomed His people to death, but He descended into their prison-house. He felt the pillars by which it was supported—the justice and truth of

God; but He so magnified and made honorable the law which they had broken, that mercy and truth met together, righteousness and peace kissed each other. Hence the Gospel is called the revelation of God's righteousness; for, by Christ's fulfilment of the law in all its extent, by the most perfect obedience and the perfection of His atoning sacrifice, He has brought in everlasting righteousness, arrayed in which the believer stands unrebukable, and can challenge the universe to lay anything to his charge. God is, in short, the just God and the Savior, and in the salvation of an innumerable multitude of our fallen race has given a more awful proof of his hatred of sin and of the impossibility of its passing unpunished than if all had perished, like the angels who kept not their first estate.

He has entered heaven with His own blood, His people are waiting without for His second appearing; they are looking for Him, and He will appear the second time, not in the likeness of sinful flesh, but without sin; [A sin-offering is sometimes called "sin," because the sin of the worshipper was in a figure transferred to it; but Christ, in taking part with His people in flesh and blood and becoming their substitute and surety, was responsible—the Lord laid on Him the iniquity of them all. Hence He says, "Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more in number than the hairs of my head; therefore my heart faileth me." Psalm 40:12.] which was once imputed to Him, but is now cast into the depth of the sea. The Lord laid on Him the iniquity of all His people, and when they are sought for they shall not be found. In the day of his second coming the Church will appear a glorious Church, without spot or wrinkle. Their robes will be so white that "no fuller on earth can white them," and they shall for ever drink of the river of God's pleasures. The Second Coming of Christ was typified by the high priest coming out of the holy of holies to bless the people.

Chapter Ten

V. 1.—For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereunto perfect.

For the law...—The law is here described as a shadow, and not an image. Here the law, as in many other places, denotes the whole of the Mosaic dispensation. It had been previously characterized as standing only in meats: "Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation." Chap. 9:10. Under these carnal ordinances, spiritual and heavenly things were concealed. The carnal ordinances constituted the vail on Moses' face, which concealed the glory of his countenance. There is an important distinction between a shadow and an image. A shadow is a mere outline, having only two proportions, length and breadth; an image has three—length, breadth, and thickness, and gives an exact representation of the object. Should it be asked whether it would not have been better had the law been an image of the new and spiritual dispensation, the reply is easy, By no means. Had this been the case, the people to whom it was given must have been gathered from all nations; and this would have defeated one important end of the separation of Israel, that the faithfulness of God in fulfilling his promise to Abraham, that he should be the progenitor of Christ, might be manifest. Again, as believers under the Gospel have but one priest, there could only have been one under the law. There would also have been but one sacrifice, one baptism. Once more the law must have been written on the hearts of all the people of the old, because this is the privilege of all the children of the new covenant. In short, every purpose of the giving of the law would have been made void; and, long before the expiration of the two thousand years which elapsed between the call of Abraham and the coming of Christ, the promise of the appearing of the Savior would have been forgotten.

But the wisdom of God, by the separation of the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, redeeming them from bondage, feeding them in the wilderness, and putting them in possession of a land flowing with milk and honey, appointing a priesthood in the family of Aaron, and, in connexion with this, establishing the daily and yearly sacrifices, purifications, and festivals, kept up during the space of fifteen hundred years a memorial of the new and more glorious dispensation under which God's people should be made free by the truth, should go up through the wilderness, should pass through the valley of the shadow of death, and inherit the better country.

Can never.—The sacrifices which were constantly offered could never make the worshippers [Those who are described as the comers thereto, verse 1, are spoken of as worshippers, verse 2.] perfect by removing their guilt and obtaining their acceptance with God.

V. 2.—For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshippers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.

Here the reason is given why the legal sacrifices could not make the worshippers perfect. Had they done so, they would have ceased to be offered. Some copies omit the word *not*, thus rendering it a positive affirmation. The meaning is precisely the same.

For the worshippers...—Had the legal sacrifices really cancelled guilt, there would have been no need of their repetition; for the worshippers being once purified, would have had no longer a consciousness of guilt; their hearts would have been sprinkled from an evil conscience, ver. 22; and they would have had boldness in approaching their heavenly Father.

It may be alleged, that since men do not cease from sin, that, although their guilt had been removed, fresh guilt would have been contracted, which, notwithstanding the efficacy of the sacrifice by which their guilt had been removed, would have required a fresh

sacrifice; but this is fallacious, and that it is so is proved by matter of fact. The blood of Jesus cleanses the believer from all sin. It gives him the answer of a good conscience. Christ was delivered for our sins, and raised again for our justification. The believer can therefore say, "It is God that justifieth; who is he that condemned?" He can plead a full remission of his sins through the blood of Jesus. They are all buried in his grave, and shall never appear against him. There is a fountain opened in Zion for sin and uncleanness, to which we have daily recourse. By one offering Christ hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified. This is illustrated in what follows.

V. 3.—But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.

So far from removing a sense of guilt, the legal sacrifices brought the guilt of the worshippers to their remembrance every year. The sacrifice on the great day of atonement might seem to remove the sins of Israel, and it did so in one sense; it sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, Heb. 9:13, removed ceremonial uncleanness; but the following year the same process took place. Thus we see how the sacrifices did no more than bring the sins of Israel to remembrance. Every succeeding day of atonement testified the inefficacy of what had gone before.

V. 4.—For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.

For it is not possible.—God does nothing in vain. It results from His infinite wisdom that the means which He employs are exactly adapted to the object He has in view, neither greater nor less. We may prove our folly by employing means inadequate to the end we have in view, or we may apply more strength than is requisite. But God is perfect in wisdom, and therefore the means He employs always exactly correspond with the end He has in view. Now, for fifteen hundred years, the blood of bulls and goats flowed on His altar, and their constant repetition proved their inefficacy. But, in the fulness of time, He sent forth His Son, born of

a woman, made under the law, to redeem His people from the curse of the law; and no other proof is requisite to confirm the Apostle's assertion, that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sin. Had such sacrifices been sufficient, the Son of God would not have suffered, the just for the unjust, that He might bring sinners to God.

Here is a demonstration that it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin. God does nothing in vain; there is nothing superfluous in His conduct. Sacrifices bled on the Jewish altar fifteen hundred years, but still the fire burned as fiercely as ever. Should it, then, be asked, Did all the generations of Israel, from Moses to Christ, die in their sins? the reply is, By no means.

They had before them an account of Abraham's justification through faith in Him whose day he saw afar off, and was glad. Moses wrote of the same exalted personage; and there was always a remnant in Israel whose heart God had touched, who looked for the coming of the Savior. As the virtue of the atonement of Christ extended not merely to those who believed during the days of His flesh, but to the end of the world, so it looked back to the fall of Adam, and, like righteous Abel, all who believed in Him who was to come were partakers of the great salvation. This is plainly declared by the Apostle. Speaking of the Savior, he says, "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation [A propitiatory, or mercy-seat. There are two words rendered in our version "propitiation." The one which is used in this passage is that by which the "mercy-seat" is rendered in the Septuagint; the covering of the ark, the throne of the God of Israel, who sat between the cherubim.] through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness *for the remission of sins that are past*, through the forbearance of God; to declare, I say, at this time, his righteousness, that he might be just, and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus." Rom. 3:25, 26. Believers who lived under the law were justified by faith in Christ, as well as those who live under the new dispensation.

So that, while there was in Israel a remembrance again made of sins every year, the efficacy of the great atonement extended from the fall to the consummation of all things.

V. 5.— Wherefore when he cometh into the world, he saith, Sacrifice and offering thou wouldest not, but a body hast thou prepared me.

Therefore when he (that is, Christ) ***cometh into the world.***—Christ was known among the Jews as He who should come, Luke 7:19; and He is thus described in the passage before us. Thus we are taught that the 40th Psalm is descriptive of Christ. It was written by David, but a greater than David is here. Indeed, the better we understand the Psalms the more clearly shall we see that they speak of Christ. The Lord, in discoursing with His disciples, divided the Old Testament into three parts; the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms. Luke 24:44. Moses wrote of Him. He is the end of the law, and to Him give all the prophets witness. David, the sweet singer of Israel, who wrote the greater part of the Psalms, was a remarkable type of Him; and, in the greater part of the Psalms, while he speaks in his own person, he describes the experience of Christ in the days of His flesh. In the Psalms we are admitted into the Redeemer's closet. We contemplate Him as a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, bowed down under the load of His people's sins, and, in the days of His flesh, making supplication with strong crying and tears to Him that was able to deliver Him from death. Both He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one family; therefore He is not ashamed to call them brethren. In virtue of their unity, their sins are His sins, and His righteousness their righteousness. Hence we find Him groaning under a load of sin, although He did no sin, nor was guile found in His lips. At other times we find Him describing Himself as holy, and rejoicing in the complacency with which His Father always viewed His righteous servant. The application by the Apostle of the 40th Psalm to Christ, in the passage before us, gives us a key which opens to us the meaning of many other Psalms.

Sacrifice and offering thou wouldst not, or thou didst not desire, Psalm 40:6.—This describes God’s weariness of all the sacrifices enjoined in the law. Isa. 1:10-14. They were enjoined to maintain the expectation of a better sacrifice; but, when they had answered their end, they were offensive to God. Everything is beautiful in its season; the time of their abolition was come, and he that killed an ox was as if he slew a man, &c. Isa. 66:3.

A body hast thou prepared me.—It is in the Psalm, “Mine ears hast thou opened.” Various conjectures have been offered to account for the difference, but none of them are satisfactory. The words, as quoted by the Apostle, are found in the Septuagint; but there seems a difficulty in the supposition of his quoting this version when writing to the Hebrews.

There is, however, a substantial agreement in these different renderings. The ear is the organ by which we receive the communications made to us by others. Hence to hear frequently signifies to believe, or obey. John 8:6, 7; 10:27; Deut. 1:43. “The Lord God hath opened mine ear, and I was not rebellious, neither turned away back.” Isa. 50:5. Jesus came as His Father’s servant, Isa. 49:6; not to do His own will, but the will of Him that sent Him. John 5:30. On becoming incarnate, He took upon Him the form of a servant, Phil. 2:7; and it was His meat and His drink to do the will of His Father; and, therefore,

“A body hast thou prepared me,” is equivalent to “ Mine ears hast thou opened.”

V. 6.—In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin thou hast had no pleasure.

Various sacrifices were enjoined by the law, two of which, burnt-offerings and sin-offerings, are specified by the Apostle. In neither of these had God any pleasure as an atonement for sin. He, indeed, approved of their being offered in obedience to His command, and severely punished their being neglected; but, for the removal of guilt, they were utterly worthless.

V. 7.—Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do thy will, O God.

The volume or roll of the book refers to the manner in which books of old were rolled up. Thus the book which John saw in the right hand of Him that sat upon the throne was written both within and on the back, and sealed with seven seals; consequently, when the first seal was opened, a part of the contents of the book were discovered, and so on with each successive seal, until the whole was exposed to view.

The book here mentioned is evidently the Scriptures, which testify of Christ. Moses wrote of Him; to Him give all the prophets witness; and the Psalms exhibit all the secret workings of His mind in the house of his pilgrimage. His love to the law was stronger than death. To magnify and make it honorable He submitted to every privation; He voluntarily endured every hardship; and, finally, laid down His life to restore what His people had taken away. He had received a commandment from His Father to lay down His life; "and how am I straitened," said He, "till it be accomplished." Luke 12:50. [Jesus had been manifested to Israel by His baptism; He was buried in and raised from the waters of Jordan, on which occasion the voice from the excellent glory proclaimed Him to be the Son of God, and the Spirit descended and rested upon Him; but this was only a figurative burial. He was to descend into the lower parts of the earth, and to be declared to be the Son of God with power by His resurrection from the dead. Rom. 1:4.]

He was impatient to fill up the measure of His expiatory sufferings. Thus He came to do the will of God, according to the prophecies concerning Him which had gone before; and, in the 40th Psalm, quoted by the Apostle, He expresses the pleasure He had in the hard service which He had undertaken.

V. 8.—Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin thou wouldest not, neither hadst pleasure therein; which are offered by the law.

Above when he said.—The Apostle here resumes his exposition of the 40th Psalm, recapitulating what he had already quoted in proof of the insufficiency of the legal sacrifices, of which, as he had said of the priesthood, “there was a disannulling of the commandment going before for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof.” Chap. 7:18.

V. 9.—Then said he, Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first, that he may establish the second.

Then he said (Psalm 40:7, 8), **Lo, I come to do thy will, O God. He taketh away the first...**—viz., sacrifice and burnt-offerings, and offerings for sin, which are offered by the law.

That he might establish the second—that is, the efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ, who came to do the will of God by finishing transgression, making an end of sin, making reconciliation for iniquity, and bringing in everlasting righteousness. The blood-shedding of the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world, in which God smelled a savour of rest, had only been pre-figured by the legal sacrifices. The Apostle’s argument here is precisely similar to his reasoning respecting the priesthood in chap. 7:, when he proves the inferiority of the priesthood after the order of Aaron to that after the order of Melchisedec. It is, in fact, the same subject presented to us under two different aspects; the one being the legal sacrifices, abolished by the great sacrifice which they only shadowed forth; the other the priesthood made after the law of a carnal commandment, superseded by the priesthood made after the power of an endless life.

V. 10.—By the which will we are sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.

By the which will...—The Apostle had quoted from the 40th Psalm the words of Messiah, that He came to do the will of God, and here he describes the effect of His obedience. “Sanctified” does not here signify internal purity or holiness, although the sanctification spoken of is the foundation of all fallen man’s conformity

to God. The first-born in Israel were to be sanctified or set apart for God, and, in their stead, the Levites were taken, who alone were permitted to do the service of the tabernacle. The nation of Israel were sanctified by the blood of the covenant, whereby God engaged to be their God, and to take them for His peculiar people. This, however, did not prevent their wickedness being greater than that of Sodom. Ezek. 16:48. All their privileges flowed from their relation to Christ, and this was a carnal relation. "Of whom," says the Apostle, "according to the flesh, Christ came, who is over all, God blessed for ever. Amen." Rom. 9:5. Hence the blood of the covenant, wherewith they were sanctified, was the blood of bulls and of goats, which could never take away sin; it merely sanctified to the purifying of the flesh, Heb. 9:13, removing whatever ceremonial uncleanness had been contracted. On the other hand, the relation of believers, the true Israel, with Christ, is a spiritual relation, 1 Cor. 6:17; and the covenant through which they enter into this relation is ratified with the blood of Christ. Hence it is written, "Wherefore Jesus, also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth, therefore, unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach." Heb. 13:12, 13. His blood cleanseth believers from all their sin, cancels all their guilt. It purges their conscience from dead works to serve the living God. Heb. 9:14. It reconciles them to God; and, as the necessary consequence, they are saved through His life. Rom. 5:10. He is both their atoning sacrifice and high priest. He appears in the midst of the throne as a lamb that had been slain. As their great High Priest, He offers their prayers, perfumed with much incense. He bears their names on His breast, and the voice of His intercession has reached our ears, "Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am." To Him the Spirit was given without measure, and by this one Spirit, communicated through Him, are they all baptized into one body; and although their conformity to their glorious head is very imperfect, while both Adam, the source of corruption, and Christ, the source of purity, dwell in them, their path is like the shining light, which shineth more and more to the perfect day.

Christ has given us repentance by manifesting Himself to us as He does not to the world; and although we now see but in part, and there is a law in our members warring against the law of our mind, and bringing us into captivity to the law of sin in our members, we are gradually advancing nearer to Christ, shall shortly see Him as He is, and then the transformation begun in the day of our new creation, when the Spirit first took of the things of Christ and showed them to us, shall be consummated; we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. Thus, then, are believers sanctified through the one offering of Christ. They are holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, sanctified through the offering of the body of Christ, once for all. This is the foundation of their conformity to God; and the more they are under the teaching of the Spirit the more they know of the things that are freely given to them of God; the more are they renewed in the spirit of their mind, and the better they understand that they are complete in Christ, and that He is made of God unto them wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

V. 11. —And every priest standeth daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.

Every priest in Israel stood daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never expiate guilt. The daily and yearly sacrifices were appointed by Divine authority; but, as it had been already proved by their constant repetition, they could not take away sins. Indeed, it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats could take away sin, and nothing can satisfy the conscience but what satisfies Divine justice.

V. 12.—But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins, for ever sat down on the right hand of God.

But this priest, having offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God. Christ having sat down at the right hand of God, is repeatedly mentioned by the Apostle. Chap. 1:3; 8:1; 12:2. This is the fulfilment of the 110th Psalm, previously quoted, "The Lord said to my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, till I

make thine enemies thy footstool." Christ sitting down at the right hand of God, after having offered His atoning sacrifice, demonstrated its perfection. The Jewish priests stood while fulfilling their service. It would have been death for the high priest to have sat down within the vail; but our great High Priest having humbled Himself, and become obedient to death, even the death of the cross, and thus redeemed His people from the curse of the law, by being made a curse for them, ascended up far above all heavens, and sat down at the right hand of God, angels, principalities, and powers being made subject to Him.

V. 13.—From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.

From henceforth...—All power in heaven and in earth is given to Him. He is exalted a Prince and a Savior, to give repentance to Israel, and the remission of sins. The Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment to the Son. All the dispensations of Providence are under His complete control; all the angels of God are subject to Him, and are employed as ministering spirits, sent forth to minister to them that shall be heirs of salvation. Hence the Apostle says to believers, "All things are yours." The unlimited power of their elder Brother is the security of all things working together for their good. They are not, indeed, exempted from the troubles of life. "Whom the Lord loveth He chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth." Never was sorrow like to that sorrow wherewith their elder Brother was afflicted while a pilgrim upon earth; their afflictions are a part of their fellowship with Christ. He drank of the brook in the way; therefore He lifted up His head; and they must suffer with Him, that they may also reign with Him. The glory in which He is enthroned is the pledge of their sharing it with Him. He that sanctifieth and they that are sanctified are all of one; and as all Joseph's power in Egypt was employed for the benefit of his brethren, so is the glory of Christ in his exaltation, the prelude of the entrance of all His people into the everlasting mansions.

V. 14.—For by one offering he hath perfected for ever them that are sanctified.

See on ver. 10. Here, again, the word “perfect” occurs. The sanctified are those who are chosen in Christ before the foundation of the world, that they might be holy and without blame before Him in love; who are redeemed, not with corruptible things, such as silver and gold, but with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot; whose sins are forgiven for His name’s sake; who are brought within the bond of the new covenant, and who are going up through the wilderness, leaning upon Him who has undertaken to guide them by His counsel and afterwards receive them to His glory. His one offering has made them perfect. God sees no iniquity in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel. He is well pleased for His righteousness’ sake. They are washed, and sanctified, and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God. Such are the effects of His one offering. He stood as the head of His body, the Church, and they are complete in Him. So glorious is His offering, that there is no spot in His redeemed. They are clothed in a garment in which God’s omniscient eye discerns no flaw. They are complete in Christ. They have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.

V. 15.— Whereof the Holy Ghost also is a witness to us; for after that he had said before.

The Apostle here confirms what he had said by the testimony of the Holy Ghost. This language merits our particular attention. It demonstrates the verbal inspiration of the Scriptures. The Apostles spoke not in the word which man’s wisdom taught, but that which the Holy Ghost taught. He then proceeds to quote the words of the Holy Ghost which he had mentioned before.

V. 16.—This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, saith the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them.

The Apostle had already quoted from Jeremiah what is repeated in this verse. See chap. 8:10.

V. 17.—And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.

The new covenant is not so fully described here as it had been formerly. He omits what he had said, chap. 8:11, and passes on to the declaration that God would no more remember their sins and their iniquities, on which he intended to reason.

V. 18.—Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin.

Now where.—It had been previously shown that the repetition of the Jewish sacrifices proved their inefficacy, but God engages to remember no more the sins and iniquities of the children of the new covenant. Now, it is self-evident that where there is remission of sins no farther sacrifice is requisite. The object of the sacrifice is to cancel guilt; and, where it is cancelled, any further offering must be superfluous. The children of the new covenant are sanctified by Christ's one offering, verse 14; and to present another offering for sin virtually pronounces it insufficient, thus making God a liar. Nothing can more clearly prove how utterly unscriptural is the sacrifice of the mass.

It is held by Roman Catholics to be a real sacrifice, a repetition of what took place on Calvary; and thus they deny the efficacy of the death of Christ as an atoning sacrifice, for as the Apostle argues that the worshippers, once purged, should have no more conscience of sin. Chap. 10:2. They may allege that the mass is only a commemoration of the sacrifice of Christ, but the Council of Trent declares the sacrifice of the mass to be a "true and proper propitiatory sacrifice for sin," which directly contradicts the assertion of the Apostle, and pours contempt on that finished work of which God hath expressed His full approbation by raising Christ from the dead, and giving Him glory, that our faith and hope might be in God. Those who pretend to offer a sacrifice for sin deny the per-

fection of the sacrifice of Christ, and are not entitled to the name of Christians.

It was the manner of the Apostle in all his epistles to bring forward the great doctrines of the Gospel as the foundation of those exhortations which he saw to be requisite for those to whom he wrote.

Men admire the morality of the New Testament, but they turn with disgust from those truths on which alone the morality rests. Christian practice is as inseparably connected with the truth as it is in Jesus as the fruitful branch is with the stock of the tree. The work of the law is written on men's hearts; hence they admire the practice which proceeds from the faith of the Gospel, while that Gospel is a stumbling block and foolishness to them.

The verse which we have been considering forms the conclusion of the doctrinal part of this Epistle. In what follows, the Apostle proceeds to the practical improvement of the truth which he had laid down.

V. 19.—Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

Having therefore, brethren, boldness...— In Israel the high priest alone durst presume to enter the holiest of all, and that but once in the year, with the blood of the sacrifices. He remained within the vail but for a short time. But our great High Priest hath for ever sat down at the right hand of the majesty in the heavens, and through Him we have access by one Spirit unto the Father, Eph. 2:18. The place of worship is indeed changed. Believers, being made priests to God, have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, not into the holy places made with hands, which were the figures of the true, but into heaven itself, chap. 9:24, into which their great High Priest has entered as their forerunner. It is true, that till they are absent from the body they are not present with the Lord. The heavens have received Him till the time of the restitution of all things, but it is to appear in the pres-

ence of God for us He is gone to prepare a place for His people, and He will come again and receive them to Himself, John 14:2, 3; meantime, believers are encouraged to come boldly unto the throne of grace. The place of worship is now transferred from earth to heaven; and, instead of sitting at the feet of Moses, whose instructions were veiled in types and parables, we behold in the unveiled face of Christ the glory of the Lord, and experience the transforming influence of the truth delivered by His Apostles, who used great plainness of speech.

V. 20.—By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.

By a new and living way. The Lord teaches us that He is the way, the truth, and the life, no man cometh to the Father but through Him. This is the new and living way which He hath consecrated for us, that is to say His flesh, or his body, which he offered once for all. The vail separated between the holy and the holiest of all, but at the death of Jesus the vail of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom, which signified that the way into the holiest of all was now made manifest by the event which had just taken place. But although he died he is the living one, Rev. 1:18, and believers have access to the throne of God through him that was dead and liveth for evermore. Many generations have passed away since the vail of his flesh was rent; but, like the ark in the midst of Jordan, his empty grave stands as a memorial that although believers must have fellowship with him in his death they shall not remain under the power of death. Through him they all have access by one Spirit unto the Father, and when he hath gathered in all his blood-bought sheep he shall call to the heaven from above and to the earth that he may judge his people: "Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice," Psalm 1:5; who have entered the new and everlasting covenant by faith in the sacrifice which cleanseth believers from all sin.

V. 21.—And having an high priest over the house of God.

And having a great High Priest... [It is in the original a great priest] The great object of the whole Epistle was to exhibit the connexion between the Jewish and Christian worship, by showing that the former was a figure of the latter, an earthly or carnal exhibition of a heavenly and spiritual object. The Apostle therefore dwells on the priesthood of Christ. In the new and spiritual dispensation He is all in all: like God's servant Moses, who was faithful in all his house; but as a son over his own house, which is composed of living stones resting upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, He himself being the chief corner stone. He is described as a living stone, and through their union with Him all the stones of the building are quickened. We know the power of a loadstone, which communicates magnetism to iron. God might have given it the power of communicating magnetism to stone, so that the foundation might communicate its property to the whole building. Such is the case with Christ; all the stones of the living temple rest on Him, and to them all, does He communicate a life which never ends, according to that which is written: "As the Father hath life in himself, so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself, [This refers to Christ in his mediatorial character, as the Father's servant, but as being Himself God, "in him was life." Hence he is called, "The eternal life which was with the Father, and was manifested to us," 1 John 1:2; but as Immanuel, God manifest in the flesh, He was the Father's servant, and that eternal life, which is the gift of God, is communicated to us through Christ "He asked life of God and he gave it to him, even length of days for ever and ever; and of his fulness we all receive, and grace for grace."] and hath given him authority to execute judgment also because he is the Son of man." John 5:26, 7. Here we see that He is the source of the life of His people, and that He quickeneth whom He will. "For the Father judgeth no man, but hath committed all judgment unto the Son." John 5:21, 22. All His sheep are known to the Good Shepherd, and that individually and by name.

V. 22.—let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, and our bodies washed with pure water.

Let us draw near.—We have seen that the Israelites drew near to God by the priests, and especially by the great high priest, who entered the holiest of all, the secret place of the Most High, on the great day of Atonement. We are invited to draw near, through our great High Priest, who hath for us, as our surety and representative, entered into Heaven itself. Another Apostle says, “Truly our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. Through him we cry Abba, Father.” Let us then draw near with a true heart. This is opposed to dissimulation or hypocrisy. It is illustrated by the Psalmist, “If I regard iniquity in my heart the Lord will not hear me, but verily God hath heard me,” &c. In full assurance of faith, that is in the fullest confidence of acceptance in Christ. Faith is the substance or confidence of things hoped for. Chap. 11: The salvation of Christ is full and free, it is for the chief of sinners; and in the Gospel a foundation is laid for the most assured confidence of acceptance in Christ.

It is well observed, by Archbishop Leighton, that the want of assurance of our salvation must proceed from one of two things; either that the atonement of Christ is insufficient to remove our guilt, or that we require some qualification which we fear we do not possess. The Scripture calls every sinner who hears the Gospel to trust in Christ, however aggravated his guilt. All who hear are invited to take of the water of life freely, to draw near with a true heart, not merely with our mouth, not merely with our lips to honor God, while we have removed our hearts far from Him, and our fear towards Him is taught by the precept of men, Isaiah 29:13; but drawing near with true hearts deeply feeling the reverence and love which we profess, and in the full assurance of faith. Having no confidence in ourselves, but the most unlimited confidence in Christ, the fullest assurance of our acceptance in the Beloved. On this passage a very unsound observation is made by one who, in many respects, possessed just and scriptural views. He says, “This full assurance is not, as many conceive, an absolute certainty of a man’s own particular salvation; for that is termed the full assurance of hope, chap. 6:11, and arises from faith and its fruits: but *the full assurance of faith* is the assurance of that

truth which is testified and proposed in the Gospel to all hearers of it in common, to be believed by them unto their salvation, and is also termed *the full assurance of understanding*. Col. 2:2." We have already observed, that the full assurance of faith and of hope may be distinguished, but cannot be separated. It is the testimony of God that by trusting in Christ we shall be saved, and in order to the full assurance of faith and of hope nothing more is necessary than our receiving that truth. To mingle faith with its fruits in regard to our hope of salvation is utterly unscriptural. We are indeed commanded to examine ourselves whether we be in the faith, to prove our own selves. Thus we are guarded against self-deception, against *saying* we have faith, against an empty profession of knowing God while in works we deny Him. Faith gives us the answer of a good conscience, it purge our hearts from an evil conscience, by convincing us of the perfection of the work of Christ. On the night on which he believe the jailer rejoiced in God with all his house. The eunuch, having heard the Gospel, went on his way rejoicing. The only fruit they had to look to was their having been baptized, their professing the glorious truth which they had received. Let us ever keep faith and its fruits in their proper place. Faith receives Christ, and in him eternal salvation; fruits prove the faithfulness of Him who saves His people from their sins, and gives them the witness in themselves, by the change produced in them by their receiving the love of the truth.—We are accepted *in the Beloved*, and whether we owed five hundred pence or fifty, our sins are all cast into the depths of the sea.

Having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience. There is an allusion here to the sprinkling under the law for the removal of ceremonial uncleanness; but such sprinkling only sanctified to the purifying of the flesh; but the blood of sprinkling, chap. 12:24, removes guilt from the conscience and gives the believer confidence in approaching God.

V. 23.—Let us hold fast the profession of our faith without wavering; for he is faithful that promised.

On this Pierce says, "Our translators were doubtless in the wrong in joining the clause (and our bodies washed with pure water) to the end of 5:22, which most of the Greek Testaments I have seen make the beginning of 5:23." See also Whitby, Macknight, and others.

This is evidently correct, and it is also plain that the Apostle here refers to baptism. The Apostle had been speaking of believers having their hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience, or the consciousness of guilt being removed by the sacrifice offered upon Calvary, and themselves begotten to a lively hope of the resurrection of Christ. He then proceeds to the confession of their hope by being baptized. Our translators have said the profession of our faith, while the confession of our hope is in the margin; both meanings are good, in fact synonymous. "So many of us (says the Apostle) as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death. Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life." Rom. 6:3, 4. The Apostle thus describes the Gospel which he preached. 1 Cor. 15:3, 4. In baptism the believer in a figure goes down into the grave of Christ and is raised again. This represents his fellowship with Christ in His death and resurrection. We have observed that Christ was manifested to Israel by a figurative burial and resurrection, and that He says I have a baptism to be baptized with, referring to His actual burial and resurrection; now His people are commanded to go forth to Him without the camp bearing His reproach. They are, in a figure, to go down into and come up from His grave; thus expressing their hope of a glorious resurrection through their union with Him, and during the remainder of their life they are to hold fast the confession of their hope without wavering. Assured of the faithfulness of the promise on which God hath caused them to hope, Psalm 119:49, knowing that He who raised up the Lord Jesus shall raise them up by Jesus. 2 Cor. 4:14.

V. 24.—And let us consider one another to provoke unto love and to good works.

Let us consider.—This admonition shows the deep concern the disciples of Christ should feel in each other's welfare. They ought mutually to consider each other's welfare and circumstances, that they may provoke each other to love and good works, adapting their admonitions to the peculiar necessities of their brethren.

V. 25.—*Not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as the manner of some is; but exhorting one another: and so much the more, as ye see the day approaching.*

The disciples of Jesus are commanded to assemble on the first day of the week, at once to commemorate the death and resurrection of Christ. That a leading object of believers meeting was to commemorate the death of Christ is manifest from 1 Cor. 11:20, "When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper," and Acts 20:7, to "break bread;" but in times of persecution the disciples were laid under much temptation to forsake the assembling of themselves together. They might agree that they could pray and read the Scriptures at home, and no doubt there might be situations in which a believer might be justified in absenting himself. God has said, "I will have mercy and not sacrifice," but our love is apt to wax cold, and we are prone to neglect what only particular circumstances may warrant us to omit. We are not only to believe, but to confess Christ before men. "He that confesseth me before men," &c.— The violent prejudices of the Jews against the doctrines of Christ, and the affliction and persecution to which the believers were exposed in Judea, was much calculated to prevent the brethren from making a bold and open profession of the truth; and hence it appears that some had forsaken the assembling with their brethren, perhaps satisfying themselves by alleging that they worshipped Christ in secret. Such conduct, however, was calculated to prevent the progress of the Gospel. It was putting the light under a bushel, and improperly endeavouring to shun the reproach of the Cross. Yet some of the Hebrews acted thus. It was their custom or manner to absent themselves from the meetings of the brethren, thus neglecting a part of the will of Christ, which is at once a great

means of impressing the truth upon our minds, by our observance of those ordinances in which it is embodied, and of diffusing the truth in the world by exhibiting it to our brethren of men.

But exhorting.—One great object of believers assembling themselves together is to exhort one another. We have ample directions on this subject in the Epistle to the Corinthians, 1 Cor. 14: It is true, there is a special reference to the exercise of spiritual gifts, which have now ceased, but we are taught, by the abundant manner in which they were bestowed, that it is not the Lord's will that His people should be exclusively instructed or edified by the elders or overseers, although this is a most important part of their office, and much conduces to the edification of the people of God; but that the brethren should from time to time also edify one another. Miraculous gifts were not bestowed on all: by which we are taught that all are not qualified to instruct and edify their brethren; but they were bestowed upon many for the benefit of the Church. And thus we are taught,—“As every man hath received the gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speak, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man minister, let him do it as of the ability which God giveth; that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, in whom be praise and dominion for ever and ever. Amen.” 1 Peter 4:10-11. The Apostle expresses his confidence in his brethren in Rome,—“And I myself also am persuaded of you, my brethren, that ye also are full of goodness, filled with all knowledge, able also to admonish one another.” Rom. 15:14. The same word is rendered exhort and comfort, for in admonishing each other the mutual exhortations of believers must be based on the glorious doctrines of the Gospel.

And so much the more...—This evidently refers to the destruction of Jerusalem, which had been foretold by the Lord with the greatest clearness. He described it as the coming of the Son of man, Matt. 24:30, and 37-39, which has been the occasion of the unscriptural tenet of the personal reign. It is called the “great and terrible day of the Lord,” Joel 2:31, Acts 2:19-20. While, as we

have seen it was foretold, Hab. 1:5-6, Acts 13:40-41, and its certainty confirmed in the most solemn manner by the Lord, Mark 13:31, there is one very striking circumstance connected with it, that, while Christ gives His disciples various tokens of its approach. He informs them that no man, not the angels of heaven, knew of that day, but His Father only; and, what is still more remarkable, He says, "But of that day and that hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels which are in heaven, neither the Son, but the Father." Mark 13:32. How shall we reconcile this with Jesus knowing all things? John 21:17. Let us compare it with John 5:19,—“The Son can do nothing of himself, but what he seeth the Father do;” and “I can of mine own self do nothing,” John 5:30. Jesus came as the Father’s servant: He spoke the words of God,—“I speak,” said He, “to the world those things which I have heard of him,” John 8:26. “As my Father hath taught me, I speak these things,” John 8:28. “I speak that which I have seen with my Father,” John 8:38. “The Father which sent me, he gave me a commandment, what I should say, and what I should speak,” John 12:49. “Whatsoever I speak therefore, even as the Father said unto me, so I speak,” John 12:50. “The words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself,” John 14:10. Now, the day and the hour of the destruction of Jerusalem was a striking emblem of the end of the world, and the language in which it is described is, therefore, in many respects applicable to that event; and, as this was not a subject of revelation, He, who was in the bosom of the Father, intimately acquainted with all His counsels, having taken on Him the form of a servant, could do or say nothing but what He was commanded. Hence He tells us that even the Son knew not of that day, Mark 13:32: it had not been communicated to Him in his official character to be made known to His Church. In conclusion, we may observe that the prediction of our Lord to His Apostles, respecting the destruction of Jerusalem, is eminently practical to us in regard to the end of this world.

V. 26.—For if we sin wilfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remaineth no more sacrifice for sins.

All sin is willful: no man can compel us to sin. There were, indeed, sins of ignorance under the law. A man might contract defilement without being aware, and when he became so, he offered the appointed sacrifice. Saul of Tarsus persecuted the saints in ignorance, but Peter denied his Lord deliberately. Here, it is evident, sinning willfully implies apostasy, rejecting the only available sacrifice for sin. It is connected with forsaking the assembling of themselves together, which might proceed either from the fear of man, or from letting the truth slip, chap. 2:1, and departing from the living God through an evil heart of unbelief, chap. 3:12. Forsaking the assembling of themselves together was a step in the direction of total apostasy. Now, if we apostatize from Christ rejecting His sacrifice, there remaineth no other sacrifice for sins. Under the law, there was no sacrifice for presumptuous sin, such as murder or blasphemy. Indeed, this could not have been the case, for, as the punishment of these sins was death, had a sacrifice for them been appointed, either the legal punishment could not have been inflicted, or the sacrifice must have been offered in vain. The Apostle, in a passage already considered, had given a very solemn caution against apostasy, chap. 6:1-6, and here he repeats the warning.

V. 27.—But a certain fearful looking for of judgment and fiery indignation, which shall devour the adversaries.

Such is the case of the apostate, which is more fully described by the Apostle. The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, "In flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God, and that obey not the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: who shall be punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and from the glory of his power." 2 Thess. 1:8, 9. Such is the awful doom of those who have rejected the counsel of God against themselves, and especially of those who have apostatized. They draw back unto perdition.

V. 28.—He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses.

The Apostle illustrates the subject by a reference to the law of Moses; he that despised Moses' law, such as Korah and his company, who despised what God had declared concerning the priesthood, which was limited to the family of Aaron, and determined to seize on it themselves, Num. 16; or those who refused to go up against the Canaanites, and determined to make a captain and return to Egypt Num. 14 and 15:30. Two witnesses were necessary to prove guilt. Hence our Lord says, It is written in your law that the testimony of two men is true. Doubtless it may be false, as in the case of those suborned against Naboth; but it was to be held true, and sentence passed accordingly.

V. 29.—Of how much sorer punishment, suppose ye, shall he be thought worthy, who hath trodden under foot the Son of God, and hath counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and hath done despite unto the Spirit of grace?

The Gospel was far more glorious than the Mosaic dispensation; it bore to the law the relation of the sun to the moon, and consequently the guilt of those who rejected it, or apostatized from it, was far greater than that incurred by the breach of the law of Moses. The Israelites, indeed, like all mankind, were under the law to God, and they all received the deeds done in the body according to that they had done, whether good or bad; but the peculiar dispensation under which they were placed contained only temporal promises and temporal threatenings, Lev. 26; Deut. 28: Everything was temporal and figurative. The life promised to obedience was a long life in the land of Canaan; the death threatened was the separation of soul and body. But the promises and threatenings of the Gospel are eternal; a life which shall never end is held out to believers, and the threatening is being cast off with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power as the portion of all who reject it. The rebellious Israelites only trod under foot the blood of calves and goats, with which the Sinai covenant was ratified; but the apostate from Christianity trod under foot the blood of the Son of God, and hath

counted, &c. The blood of the covenant is that by which it was ratified. It may be a question whether the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified refers to Christ or to the apostate. The Lord says, "For their sakes I sanctify myself, that they may be sanctified through the truth." John 17:19. Again, believers are sanctified in Christ Jesus, 1 Cor. 1:2, chap. 13:12, but how can this be said of apostates? They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us." 1 John 2:19. It is replied that the Scripture frequently speaks of things as they appear to be. Thus we read that Simon believed. Acts 8: Apostates are said to have been once enlightened, and so they may be said to be sanctified. This seems to be the meaning of the passage; but, if we suppose it refers to Christ, we must refer it to His separation at once as the victim and as the priest. Every family in Israel was commanded to take a lamb without blemish on the fourteenth day of the month; it was to be kept till the fourteenth, and then to be killed in the evening. In exact correspondence with this law, Jesus, six days before the passover, came to Bethany, where Mary anointed His feet against his burying. John 12:1-7. Thus was He sanctified, or set apart as our passover.

Again, it has been already observed that the first part of the consecration of the priests was their being washed with water, accordingly when Jesus began to be about thirty years of age, (the time when the consecration of a priest took place in Israel,) He was baptized in Jordan. The next step in consecration was the anointing with oil, and when Jesus came out of the water the Holy Spirit descended on Him in a bodily shape. Still the consecration was not complete, and accordingly our Lord did not act as a priest during his abode upon earth. Chap. 8:4. The last part of the consecration was the blood of the sin offering and the burnt offering, which completed the consecration, when the priest entered upon the duties of his office, and thus was our great High Priest consecrated, and having offered Himself without spot unto God, he ever liveth to make intercession for the true Israel. Thus the expres-

sion, the blood of the covenant wherewith he was sanctified, may either apply to Christ or to him who professed the faith and afterwards apostatized, thus counting the blood of the covenant wherewith he appeared to be sanctified an unholy thing, and did despite to the Spirit of Grace by rejecting the testimony which he bore to Christ. This is the sin against the Holy Spirit, of which we elsewhere read. performed the most astonishing miracles: He cast out devils by the Spirit of God, but the Pharisees attributed this to the power of Satan, which led to the solemn caution given to them by the Lord, who informed them that all manner of sin and blasphemy should be forgiven to men; that a word spoken against the Son of man should be forgiven, but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost should not be forgiven. They might blaspheme the Lord Jesus, might condemn and crucify Him, yet pardon would be proclaimed to them through the blood which He had shed, and more abundant evidence given of His having come forth from God by the outpouring of the Spirit upon His disciples, bestowing on them the gift of tongues, of the cure of the sick, and raising the dead, but if they rejected the testimony of the Spirit, ascribing His miracles to the power of Satan, then it should not be forgiven them either In this world or in that which was to come. We have observed that the world to come was an expression employed by the Jews to denote the kingdom of Christ, and indeed is thus employed by the Apostle. Heb. 2:5. The rejection of the Holy Spirit's testimony should be involved in all the miseries which befell the Jews previous to and in the destruction of Jerusalem, and should then have their portion in the lake of fire.

The Spirit is here termed the Spirit of Grace, because from Him proceedeth every good and perfect gift. He takes of the things of Christ and shows them to believers; by His grace and power they stand, holding fast the truth; and, finally, raises them from the dead.

V. 30.—For we know him that hath said, Vengeance belongeth unto me, I will recompense, saith the Lord. And again, The Lord shall judge his people.

For we know him... This is a quotation from Deut. 32:35. In this prophetic song, given out by Moses at the close of his ministry, the peculiar kindness of God toward his people Israel is celebrated, together with their ungrateful returns and the consequent vengeance which he would inflict upon them. Here, as elsewhere, He claimeth vengeance as His peculiar prerogative. We are not to avenge ourselves, Rom. 12:19; and it appears that when Joseph's brethren, after their father's death, besought him to forgive them, the question he put, "Am I in the place of God?" Gen 50:19, was intended to intimate that vengeance belongs to him alone. This prerogative, however, is, in a certain degree, delegated to the civil magistrate. "As the servant of God be is an avenger, to execute wrath on him that doeth evil." Rom. 13:4.

In Israel he that despised Moses's law died without mercy; but no power is given to civil magistrates to punish irreligion; on the contrary, while we are commanded to be subject to every ordinance of men, to obey magistrates, and taught that in resisting "the power we resist the ordinance of God," the Lord expressly prohibits our acknowledging any civil authority in religion. Here we have but one Master, even Christ. Matt. 23:8-10. This is repeated in order to enforce it more powerfully, and thus a broad line of distinction is drawn between civil and religious obedience. The former we are commanded to render, under pain of the vengeance which God has delegated to the civil magistrate; the latter is absolutely prohibited. In Christ's kingdom He is the blessed and only potentate. It is the duty of believers to warn and to admonish each other, and the highest penalty which they are authorized to inflict for false doctrine, or a violation of the laws of Christ, is to turn away from the offender. "My kingdom," says Christ, "is not of this world," and therefore he commits to his servants no carnal weapons.

And again the Lord shall judge his people; the word judge is ambiguous, it signifies either to plead the cause of his people by delivering or defending them, Psalm 43:1, or taking vengeance on the disobedient, Gen. 15:14, 2 Chron. 20:12, Ezek. 7:3. From the

connexion, the words quoted by the Apostle appear to bear the former sense: "For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself for his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left." As applied in the passage before us they refer to the punishment of apostates: "Vengeance belongeth to me, I will recompense saith the Lord and again, "The Lord will judge his people." Perhaps the lesson inculcated by the Apostle is, that while sin is that bitter thing which God's soul hateth, He, to whom vengeance belongeth, will visit with stripes the shortcomings of His people; but although He cause grief yet He will have compassion, according to the multitude of His mercies. Lam. 3:32.

V. 31.—It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

It is a fearful thing. God is called the living God, which gives peculiar force to the language of the Apostle. If we fall into the hands of an enemy we may cherish the hope that he may be removed, or that we may make our escape; but no such hope can visit those who fall into the hands of the living God, in whom we live and move and have our being, in whose hand is our breath and whose are all our ways. He executed terrible vengeance on the nations of old. He drowned Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea—He blotted out the name of Amalek from under heaven—He destroyed the seven nations of Canaan. Where are now the Philistines, the Moabites, and Ammonites? Where is the proud Assyrian! Where is Babylon the great? They have all perished. But what is all this when compared with the worm which never dies, the fire which never shall be quenched? There has mercy been mingled with every temporal judgment, however severe; but those who have professed the faith and drawn back into perdition, have thus trodden under foot the Son of God, have rejected His propitiatory sacrifice and blasphemed the Holy Spirit, shall drink abundantly the wine of the wrath of God poured out into the cup of His indignation for ever and ever, To such His mercy is clean gone for ever, and He will be favorable no more. We read that all Israel that were round about them fled at the cry of Korah and his company

when the earth opened her mouth and swallowed them up, and all that appertained to them; but what was this in comparison of being cast into the bottomless pit, into that place where hope can never enter?

V. 32.—But call to remembrance the former days, in which, after ye were illuminated, ye endured a great fight of afflictions.

Knowing the terrors of the Lord, the Apostle persuaded men, yet for love's sake he preferred beseeching them, and hence we find with what wisdom he mingles the most alarming warnings with the most affectionate recollections. We have a very striking example of this in the passage before us. A most awful description had been given of the doom of apostates. There were, perhaps, others approaching the brink of the precipice, and, as a nurse cherisheth her children, the Apostle recalls to their minds the trials they had gone through. He remembered the kindness of their youth, the love of their espousals, when after they were illuminated, when the Sun of Righteousness had arisen upon them with healing in his wings, they had endured a great fight of afflictions; they had braved persecution, and had not been moved by their afflictions.

V. 33.—Partly, whilst ye were made a gazing-stock both by reproaches and afflictions; and partly, whilst ye became companions of them that were so used.

These consisted, partly, in their being made a gazing-stock by the reproaches cast upon them, and the various afflictions which they had passed through in their own persons; and, partly, while they became companions of them that were so used, not forsaking their brethren, but giving them their countenance and sympathy.

V. 34.—For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods, knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven a better and an enduring substance.

For ye had compassion.—Paul was in bonds in Jerusalem for the sake of Christ, Acts 21:23, and they had not been ashamed of his chain, although their compassion for him exposed them to having their goods spoiled. This, however, did not discourage them; “they took joyfully the spoiling of their goods, knowing,” &c. They remembered the Lord’s words, how He said, “And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name’s sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.” Matt. 19:29. They obeyed His commands, who said, “Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal.” Matt. 6:19, 20.

V. 35.—Cast not away therefore your confidence, which hath great recompense of reward.

Cast not away...—In all their trials they had been supported by the assured hope of the joy set before them, but he that endureth to the end shall be saved; therefore, He warns them not to cast away their confidence, which would issue in a great reward. Their sufferings were not worthy to be compared with the glory which should be revealed in them, Rom. 8:18. The Apostle appears to glance at what our Lord said for the support of His people under their afflictions for His sake, “Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven.” Matt. 5:12.

V. 36.—For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise.

They had, however, need of patience. In the world they must have tribulation: they were appointed thereto. They must suffer with Christ here, in order that they might reign with Him hereafter. The Lord would lead them in the right way, only let them hold fast the faith, and not be moved away from the hope of the Gospel. The

promise of eternal glory would make rich amends for their present light afflictions.

V. 37.—*For yet a little while, end he that shall come will come, and will not tarry.*

For yet a little while.—The prophecy of Habakkuk, from which this quotation is taken, had foretold the destruction of Jerusalem by the Chaldeans, Habakkuk 1:5-6, and the Apostle applies the words of the prophet to the destruction of the city by the Romans, Acts 13:40-41. This was doubtless the chief event foretold, although it had what may be termed a preliminary fulfilment in the destruction of the city by the King of Babylon; just as the Lord, being brought from Egypt, was the fulfilment of Hosea 11:1, although it had a previous fulfilment in Israel being brought from the bondage of Egypt. In the passage before us, the Apostle refers to the language of the same prophet, “He that shall come will come, and will not tarry.” The great promise of the Old Testament is the coming of Christ in the flesh. This supported the minds of God’s people from Adam to Christ. The great promise of the New Testament is the coming of Christ to judgment. All believers are represented as waiting for Him. This is the great and terrible day of the Lord, when He shall judge the world in righteousness, receiving His people into everlasting mansions, and punishing the wicked with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord, and the glory of His power.

While His coming to judgment is the *great day* of His coming, He is represented as coming both in the way of mercy to His people, and of judgment upon His enemies. He promised to come to His disciples, John 14:18, and He fulfilled the promise, not by His personal presence, which they only enjoyed forty days, but by coming in the power of His Spirit, the Comforter who abides in the Church for ever, John 14:16, and without whom the Church of Christ could not subsist. On one occasion the Lord informed His disciples that some were standing there who should not taste of death till they saw the Son of man coming in His kingdom, Matt.

16:28, which was fulfilled in the rapid progress of the Gospel. Again, He describes the coming of the Son of man in the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory, Matt. 24:40, evidently referring to His coming to destroy Jerusalem, for He adds, "Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled." Matt. 24:34.

The passage under consideration appears especially to refer to the Lord's coming to destroy the city, which was soon to take place, and would be connected with a partial deliverance from the persecution of the disciples.

V. 38. Now the just shall live by faith; but if a man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him.

For the just, by faith, shall live—This passage is frequently quoted in the New Testament and points out the way of our acceptance with God. Gal 2:11. "The just shall live by faith." has much the same meaning, although the former is nearer to the order of words in the original. The Hebrews were called to remember the coming of the Lord was at hand. He had warned the disciples of the awful destruction of Jerusalem, and it was now at hand, and the vengeance He would then inflict on the inhabitants was an emblem of the destruction of the wicked. The Lord had also mentioned the signs that should precede the desolation of Jerusalem, by the observance of which His disciples might escape the impending danger. Their safety would depend on their attention to those signs, and their readiness to abandon all. If they let slip the warnings He delivered, or ceased to observe what was taking place, they would be involved in the destruction of the wicked.

Our translators have introduced the words "any man," but this is unauthorized. I object probably was to prevent the passage being employed in opposition to the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints. But this doctrine is explicitly stated in the Word of God, and is not affected by the passage before us: Men go out from the disciples, because they were not of them, 1 John 2:19. We are here warned that he who endureth to the end shall be saved,

which is the uniform doctrine of the Word of God. Let a man profess what he pleases, if he draw back, God's soul shall have no pleasure in him.

The passage quoted by the Apostle is Hab. 2:4,—“Behold, his soul which is lifted up is not upright in Him: but the just shall live by his faith.” Here faith is opposed to high-mindedness, which is directly contrary to faith. The believer has no confidence in the flesh, but rejoices in Christ Jesus. He rests wholly on Christ; he feels he has no strength; he lives out of himself: all which are directly contrary to high-mindedness. God knoweth the proud afar off, and has said his foot shall slip in due time.

V. 39.—But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul.

This sufficiently shows that the supplement, *any man*, in the former verse, is unnecessary.

“The just shall live by faith: but if,” says the Apostle, “he draw back, my soul shall have pleasure no in him. But we are not of those that draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe,” &c. He was “confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform it until the day of Jesus Christ,” Phil. 1:6. Faith is the gift of God, and the gifts and calling of God are without repentance: He does not forsake the work of His hands. 1 Sam. 12:22. The Apostle's words, however, do not imply that none of those whom he addresses should draw back, but he expresses his confidence in them as formerly, Heb. 6. He speaks of all believers, “They are not of those who draw back unto perdition: but of them that believe to the saving of the soul; literally, “But of faith to the salvation of the soul.” There are, no doubt, apostates who promised fair; but man only looks on the outward appearance, God searcheth the heart; and when the heart is right with God and we, under a habitual sense of weakness have fled to Christ, and are living by faith in Jesus, our path shall be as the shining light which shineth more and more unto the perfect day.

Chapter Eleven

V. 1.—Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.

The substance. It gives things hoped for and not seen a substance, or reality, in the mind. This can hardly be called a definition of faith, for it is a simple idea and can only be defined by synonymous terms. The word here rendered substance is repeatedly rendered confidence, 2 Cor. 9:4, 11:17, Heb. 3:14, and in the margin of this passage, and it would seem preferable to render it confidence; here faith is the confidence of things hoped for, the evidence, or rather conviction of things not seen, a more accurate description of faith cannot be given.

V. 2.—For by it the elders obtained a good report.

The elders, or ancients, obtained a good report; they are mentioned with approbation in the Scriptures, and their names handed down to us with honor.

V. 3.—Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

It is by faith that we understand that the worlds were made by the word of God. The heathen philosophers did not deny that God was the Creator of the world, but they supposed that creation consisted in reducing the form and order the matter of which all things were made.

The idea of all being made out of nothing appears to have been an idea too vast for their comprehension. But by faith we understand that the things which are seen were not made of matter which had a previous existence. The formation of matter is described in the Scriptures, "In the beginning God made the heavens and the earth," and then we have the account of their being reduced to order. The work of creation is so vast, bearing the impress of its

divine author, and is so different from the works of man, that even the heathen are without excuse in not recognizing in it God's eternal power and Godhead. " The heavens declare the glory of God, and the firmament showeth his handiwork;" although there is no voice proceeding from the sun and moon, yet their line is gone to all the earth, and their words to the end of the world, and were it not for the determined enmity of fallen man against God, and that a deceived heart has turned them aside, all who behold the glories of creation would be led by the contemplation of them to their great Original; but they feed on ashes; a deceived heart hath turned them aside, and prevents them from seeing that, in supposing the earth to have been eternal, or produced by chance, there is a lie in their right hand.

V. 4.—By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

The next instance of faith adduced by the Apostle is that of Abel. By faith he offered a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. We learn from the history of Cain and Abel, that in connexion with the promise that the seed of the woman should bruise the head of the serpent, bloody sacrifices were instituted; Abel offered the firstlings of his flock, Cain the fruit of the ground. The latter thereby acknowledged his dependence on God, the former acknowledged his guilt as a sinner and his hope of acceptance through the promised Savior, whose heel was to be bruised in bruising the head of the serpent.

The way of salvation was revealed after the fall; in the emblematical language the seed of the woman bruising the head of the serpent. This may be viewed as the first parable, and its interpretation is given Heb. 2:14. The bruising of the heel of Christ describes his death, by which he destroyed the power of Satan. The sting of death is sin. It could not injure an innocent person, but Christ took part in flesh and blood with his people, and by His death removed the sting of death, transforming it into a state of transition from

pain and hurt and suffering and vanity, to an exceeding, even an eternal weight of glory. Through death, Christ, the head of the family, entered into this glory, and it behoves all his people to follow his steps, to have fellowship with him, the glorious head, in the troubles and trials of life and at last to be conformed to his death, that they may have fellowship with him in the victory which they all share. In connexion with the obscure revelation of the plan of salvation, in the curse pronounced upon the serpent, bloody sacrifices were appointed, and thus, as in other ordinances, the truth of the great atonement was embodied. But Cain didn't regard the Divine appointment, confessing indeed his obligations to the Divine bounty but making no account of his sinfulness, and disregarding the intimation that without shedding of blood there was no remission and no satisfaction to justice. The history of Cain and Abel exactly corresponds with the parable of the Pharisee and Publican. The former was exemplary in many respects. He acknowledged his obligations to God, but forgot that he was a sinner and needed mercy. This occupied all the thoughts of the publican, and he looked for it through the propitiation. There is but one name given under heaven whereby a sinner can be saved, and previously to his appearing, sacrifices, which can never take away sin, were offered on God's altar. Abel's offering was by faith in the Savior, who was described as the seed of the woman, and his faith was manifested by offering the appointed sacrifices.

He thus obtained witness that he was righteous. —God is angry with the wicked every day; but he testified his acceptance of Abel's gifts. We are not told in what manner, not improbably by fire coming down and consuming his offering. Our Lord speaks of righteous Abel. He was, like all God's people, righteous by faith, and, although dead, he yet speaketh, teaching us that there is but one way in which sinful man can come to God, and that the blood of Jesus cleanseth from all sin all who believe in Him as their substitute who has satisfied Divine Justice,

V. 5.—By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death; and was not found, because God had translated him; for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God.

The Apostle's next example was Enoch. He was the seventh from Adam, and was translated without tasting death. This privilege he shared with Elijah; Enoch was translated before the law, Elijah under the law. This was not only a most honorable testimony to those distinguished servants of God, but an intimation that when Christ shall come to judgment, his people who are alive and remain shall not die but be changed and caught up to meet the Lord in the air. Hence the translation of Enoch and Elijah is termed a mystery, 1 Cor. 15:51, of which what shall take place on the great day is the explanation, or hidden meaning.

Our translation says, Enoch walked with God. The Apostle, quoting from the Septuagint, has it, he pleased God; the expressions are nearly synonymous. "How can two walk together except they be agreed?" God, in his Word, bears this testimony to Enoch, that he pleased God, which implied his being reconciled to God by Jesus Christ; for, like all other men, he had been shapen in iniquity, and in sin did his mother conceive him, and while in the flesh he could not please God, he was washed and sanctified and justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, and by the Spirit of God.

V. 6.—But without faith it is impossible to please him; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him.

But without faith it is impossible to please God; for, in order to please God, we *must believe that He is, and that He is the rewarder of those that diligently seek Him.*

It is evident that in coming to God we must necessarily believe his existence, and without the conviction that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him we can have no motive to serve Him.

This illustrates both parts of the definition given. Heb. 11:1. No man hath seen God at any time, but by faith we have a conviction of His existence. We believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, is the confidence of things hoped for. It satisfies us that we shall not seek His face in vain, that He will hear our prayers, and send us an answer in peace.

It is true that men are inexcusable in not perceiving the Creator's eternal power and Godhead by His works; but such is the utter blindness and depravity of fallen man, that not only have they not discovered the true God by the works of creation, but when God had revealed himself in the seed of the woman, the incarnate Savior, they completely lost the knowledge of God, and changed the image of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds and four-footed beasts and creeping things.

In the passage before us the Apostle not only speaks of our belief in a God, but in the living and true God, whom no man knows but as He is revealed in His Son Jesus Christ. Hence it follows that the character of the man who believes that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that diligently seek Him, must be confined to the believer in Christ who knows that God is a Spirit, and that they who worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth.

V. 7.—By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by the which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

The next example given by the Apostle is that of Noah, who was warned of God of things not seen as yet. He was informed of the impending flood 120 years before it took place; and, although there was as yet no appearance of the catastrophe, by that faith which is the conviction of things not seen, he was moved with fear, which led him willingly to embrace the way of escape made known to him. He prepared an ark for the preservation of his house. This could not be done in a corner, nor, we may be as-

sured, was the object he had in view concealed. In the obedience yielded by Noah, and in the indifference of those who witnessed the preparation which he was making, we have an illustration of the opposite effects of faith and unbelief. Actuated by a spirit of obedience, Noah was busily employed in preparing the Ark; while, under the influence of indifference, the inhabitants of the world were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage.

Thus he condemned the world; such of them as were in his neighbourhood, or to whom the report extended, treated the notion of a flood with contempt. Such a thing had never before occurred.

It is even doubtful whether there was any rain previously to the flood. We read, Gen. 2:5, 6, "For the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth ... but there went up a mist from the earth, and watered the whole face of the ground." It is probable this continued till the flood, and here we find the explanation of Gen. 9:12-16, "And God said, This is the token of the covenant which I make between me and you and every living creature that is with you, for perpetual generations: I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass, when I bring a cloud over the earth, that the bow shall be seen in the cloud: and I will remember my covenant, which is between me and you and every living creature of all flesh; and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And the bow shall be in the cloud; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth."

Had there been rain previously the rainbow would have appeared; but, as this was not the case, it seems most reasonable to suppose that the ground had been watered by the mist, and, consequently, that the rainbow was not seen till the rain began to descend. The windows of heaven had been opened and the earth deluged, which would naturally create apprehension when rain began to fall, but then the bow was to appear as a pledge that the earth should no more be overwhelmed.

Thus we see how Noah became heir of the righteousness which is by faith. Noah was a sinner, and therefore exposed to wrath as well as others. He did not escape by his innocence but by his faith. Our Lord frequently said, "Thy faith hath saved thee," and thus did Noah's faith save him; hence he is said to have become heir of the righteousness which is by faith. He is termed a preacher of righteousness, calling his fellow-men to repentance, warning them of what was about to take place which had been communicated to him. But they made light of it, and so perished in their unbelief. God's long-suffering waited an hundred and twenty years, during the whole, or a part, of which Noah was not only engaged in preaching, but in preparing the Ark; thus, at once, addressing by what they saw and heard, and thus are men addressed by the preaching of the Gospel and the appointed ordinances in which this doctrine is embodied.

The Apostle describes Baptism, which now saves believers, as the antitype of Noah's preservation in the Ark; not, indeed, the putting away of the filth of the flesh, which is all that water can do, but the answer of a good conscience toward God by the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Baptism is the profession of our faith that Jesus died for our sins according to the Scriptures, was buried and rose again according to the Scriptures, and in virtue of our unity with Christ our glorious head, His resurrection is our resurrection, and His justification is our justification. As Noah was preserved from the flood by faith, so are believers preserved from the wrath to come through faith in Him who bore their sins in his own body on the tree, thereby cancelling their guilt.

V. 8.—By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

We have already observed that immediately after the fall God had revealed himself in Christ the seed of the woman; in other words, the Son of man. To Him, or to God, as revealed in Him, men were taught to look for victory over their adversary the devil; and those

who ceased to view God as there revealed very soon lost the knowledge of God altogether, and bowed down to stocks and stones. Noah alone in that generation had retained the knowledge of God. Gen. 7:1. He viewed God not merely as a subject of contemplation, but as his God and Savior; and experienced, as all believers do, His power to save.

Before the days of Abraham, God, as we have seen, had revealed Himself in the seed of the woman. Cain, in consequence of the murder of his brother, had been driven out from the presence of the Lord, and another seed had been given to Eve, named Seth. Among his posterity the knowledge of the true God seems to have been maintained; and they appear to have lived in a state of separation from the posterity of Cain, who, it is probable, soon fell into idolatry. At length the separation was broken by the sons or worshippers of God contracting marriages with Cain's posterity, called the daughters of men, which seems to have produced general ungodliness, and was the immediate cause of the Flood. The same controversy has been carried on in every age. God afterwards separated the seed of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; but they learned the way of the heathen, and corrupted themselves. After the ascension of Christ, God said to His people, "Come out from among them, and be ye separate, and touch not the unclean thing," &c.; but they disregarded the admonition, and mingled with the nations, satisfied with the name of Christians, while few possessed the spirit of Christ. Thus we see that in every age the great controversy between God and His people has been their proneness to mingle themselves with those who know not God.

Abraham is the father of believers, and his life is their pattern and example. Hence the Apostle dwells more upon his history than he had done upon the preceding examples which he had adduced.

He for a time served other gods. This does not imply that he was an idolater, bowing down to stocks and stones. When Jacob and Laban entered into a friendly league, Laban swore by the God of Abraham and the God of Nahor, the God of their father; and Jacob

sware by the fear of his father Isaac. Both seem to have sworn by the living and true God; but Jacob swore by Him who had revealed Himself to his grandfather and his father as their God, and who had appeared to him at Bethel, and assured him of his protection, and into whose hands he had committed himself.

Abraham was called to go out into a place which he was afterwards to receive for an inheritance, and by faith he obeyed, although he knew not whither he went.

V. 9.—By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, in which he had no inheritance, but dwelt in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise.

V. 10.—For he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God

This was not grievous to him, for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. Here we are taught that Abraham's faith looked beyond this earth. This is more expressly stated, ver. 16, where Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are said to desire a better country, even an heavenly, of which they saw only a shadow in the land of promise. The same language is employed, chap. 12:22, where we read of the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and Jerusalem that is above. Gal. 4:26.

V. 11.—Through faith also Sara herself received strength to conceive seed, and was delivered of a child when she was past age, because she judged him faithful who had promised.

Sarah is the next example of faith. She received strength to conceive seed when past age, and strength was communicated to her through faith.

The Lord had promised to Abraham that Sarah should have a son, and be a mother of nations, Gen. 17:15, 16; and the promise was fulfilled to her through faith. The Lord, with two attendant angels, appeared to Abraham as he sat in his tent. With the greatest hospitality he prepared food for them, and stood by them under the tree while they did eat. Gen. 18:18. On the Lord's inquiring for Sarah his wife, Abraham replied she was in the tent. The Lord then assured him that she should have a son. Sarah, although unseen, heard the promise, and laughed within herself at the supposition of her being a mother at such advanced an age. The Lord inquired why Sarah had laughed, and asked if anything was too hard for the Lord. She denied having laughed, which was an equivocation; she had not laughed aloud, but she was conscious of having laughed, and the Lord's reproof removed her unbelief. She had heard the question, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" and that faith through which she received strength to conceive seed sprang up in her mind. The scene here described reminds us of Nathanael. When Jesus said, "Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig-tree, I saw thee," conviction flashed into his mind, and he said, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Thus it seems to have been with Sarah. She was in the tent; no human eye was upon her; but her incredulous smile had not escaped the eye of Him who seeth in secret; and thus it appears that faith, by which she judged Him faithful who had promised, was produced in her mind.

V. 12. —Therefore sprang there even of one, and him as good as dead, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand which is by the sea shore innumerable

And thus there sprang from an individual, and him as good as dead, being naturally incapable of procreating children, so many as the stars of the sky in multitude, and as the sand by the sea shore innumerable.

V. 13.—These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and

embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth.

These all.—The Apostle does not here refer to Abel, Enoch, and Noah; for Enoch did not die; and, not being mindful of that country from which they came out, is not applicable to Abel and Noah, but to Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, and Jacob, who all died in faith, holding fast the beginning of their confidence steadfast to the end. They died in faith, not having received the promises; but they saw them afar off, were fully persuaded that they should be accomplished, embraced them as their portion, the joy and rejoicing of their heart, and confessed themselves strangers and pilgrims on the earth. This illustrates what had been previously said, that Abraham looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God; and that they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly. Had a portion in this world been what they desired, the stronger the desire the more would their souls have cleaved to the dust; but they did not mind earthly things; they looked beyond this vain and perishing world to the better and heavenly country, the city of which they had become citizens by faith. Thus were their hearts purified by faith; they sought the things that were above; they felt that here they had no continuing city, that they were strangers and pilgrims on earth. Faith brought the glories of the better country to their view, and this dimmed the lustre of all earthly splendor, and worldly pursuits and enjoyments.

The promises include not only that of Christ, but of the land which He was to inhabit. But all that was earthly and temporal in the promises derived its value in their eyes from its connexion with the promise of Him who delivers His people from this present evil world.

V. 14—For they that say such things declare plainly that they seek a country.

For they that say such things, viz., that they are strangers and pilgrims on earth, declare plainly that they seek a country; they do not reckon themselves at home. Thus the Psalmist says, "I am a

stranger with thee, and a sojourner, as all my fathers were."
Psalm 49:13

V. 15—And truly, if they had been mindful of that country from whence they came out, they might have had opportunity to have returned.

The patriarchs are here represented as having forgotten the country from whence they came out. Thus the Church, the Lamb's wife, is exhorted to forget her own people, and her father's house, Psalm 45:10; to set her affections on things above, not on things on the earth. Had the patriarchs been mindful of the country whence they came out, they might have had an opportunity of returning. We repeatedly read of famines in the land of Canaan in the days of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Sometimes they went down to Egypt on such occasions, but they never thought of returning to the land of Chaldea. When Abraham commanded his head servant to go to his kindred, and take a wife for his son Isaac, the servant inquired whether, in case the woman was not willing to leave her country, he should bring Isaac back to the land of his fathers. Abraham prohibited his doing so, at the same time expressing his confidence that God would incline the heart of the woman to accompany him; but, having no particular promise on this subject, he made the servant swear that he would not on any account carry Isaac back. The promise of Abraham being the father of Christ was connected with the patriarch's dwelling in the land of Canaan, which was a pledge of the fulfilment of the promise, and was called Immanuel's Land. But, while they lived in the land, they were not to mix with the inhabitants.

V. 16.—But now they desire a better country, that is, an heavenly; wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city.

It is apparent from their history that they desired a better country, even an heavenly, and God had prepared for them a city. Here we are expressly taught that the attention of the patriarchs was directed to a better, even a heavenly country, and that God had

provided for them a city, which is elsewhere described as having foundations, whose builder and maker is God. This is illustrated by our Lord putting to silence the Sadducees, who denied that there was a resurrection, by quoting God's declaration to Moses, in which He describes Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He would have been ashamed of describing Himself as standing to them in this relation had He bestowed on them nothing better than this world can afford. An earthly king would be ashamed of any of his near relations being placed in a low or subordinate situation. And the King of kings would have been ashamed of permitting him whom he acknowledges as His friend, and whom He had promised to bless, to be put off with the perishing enjoyments of this present life. God is unchangeable, the same yesterday, today, and for ever; and the relation between Him and those to whom He described Himself as standing in the relation of a God must be eternal, not confined to the brief period of our present life.

V. 17.—By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only-begotten son,

Abraham was not permitted to accomplish his intention to offer up his son Isaac; but the trial was the same. Never was any one subjected to so great a trial, Isaac was his beloved son, the only child of Sarah his wife, who, after being long barren, was made a joyful mother. For Ishmael had been sent away from his father's house, and Isaac remained the hope of his aged father. The promises, for the sake of which Abraham had passed his life in a foreign land, were expressly limited to Isaac, and therefore his death appeared to nullify them all; so that paternal affection, and the hope of being the father of the Savior of the world, concurred in leading Abraham to shrink from obedience to so revolting a commandment.

V. 18.—Of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called.

Of whom it was said, In Isaac shall thy seed he called.—God had promised that in Abraham's seed all the families of the earth should be blessed, and He had said as expressly that this should be fulfilled in the line of Isaac. Must not, then, the death of Isaac preclude the fulfilment of the promises? No; Abraham was persuaded that the promises should all be fulfilled. He knew that He was faithful who had promised, and therefore on this subject there could not be any doubt.

V. 19.—Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure.

We have seen that the commandment to offer Isaac was express; he was not only to be slain, but reduced to ashes; and there was but one way in which the express commandment and the positive promise could be reconciled, viz., by God raising him from the dead; but, considering his almighty power, what was incredible in this? Acts 26:8. Here we see Abraham's faith. He had never seen a person raised from the dead; he had never seen the ashes of a body, which had been consumed and dissipated in smoke, reorganized and reanimated; but, when he reflected on the power of the Creator, who spoke, and it was done; who commanded, and all things stood fast; who called into existence and harmony all the various parts of this fair creation; all difficulty was at an end. He knew not how Isaac's bones had grown in the womb of Sarah. Eccl. 11:5. Yet so it had been, and he was convinced that with God nothing was impossible; and he was no less fully convinced of the Divine faithfulness. He knew that it was impossible for God to lie, that He was faithful. We may make promises, and something may occur which may prevent our fulfilling them. We may, although our inclination be the same, have lost the power of doing what we intended and said; but with God there is no variableness, neither shadow of turning. He sees the end from the beginning. All is under His absolute control; and, in the faith of this, Abraham hesitated not to make the required sacrifice.

The commandment to offer Isaac is called a temptation or a trial. Jas. 1:13. His faith was triumphant; and he experienced that, in keeping God's commandment, there was an exceeding great reward. This was the greatest trial of the patriarch's faith, and he did not lose his reward. It had been promised that all the families of the earth should be blessed in his seed; and his obedience to the commandment to offer his son, in whom his seed was to be called, was the means of making known to him how the promise was to be fulfilled, namely, by the death and resurrection of Christ. There is a remarkable correspondence in the circumstances of Abraham's offering up Isaac, and the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus. Abraham was required to offer up his son. He obeyed, and proceeded to the land of Moriah. Moriah was the name of the mountain on which the temple was built. It was adjacent to Calvary, and it may be that Calvary was the scene of this transaction. On the third day Abraham saw the place afar off, so that during three days Isaac was under sentence of death, the exact period of our Lord's being free among the dead. Again, Abraham leaving his servants, laid the wood for the burnt-offering upon Isaac, as the cross was laid upon Jesus. Again, Isaac must have submitted without resistance. We know not his age; but Abraham was far advanced, and probably incapable of struggling with a youth who had been able to walk so far, and afterwards to carry the wood for the burnt-offering. These circumstances coincide with what took place at the death of Jesus; and the Apostle appears to put it beyond a doubt that the whole of the transaction was figurative, from our being taught that Abraham received his son from the dead in a parable. Hence it appears that, in Abraham giving up his son, and voluntarily offering him up as a burnt sacrifice, is represented the love of God in not sparing His Son, but giving Him up for all His redeemed. The narrative is indeed, as the Apostle had previously said of the law, not an image, but a shadow of the death of Jesus; but there seems no doubt that, in this parable, Abraham obtained a more distinct view of the manner in which all the families of the earth were to be blessed in his seed; and it has been supposed with great probability that the Lord es-

pecially refers to this transaction when He says, "Abraham saw my day afar off, and was glad;" and probably this transaction was the means not only of comforting and instructing Abraham, but also many of his children in their generations.

V. 20.—By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come,

Isaac blessed Jacob concerning things to come. —The Apostle does not speak of the deceit which Jacob practiced in order to obtain the blessing. He simply refers to the blessing which each of them received. The blessing of Abraham, viz., of being the father of Christ, was given to Jacob contrary to Isaac's intention; but it was given him according to the Divine purpose, of which Isaac was afterwards fully aware, and said, "I have blessed him, and he shall be blessed." Nothing is said of the impropriety of Jacob's conduct in deceiving his father. He acted under the direction of his mother, to whom it had been revealed before the birth of the children that the elder should serve the younger, Gen. 25:23, by which the Apostle illustrates the doctrine of election, Rom. 9:11, 12. At the same time, Jacob seems to have suffered much during his lifetime. He says to Pharaoh, "The days of the years of my pilgrimage are an hundred and thirty years: few and evil have the days of the years of my life been, and have not attained unto the days of the years of the life of my fathers in the days of their pilgrimage," Gen. 47:9; and he thus describes the twenty years he served Laban, "This twenty years have I been with thee; thy ewes and thy she goats have not cast their young, and the rams of thy flock have I not eaten. That which was torn of beasts I brought not unto thee; I bare the loss of it; of my hand didst thou require it, whether stolen by day, or stolen by night. Thus I was; in the day the drought consumed me, and the frost by night; and my sleep departed from mine eyes. Thus have I been twenty years in thy house; I served thee fourteen years for thy two daughters, and six years for thy cattle; and thou hast changed my wages ten times," Gen. 31:38-41. (Psa. 99:8.) Into these things, however, the Apostle does not enter; he simply states that Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau

concerning things to come, and that he did so by faith, and he did so according to the description given of faith, chap. 11:21.

V. 21.—By faith Jacob, when he was a dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph; and worshipped, leaning upon the top of his staff.

By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed both the sons of Joseph, appointing them to be heads of tribes, thus giving the birthright to Joseph, 1 Chron. 5:1, and proving his faith in the promises of God—*staff*, Gen. 47:31; this was connected with the oath he required of Joseph that he should be buried in the land of Canaan, which proved his faith in the promises made to his fathers.

V. 22.—By faith Joseph, when he died, made mention of the departing of the children of Israel: and gave commandment concerning his bones.

Joseph, the next example, when dying, expressed his confidence in the departure of the children of Israel from Egypt that they might obtain the inheritance which God had promised them, and gave commandment concerning his bones, Gen. 1. 24, 25, Exod. 13:19. Joseph's conduct, in regard to his bones, was not only a proof of his own faith, but was calculated to confirm the faith of his brethren that God would deliver them. This might be disregarded in prosperity, but remembered when oppressed.

V. 23.—By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months of his parents, because they saw he was a proper child: and they were not afraid of the king's commandment.

The next example is the faith of the parents of Moses. The king had commanded all the male children of the Israelites to be cast into the river. At this period Moses was born, and, being very remarkable for his beauty, his parents, undismayed by the king's commandment, concealed him three months. Their doing so is ascribed by the Apostle to faith. Whether this faith rested on a Divine communication by a dream to his father, as the Jewish his-

torian, Josephus, relates, or on their confidence in the power of the God of Israel, we are not informed. It is not improbable that the latter was the case; the child was so very remarkable for beauty that his parents concluded that God would preserve him, and they therefore braved Pharaoh's tyrannical edict. Indeed, the Apostle appears to intimate that such was the case, when he says he was hid three months, because they saw he was a proper child.

V. 24.—By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter.

The next example of faith is Moses, himself one of the most remarkable personages of whom we read in Scripture. He is placed by our Lord at the head of the prophets, when He speaks of Moses and the prophets, Luke 16:29. Moses was the lawgiver of Israel, and a remarkable type of Christ, uniting in his own person the offices of prophet, priest, and king. When Aaron and Miriam alleged that they were prophets as well as Moses, they were sharply rebuked, and reminded of his superiority, Num. 12:6-8. What the Apostle relates respecting him demonstrates his faith. He had been wonderfully preserved and adopted as her son by Pharaoh's daughter. He was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds; but when he was grown up, he renounced all the advantages which he possessed.

V. 25.—Choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God, than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season.

And chose rather to share the afflictions of God's chosen people than to enjoy for a season the pleasures of sin.

V. 26—Esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt: for he had respect unto the recompense of the reward.

God had promised that Abraham should be the progenitor of the Savior of the world, and had given him the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness of the faith which Abraham had exer-

cised in the promise, and it was also the token of the covenant. We do not read of Moses having been circumcised, but there can be no doubt that, in obedience to the commandment, he had been circumcised on the eighth day. Hence he bore in his body the marks of the Lord Jesus, the token of the covenant with Abraham. No doubt this was a reproach in the opinion of the Egyptians. In the state in which Israel then was it was a mark of degradation and slavery; but Moses preferred the reproach of Christ to all the treasures of Egypt, which were at his command, but which he was aware must be forfeited by his casting in his lot with Israel. But he had respect to the recompense of the reward of enjoying the blessing of Abraham and sharing with him in the glories of the resurrection, which were included in the promise of being his God. Matt. 22:32. Whether Moses had received an intimation that God by his means would deliver Israel, we are not informed. But, either he had received such an intimation, or had formed the design of attempting it, and had confidence in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that he would prove successful. Stephen tells us that he supposed his brethren would have understood that God by his hand would deliver them. Acts 7:25. Had the Lord accomplished his desire, had he with all the advantage of his station succeeded in delivering Israel, his success might have been ascribed to his personal rank and influence; but he was stripped of all his glory, reduced to the situation of a shepherd; and when he received his commission, pleaded his unfitness to engage in the service, and only undertook it by the express commandment of God. We see the same thing in Gideon's victory over the Midianites. He had collected a numerous army, though far inferior to the enemy; but it was diminished to a third of its number by a proclamation, that as many as chose might withdraw. Still it was too numerous. It was further reduced to 300 men, and then obtained a decisive victory over the enemy, when their own strength was gone, Deut. 32:36; and they were strong only in the Lord and in the power of his might.

V. 27.—By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king: for he endured, as seeing him who is invisible.

By faith he forsook Egypt...—This refers to the first deliverance of Israel. Moses, after slaying the Egyptian, feared the wrath of the king, and fled out of Egypt; but after he had, by the direction of God, wrought all the miracles, he had no apprehension. The king commanded him to see his face no more. "And Moses said, Thou hast spoken well, I will see thy face again no more," Exod. 10:29; previously informing him that "All these thy servants shall come down unto me, and bow down themselves unto me, saying, Get thee out, and all the people that follow thee: and after that I will go out. And he went out from Pharaoh in a great anger." This was the effect of faith,—he disregarded the displeasure of Pharaoh, having his eyes directed to the invisible God.

V. 28.—Through faith he kept the passover, and the sprinkling of blood, lest he that destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

The Lord had intimated his intention to slay the firstborn of Egypt, and commanded that the blood of the paschal lamb should be sprinkled on the doorposts, and that He would pass over and not inflict the plague on those whose houses were thus distinguished, and through faith in the Divine intimation Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood; at once giving credit to the judgment to be inflicted on the Egyptians, and to the prescribed means of preservation of the Israelites.

V. 29.—By faith they passed through the Red sea as by dry land; which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned.

When Israel came to the Red Sea Moses was commanded to stretch out his rod over the sea, which was divided, so that the Israelites passed over as on dry land, which the Egyptians assaying to do were drowned. Here the whole of Israel are represented as believing. They followed their leader. The miracles wrought on the Egyptians must have given them confidence in God and in Moses, and under the influence of this confidence they entered the sea, which was indeed the only way in which they could escape the pursuit of the Egyptians. The Apostle tells us they were baptized unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea. 1 Cor. 10:2. By following

him while the waters stood on their right hand and their left, the cloud having removed and gone behind them, they proved their confidence in him, and consequently in God, under whose guidance and direction they had come out of Egypt, just as it is said of believers, that by Him (Christ) they believe in God. 1 Peter 1:21

V. 30.—By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, after they were compassed about seven days.

Israel received a lesson in Jericho how Canaan was to be conquered, not by their own sword, but by the power of God. But their faith was not abiding. When they had passed safely over then believed they God's words, but soon forgot His works. Psalm 106:13. Thus, also, our Lord speaks of some who for a while believe, Luke 8:13; and the Apostle teaches us that we are partakers of Christ, if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, Heb. 3:14; and our Lord tells us, He that endureth to the end shall be saved, Matt. 24:13; by which we learn that temporary impressions may be made upon the mind, producing appearances which it may be impossible to distinguish from saving faith, except by their continuance or non-continuance.

V. 31.—By faith the harlot Rahab perished not with them that believed not, when she had received the spies with peace.

The next example is that of Rahab. She told the spies that she knew that the Lord had given them the land; she had heard of His drying up the sea, and declared her faith in the God of Israel as God in heaven above and in the earth beneath; and, under this conviction, she received the spies and concealed them, and did not perish with the unbelieving Canaanites; who, although so greatly alarmed by all they had heard of the Israelites, that they fainted because of them, Josh. 2:24, still madly persisted in resisting them, and brought on themselves swift destruction.

V. 32.—And what shall I more say, for the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthah; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets.

Although the Apostle had adduced a sufficient number of examples, he had not exhausted the subject, but here names several others whose faith was conspicuous: Gideon, who by faith triumphed over the Midianites, Judges 7:; Barak, who overcame the army of Jabin, Judges 4:6. Samson, whose faith appears not only from his mighty actions, but from acknowledging the Lord as the author of his success, and calling upon him when ready to perish with thirst, Judges 15:18; Jephthah, whose faith was manifest by his message to the King of the Ammonites, stating that God had given to Israel all the lands to which the Ammonites laid claim, and at the same time appealing to God for the justice of his claim. Judges 11:12-27. It is unnecessary to particularize instances of the faith of David, of Samuel, and of the prophets.

V. 33.— Who through faith subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions.

David through faith subdued all the neighboring kingdoms. Samuel was a most righteous judge. The prophets enforced men's obligations to act justly; obtained promises, as Phinehas obtained the promise of an everlasting priesthood; whilst Daniel stopped the mouths of lions.

V. 34.— Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

Quenched the violence of fire, like the three who were cast into the midst of the burning fiery furnace; escaped the edge of the sword; out of weakness were made strong; waxed valiant in fight; turned to flight the armies of the aliens.

V. 35.— Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection.

Women received;—as the woman of Zarephath, 1 Kings 17:21; and the Shunammite, 2 Kings 4:34; others were tortured, not ac-

cepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection—a resurrection to a better and more glorious life.

V. 36.—And others had trial of cruel mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment

Others had trial of cruel mockings, as, Jer. 20:7, bonds and imprisonments.

V. 37.—They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented.

Stoned, as Zechariah, 2 Chron. 24:20, 21; Matt. 23:37; were sawn asunder (such, it is said, was the fate of Isaiah by Manasseh); tempted; tried in various ways, especially by sufferings; were slain with the sword; they wandered, as Elijah, destitute, &c.

V. 38.—(Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and in mountains, and in dens and in caves of the earth.

Thus did David, and Elijah, and others, of whom the world was not worthy.

V. 39.—And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.

Those whom the Apostle had mentioned, and many others, having received a good report through faith, received not the promise. The promise here is the promise of the resurrection and the enjoyment of the better country, 5:16. The hope of the resurrection was general in Israel, and the Sadducees were remarkable for denying it. The Apostle describes himself as having hope,—“And have hope toward God, which they themselves also allow, that there shall be a resurrection of the dead, both of the just and unjust,” Acts 24:15; and again,—“And now I stand and am judged for the hope of the promise made of God unto our fathers: unto which promise our twelve tribes, instantly serving God day and night, hope to come. For which hope’s sake, king Agrippa, I am

accused of the Jews. Why should it be thought a thing incredible with you, that God should raise the dead?" 26:6-8. This is the promise which supported the minds of all in Israel who truly possessed the fear of God, and the worthies mentioned by the Apostle had not received. The Apostle says,—“These all died in faith.” This is not to be understood of all who had been mentioned; for instance, all Israel who came out of Egypt, of whom it is said,—“They are a very froward generation, children in whom there is no faith.” Deut 32:20. The fall in the wilderness of the generation which came out of Egypt is held out as a warning, 1 Cor. 10:11, 12. But many to whom the Apostle referred were partakers of precious faith, and looked for eternal life beyond the grave.

V. 40.—God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.

God having provided some better thing for us...—With the exception of Enoch and Elijah, all the family of Adam have returned to the dust. One generation has passed away, and another come to occupy the earth. The people of God have entered into rest, although their bodies have mouldered in the dust. But, while the soul remains in a state of separation from the body, they are not made perfect, they are in a state of transition, they are present with the Lord; but their body, so fearfully and wonderfully made, is reduced to its first elements, and appears to be turned to destruction. Christ is the first-born from the dead; the Holy One of God saw no corruption. He did, indeed, taste of death, and has become the first-fruits of them that sleep. They came into the world in successive generations, but they shall all be made perfect in one. John 17:23. When the Lord shall descend with a shout, with the voice of an archangel and the trump of God, the dead in Christ shall arise. There will be no priority of those who lived in the early ages of the world. They are all members of Christ, of His flesh and of His bones, and His body cannot be mutilated. Believers are members of Christ's body, of His flesh and of His bones. Each individual believer, therefore, is necessary to the perfection of the whole; so that, while some remain in the grave the body of

Christ is incomplete. This passage seems to be a conclusive argument against the notion of first and second resurrection. The first resurrection is figurative, as John the Baptist was figuratively Elijah. The body of Christ is compared to the human body. Every member, the smallest and, apparently, the most insignificant, is essential to the perfection of the natural body, and not less to the mystical body of Christ; which, like the other, is one body composed of many members. 1 Cor. 12:10.

Chapter Twelve

V. 1.— Wherefore seeing we also are compassed about with so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and let us run with patience the race that is set before us.

The witnesses here spoken of are commonly understood of those to whom reference had been made in the preceding chapter, who, having themselves obtained the victory, are now spectators of those who are engaged in the combat; and, no doubt, reference is made in the New Testament to those games which were so celebrated in Greece. But the testimony borne by the elders, who obtained a good report, as stated in the preceding chapter, rather seems to be their testimony to the efficacy of faith, to which the Apostle had ascribed all the great actions they had performed.

Faith is the spring of all holy affections and of all noble actions, of which a variety of examples had been brought forward in the preceding chapter. Now the witnesses summoned were so numerous, and the testimony delivered so various, that believers are warned and encouraged to lay aside every weight, and the sin which doth so easily beset us, and to run with patience the race that is set before us. The sin which doth so easily beset us, is evidently unbelief. The Apostle is treating of faith, than which there is nothing in which we are so prone to fail. We naturally walk by sight, but the Christian life is a life of faith. The world, and the things of the world, are constantly soliciting our attention, and by means of them the god of this world is ever attempting to draw our minds away from God, but we are to resist him steadfast in the faith.

The prophet condemns our natural proneness to self-confidence in the following striking passage:—"For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would

not. But ye said, No; for we will flee upon horses; therefore shall ye flee; and, We will ride upon the swift; therefore shall they that pursue you be swift. One thousand shall flee at the rebuke of one; at the rebuke of five shall ye flee: till ye be loft as a beacon upon the top of a mountain, and as an ensign on an hill." Isaiah 30:15-17. Our Lord, when asked how the Jews might work the work of God, replies, "This is the work of God, that ye believe in Him whom He hath sent;" but we are ever prone to let slip the truth, and to mind the things which are seen and temporal, rather than those things which are unseen and eternal. Faith is the gift of God implanted by his Spirit, and the same power is requisite for maintaining as for implanting it at first. So that if the believer grieves the Holy Spirit of God he is like Samson shorn of his locks, and becomes weak and as another man. We are constantly apt to start aside from God, like a deceitful bow; so that the Apostle may well term unbelief the sin that doth most easily beset us. Faith is the principal, indeed we may say the material, of which the Christian armor is forged; the shield of faith, and for an helmet the hope of salvation, founded on faith; the feet shod with the preparation of the gospel of peace; which profits only when mixed with faith; and the sword of the Spirit, which is the Word of God, which profits nothing unless mixed with faith; praying always, with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, we must ask in faith, nothing wavering, else we need not expect to obtain anything of the Lord. In short, faith, so to speak, is the staple of every part of the Christian armor.

Let us run...—The Christian life is here compared to a race. It is worthy of notice that it is sometimes described as a rest, a state of repose, and at other times as demanding the greatest exertion: "For thus saith the Lord God, the Holy One of Israel: In returning and rest shall ye be saved; in quietness and in confidence shall be your strength: and ye would not." Jer. 30:15. "For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest." Heb. 4:3. Again, "So run that ye may obtain." 1 Cor. 9:24. "I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so fight I, not as one that beateth the air: But I keep under

my body, and bring it into subjection; lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a castaway." 1 Cor. 9:20, 27. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." Phil. 3:14. But these apparently opposite characteristics are perfectly consistent. All the believer's confidence is in the power and grace of Christ, without whom he can do nothing. All his springs are in Christ, Psalm 87:, who works in him to will and to do of his good pleasure; but at the same time he is to be sober, to be vigilant, to fight the good fight of faith, that he may lay hold on eternal life. He is to take to him all the armor of God, of which, while we have seen faith is the chief, we might say the sole material, the greatest diligence and activity are required in using it. Nothing requires more of persevering activity than a race, and here we are called to run with patience the race set before us. The believer requires patience, that after he has done the will of God he may inherit the promises. Chap. 6:12.

V. 2.—Looking unto Jesus the author and finisher of our faith; who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of the throne of God.

Here again faith is introduced under the figure of *looking unto Jesus*; he is here described as our pattern and example. Some suppose that the Apostle here represents Jesus as the judge who determines who shall receive the prize; but he is rather represented as our model, our leader. In the witnesses whom the Apostle had summoned in the preceding chapter we see many great actions performed through faith, but where are the actors? They have, with the rest of mankind, descended to the grave; but in looking to Jesus we see faith perfected and completed. For the joy set before Him of redeeming his people from death, of ransoming them from the power of the grave, and, in the midst of the great congregation, singing praises to his Father. Chap. 2:12.

He endured the cross, despising the shame, and is set down at the right hand of God.— Here we see faith perfected or completed. In

all the other instances we see but the beginning of faith, but in our great pattern we see its complete triumph. As the Apostle had already stated that the worthies who lived under the old dispensation had not received the promise; they were dead and buried, they were, so to speak, detained in the grave, that they, and those who trod in their steps, might all be made perfect in one glorious body; but we behold Jesus, after unexampled sufferings, wearing the conqueror's crown, and gone before to prepare mansions in which his followers may for ever dwell.

V. 3.—For consider him that endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, lest ye be wearied and faint in your minds.

Believers are exposed to sorrow and affliction, but there never was sorrow like that with which Jesus was afflicted, Sam. 1:12; and, by considering Him, His original glory, and the depth of His humiliation and sufferings, in connexion with the glory in which He is now enthroned, and into which He is about to introduce all His blood-bought sheep, they ought to be guarded against weariness and fainting.

V. 4.—Ye have not yet resisted unto blood, striving against sin.

They had indeed suffered much, but they had not been called, as many who had gone before them, and as the Captain of their salvation had done, to seal their testimony with their blood.

V. 5.—And ye have forgotten the exhortation which speaketh unto you as unto children, My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him.

And they had forgotten the exhortation, in which they are addressed as children, "My son, despise not thou the chastening of the Lord, nor faint when thou art rebuked of him."

V. 6.—For whom the Lord loveth he chasteneth, and scourgeth every son whom he receiveth. If ye endure chastening, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son is he whom the fa-

ther chasteneth not? But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons.

For whom the Lord loveth.—So far from the chastening of the Lord being an evidence of indifference or disregard, it is a proof of love.

This is illustrated by the conduct of a wise and affectionate father. In chastening you, God dealeth with you as with sons; for what son does not the father chasten?

But if ye be without chastisement, whereof all the children of God are partakers, then are ye bastards, and not sons. Men are ashamed of their illegitimate children; they remind them of their sins, and send them out of the house, and pay little attention to their education.

V. 9.—Furthermore we have had fathers of our flesh which corrected us, and we gave them reverence: shall we not much rather be in subjection unto the Father of spirits, and live?

Besides, we have had fathers, &c., who corrected us, and, so far from diminishing our respect for them, it led us to give them reverence; and shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of our spirits, and live? [There is probably a reference here to Deut 21:18, in which the rebellious son was commanded to be put to death.]

V. 10.—For they verily for a few days chastened us after their own pleasure; but he for our profit, that we might be partakers of his holiness.

Parents often chastise their children, not so much from principle as from passion; not so much with a desire to do them good, as to gratify their own irritation: but the Father of our spirits only chastens His children for their profit. He makes their own wickedness correct them, and their backslidings to reprove them, that they may know and see that it is an evil thing that they have forsaken the Lord their God, and that His fear was not in them. Jer. 2:19.

V. 11—Now no chastening for the present seemeth to be joyous, but grievous: nevertheless afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

It is true that no chastening seemeth for the present to be joyous, but grievous: but afterwards, &c. “Ye have heard of the patience of Job, and know the end of the Lord; that the Lord is very pitiful, and of tender mercy.” James 5:11. When Joab refused to come to Absalom, he commanded his servants to set his field of barley on fire. Thus, we are prone to forget God, to restrain prayer, and to sink into formality, but are reminded by affliction of our entire dependence upon God. We forsake the fountain of living water, and hew out for ourselves broken cisterns, cisterns that can hold no water; but are reminded, by their being dried up, of our folly, and then are made to turn to the strong hold. Hosea 2:6, 7. Moses describes the Lord chastening Israel as a man chastening his son as a mark of his love. Deut. 8:5.

V. 12.— Wherefore lift up the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.

This may either refer to themselves or others. If the former, those whose hands hang down, and their knees are feeble through weariness and fatigue, are exhorted to lift them up, to resume their courage. If it refers to others, it is an exhortation to bear one another's burdens, to take a lively interest in the welfare of their brethren, and to endeavour to animate and encourage them, sympathizing with them in their sorrows, and to comfort and exhort each other by the motives which had been suggested.

V. 13.—And make straight paths for your feet, lest that which is lame be turned out of the way; but let it rather be healed.

And to beware of casting a stumbling block in the way of others, as far as lies in our power, to facilitate each other's progress by our influence and example, lest the weak be turned out of the way; but we should rather aim at their being strengthened and restored to soundness.

V. 14.—Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord.

The exhortation implies that there may be difficulty in maintaining peace, men's tempers and interest frequently clash, and this produces strife and division, James 4:1. Peace is much enforced both on believers and others in the Word of God. We ought not only to be peaceably disposed ourselves, but to endeavour to promote peace among others. "Blessed," says our Lord, "are the peace-makers, for they shall be called the children of God," Matt. 5:9; and His Apostle says, "If it be possible, as much as lieth in you, live peaceably with all men. Let us therefore follow after the things which make for peace, and things wherewith one may edify another." Rom. 12:18; 14:19. A peaceful disposition is intimately connected with success in diffusing the truth. The Apostle tells us the fruit (or seed) of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace, James 3:18. Connected with peace is holiness, or conformity to God. We shall all receive the deeds done in the body, whether they were good or bad. We are all far deficient. In many things we all offend. If we say we are perfect, it only proves us to be perverse. There is a struggle in the mind of every believer, a law in his members warring against the law of his mind, and bringing him into captivity to the law of sin in his members. But he is, through the Spirit, communicated to every believer through Christ to mortify the love of sin, to crucify the flesh with its affections and lusts. Faith purifies the heart, and, although this purification is very partial, yet we are to follow after it, and remember that faith without works is dead being alone; and that it is vain to call Christ "Lord, Lord," if we do not the things which He says. We shall all be judged by our works, and therefore we ought to walk, not as fools, but as wise. The nearer we live to God, the more effectually the truth is working in us, the more of it we shall perceive; but if we give place to the devil, if we say, The Lord delayeth His coming, we are in danger of stumbling on the dark mountains. It is true, our acceptance with God is founded solely on the righteousness of Christ, but every man who possesses the hope of

the Gospel purifieth himself, even as He is pure. He that doeth righteousness is righteous, even as He is righteous.

V. 15.—Looking diligently lest any man fail of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up trouble you, and thereby many be defiled.

Looking...—We ought to maintain a holy jealousy over ourselves, knowing how prone we are to sin and to apostasy, and that our adversary, the devil, goeth about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour; but the Apostle appears to have in view our watching over each other in love. The precept is in direct opposition to the question, “Am I my brother’s keeper?” The word is repeatedly rendered “come short,” Rom. 3:13; Heb. 4:1. It is in the margin “fall from;” and, indeed, while we may be confident that He who hath begun a good work will carry it on to the day of Christ, and that the election shall obtain eternal life, we can only know that we are the subjects of Divine grace by holding fast the truth as it is in Jesus, and abiding in the doctrine of Christ. “For some receive the word with joy, but have no root, and in time of temptation fall away;” and although there is an essential difference between saving and temporary faith, it may be impossible for a time to distinguish them. Empty professors go out from believers, because they were not of them; had they been so, they would no doubt have continued with them; but, in the meantime, their profession and practice may be such as to make it meet for others to think that God has begun a good work in them.

But, from the connexion of the passage, it would appear that the Apostle is treating of that watchfulness which believers are commanded to exercise over their brethren; not watching for each other’s halting, but, knowing the temptations and dangers to which all are exposed, not only to mind their own things, but the things of others, and to be prepared to caution those who are exposed to peculiar temptations; at least, this is included in the precept; and they were not only to obey this exhortation from regard to their brethren, for they were personally concerned. One sinner

destroys much good; and, as a spark may kindle a great flame, so many might be defiled by one root of bitterness springing up to trouble them. The Apostle here refers to Deut. 29:18, "Lest there should be among you a root that beareth gall and wormwood," and thereby many be defiled. In general, men do not perish alone in their iniquity; they infect others, and embolden them to transgress.

V. 16.—Lest there be any fornicator, or profane person, as Esau, who for one morsel of meat sold his birthright.

Let there be.—This is one of those sins which we are expressly taught exclude men from the kingdom of God, 1 Cor. 6:9, 10. This is one of those fleshy lusts which war against the soul. The word is frequently employed in regard to Israel departing from God, being seduced into the worship of idols; but whether taken literally or figuratively, it is an act of rebellion against God.

Or profane person; that is, one who disregards spiritual blessings, preferring things which are seen and temporal, to those things which are unseen and eternal. The character is illustrated by the example of Esau, who, for a morsel of bread, sold his birthright. Esau was the firstborn, but this did not entitle him to the blessing of Abraham; for before the children were born it had been said, "The elder shall serve the younger." But he was probably unacquainted with this. His seniority appeared to give him a claim to be the representative of his father and grandfather, and, consequently, to obtain the high privilege of being the progenitor of Christ. But for one morsel of meat he sold his birthright. His conduct affords a striking emblem of those who prefer the gratification of their appetites to the enjoyment of the eternal inheritance. What do they enjoy here?—A momentary gratification, to which they sacrifice all their future well-being.

It appears, from the history of Jacob's family, that, although the blessing of Abraham did not necessarily descend to the firstborn, 1 Chron. 5:1, yet there appears to have been a preference of the elder. Accordingly Jacob, in blessing his sons, passes over the

three eldest, Reuben, Simeon, and Levi, on account of their conduct, and sets Judah above all his brethren. Now, the preeminence both of Jacob over Esau, and of Judah over his three elder brethren, was according to the purpose of God, as appears by the names given them at their birth. Jacob means “supplanter,” and he did supplant Esau; Judah means “praise,” and, said his father, “Judah, thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise.” Thus, the purpose of God was effected through the wickedness of those who appeared to have the best right to the blessing.

V. 17.—For ye know how that afterward when he would have inherited the blessing, he was rejected: for he found no place of repentance, though he sought it carefully with tears.

Esau was very desirous of inheriting the blessing. He carefully obeyed when commanded by his father to procure him savoury food; and when, in his absence, Jacob had been blessed, Esau in vain besought his father with tears to bestow it upon him. It could not be; the blessing was irreversibly bestowed; he found no place of repentance. Some understand repentance in his father, leading him to revoke the blessing; but it rather appears to refer to himself. His sorrow was unavailing.

It was not godly sorrow. He was disappointed; his pride was hurt at being overreached. His repentance did him no good; it was of no advantage to him. His history is a warning to all who mind the things which are seen and temporal, rather than those which are unseen and eternal. The same truth is inculcated in the parable of the ten virgins. Five were excluded; they besought that the door might be opened; but it was too late. The door was shut.

V. 18.—For ye are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, nor unto blackness and darkness, and tempest.

On the third month after leaving Egypt Israel came to mount Sinai, “And Moses brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.” Exod.

19:17. On that occasion God delivered the ten commandments in the hearing of all Israel, assuring them of His peculiar favor and protection if they obeyed His voice. Ex. 19:5, 6. Thus they came to a mount that might be touched, a material mountain, which burned with fire, and to blackness and tempest. Hence it is called a fiery law, Deut. 33:2, and its being given was accompanied with everything calculated to inspire terror and apprehension.

The blackness and darkness and tempest intimated the obscurity of the dispensation , under which the Jewish lawgiver wore a veil. 2 Cor. 3:13.

V. 19.—And the sound of a trumpet, and the voice of words; which voice they that heard entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more.

This is particularly noticed in the giving of the law. We read that the trumpet sounded long, and waxed louder and louder. Ex. 19:19. This was the signal for Israel to approach. Ex. 19:18. Accordingly “when the voice of the trumpet was exceeding loud, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled,” Moses “brought forth the people out of the camp to meet with God; and they stood at the nether part of the mount.” Exod. 19:16, 17.

Connected with the sound of the trumpet was the voice of words. We read that the law was given by the disposition of angels, Acts 7:53, and ordained by angels, Gal. iii. 19. Yet we are expressly told that God spake all these words. Exod. 20:1. These different statements are harmonized by the word of the Psalmist, “The Lord gave the word: great was the company of those that published it.” Psalm 68:11. And again, “The chariots of God are twenty thousand, even thousands of angels: the Lord is among them, as in Sinai, in the holy place.” Psalm 68:17. The thunder, the lightning, with the tempest, and the sound of the trumpet waxing louder and louder, were very dreadful, but still more tremendous was the voice of God. It demanded supreme love to God, and to love our neighbour as ourselves, Matt. 22:37-40, a demand which no

man can answer; by which, therefore, every mouth is stopped, and all the world become guilty before God.

V. 20.—For they could not endure that which was commanded, And if so much as a beast touch the mountain, it shall be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.

They could not bear that which was commanded ; the fiery law was too broad for them. It is true that only the moral law, contained in the ten commandments, is here spoken of, but it was necessarily connected with the rest of the Jewish dispensation, the meats and drinks and carnal ordinances, else it would not have been a shadow of good things to come. However insufficient the blood of bulls and goats might be to take away sin, such sacrifices were necessary for the time then present to keep up the expectation of the sacrifice of Christ.

To increase the terror and awfulness of the scene, and to make Israel feel their distance from God, “who is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and who cannot look upon sin, but hateth all the workers of iniquity,” “if so much as a beast touched the mountain, it was to be stoned, or thrust through with a dart.”

V. 21.—And so terrible was the sight, that Moses said, I exceedingly fear and quake.

This is probably referred to Ex. 19:19. Moses spake, and God answered him with a voice, probably encouraging him.

V. 22.—But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels.

In opposition to Israel’s coming to mount Sinai, (the material mountain,) the true Israel, to whom the Epistle is addressed, are represented as having come to mount Zion (not a material but a spiritual mountain). In the description of the giving of the law, in the preceding verses, everything is material and earthly. Blackness, darkness, and fire, with lurid smoke, and the sound of the

trumpet, are all calculated to affect the senses and inspire terror. Here, on the contrary, everything is spiritual and heavenly. Believers are come to mount Zion. It is remarkable that Jerusalem, which under the old dispensation was chosen for the residence of the God of Israel, where his temple was built, and the sacrifices were offered, was the last place in the promised land of which Israel obtained possession in the reign of David. 2 Sam. 5:7. Hence the God of Israel is said "to have dwelt in His holy hill of Zion," Psalm 2:6, and "to love the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob." Psalm 87:2. Hence Zion is called "the joy of the whole land." Psalm 48:2. On this account mount Zion is represented as the dwelling-place of God under the new and better dispensation. This is His rest for ever; here Christ is laid for a foundation, 1 Pet. 2:6, and here He is said to stand at the head of His redeemed. Rev. xiv. 1. The city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem. This is the city which God hath prepared for His people. Ch. 11:16. It is called Jerusalem that is above, Gal. iv. 26, and the holy city, new Jerusalem, Rev. 21:2.

To an innumerable company of angels.—We have seen that thousands of angels were present at the giving of the law, and myriads of the same glorious beings are represented as all ministering to the heirs of salvation, under the direction of Him who is the head of all principalities and powers.

The whole of Israel were assembled at Sinai, and there formed into a nation, to which allusion is here made.

V. 23.— To the general assembly and church of the first-born, which are written in heaven, and to God the judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect.

The firstborn of Israel were sanctified, Ex. 13:2, and the Levites taken in place of them to minister in the sanctuary. The congregation of Israel was an emblem of the general assembly and church of the firstborn, the true Israel, the righteous nation that keepeth the truth. It was a grand sight to behold all Israel assembled before God at Sinai, Israel is called the firstborn. Ex. 4:22. The gene-

alogies of the different tribes in Israel were carefully kept, as emblems of the Lamb's book of life. Isaiah 4:3.

God the judge of all—He is revealed as such in his Son. God appeared at Sinai as the God of Israel, Ex. 20:2; 2 Cor. 5:10, and as such believers have access unto him. At Sinai everything was calculated to alarm, but in Christ God has revealed himself to all his people as love.

Perfect—1 Pet. 5:10.—The people of God are not made perfect till the soul and body are reunited, but life and immortality are brought to light. The resurrection is exhibited in the resurrection of Christ, and therefore we are said to have come to the spirits of just men made perfect; behold them clothed with their spiritual bodies, the house which is from heaven.

V. 24.—And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaketh better things than that of Abel.

Moses was the mediator of the old covenant, and stood between God and Israel; but believers are come to a better and more glorious Mediator, *the Mediator of the new covenant*, not written on stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart, 2 Cor. 3:3, *and to the blood of sprinkling*. Believers are saved by the blood of sprinkling. 1 Pet. 1:2. Christ is their passover, and as Israel escaped by the sprinkling of blood, so do believers. Israel was sprinkled at Sinai with the blood of the covenant, and thus it was ratified. It *speakeeth better things than the blood of Abel*, which cried for vengeance, this ensures mercy.

V. 25.—See that ye refuse not him that speaketh. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, how much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaketh from heaven.

Him that speaketh—Chap. 1:2.—Him that spake on earth. How vain to expect to escape from mount Sinai. At Sinai the worldly

kingdom was established, the rewards and punishments of which were all temporal; now he speaketh from heaven in a far more excellent way,—better promises.

V. 26.— Whose voice then shook the earth: but now he hath promised, saying, Yet once more I shake not the earth only, but also heaven.

Voice shook mount Sinai, Ex. 19:18, refers not only to the mountain shaking, but to the great change produced by taking the nation of Israel to be his peculiar people, setting them apart for himself, giving them laws and commandments, while all the other nations were left in darkness and ignorance. But now a much greater shaking was to take place, not only the earth, but the heaven was to be shaken. The first shaking only affected one nation. It took them out of their former order. It gave privileges to one nation which no other enjoyed; but now a far greater shaking was to take place, by which all nations would be affected. The heaven is higher than the earth. By the first shaking God established an earthly kingdom, confined to one nation; by the second, a heavenly kingdom, whose influence should extend to all nations, was to be established.

V. 27.—And this word, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain.

Now this word, once more, signifies the removing of things shaken, as of things that are made, that the things that cannot be shaken may remain.— All the law and the prophets hang on the precepts to love God and our neighbour. These things remain, while the meats and drinks and carnal ordinances in which the kingdom of Israel stood are shaken and removed. The shaking of heaven refers to the far greater alteration made by the new covenant, the gathering of the saints into one body under Christ, and bestowing on them the kingdom.

V. 28.— Wherefore we receiving a kingdom which cannot be moved, let us have grace, whereby we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.

We, believers, receiving a kingdom, are made kings and priests to God. This kingdom cannot be moved; it is not like the Jewish dispensation temporary and introductory, but it is abiding. From this consideration let us have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. Let us consider that the greater our privileges the more our responsibility. To whom much is given of them much shall be required.

Let us then have grace to serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear.—This is altogether different from slavish fear; it is that godly fear which arises from right views of the glorious character of God; his purity, holiness, kindness, and compassion, blended with abhorrence of sin, on which he cannot look.

V. 29.—For our God is a consuming fire.

The Apostle refers to Deut. 4:24, —“For the Lord thy God is a consuming fire, even a jealous God;” and while the Gospel exhibits the boundless riches of the love of God, it gives a more awful display of His justice, and abhorrence of sin, than if all mankind had been destroyed. He pardons sins of the deepest dye, but it is only through the death of His only begotten Son. Here we see that He is of purer eyes than to behold iniquity, and that He cannot look upon sin. When Jesus stood in the place of sinners, the sword was called to awake against the man who was the fellow of the Almighty, and He drank to the very dregs the cup of wrath; so that while the believer joys in God through Jesus Christ, whose mercy endureth for ever, the more clear his apprehension of the way in which this mercy flows to him, the more is he impressed with the evil of sin, which is that bitter thing which God cannot look upon.

Chapter Thirteen

V. 1. —Let brotherly love continue.

Brotherly love is Christ's new commandment. It is at once a new and an old commandment. It is old, as it was from the beginning. It is new, as it was enjoined by Jesus on his disciples. The love of believers to each other, which is implanted in them by Divine teaching, 1 Thess. 4:9; was shadowed forth by the preference which the children of Israel were commanded to cherish towards each other. Believers of every nation are to be the objects of our love. It is to continue. It is the perfect bond by which the subjects of the kingdom of God are knit together. They are heirs of God, and joint- heirs with Christ. Their inheritance is ample. However great the enjoyment of one, it does not impoverish others, so that there is no room for jealousy.

V. 2. —Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares.

Hospitality to strangers is inculcated from the consideration that some have, without knowing it, entertained angels, as was the case with Abraham and Lot.

V. 3.—Remember them that are in hands, as bound with them; and them which suffer adversity, as being yourselves also in the body.

This is a reference to those who are in bonds for the cause of Christ. They were to sympathize with them and to pray for them. Such persons had peculiar claims upon them as their brethren, and being placed as it were in the front of the battle. Indeed, it became them to sympathize with all who were in adversity, from the consideration that they were also in the body and liable to like afflictions.

V. 4.—Marriage is honorable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge.

Marriage is honorable in all.—The Roman Catholics extol celibacy as more honorable, and do not permit their clergy to marry; but God has declared it to be honorable in all. But God will judge whoremongers and adulterers; they may escape the judgment of men, but they cannot escape Divine vengeance.

V. 5.—Let your conversation be without covetousness; and be content with such things as ye have: for he hath said, I will never leave thee, nor forsake thee.

Here, and in many other passages of Scripture, we are cautioned against covetousness, and urged to be content with the situation and circumstances in which we are placed in the course of God's providence, and the motive to contentment is the promise of God, that He will never leave us nor forsake us. This passage is remarkable for the number of negatives which it contains. I will never, never leave thee; no, I will never, never forsake thee. This was originally said to Joshua, after the death of Moses. Josh. 1:5. David repeated the promise to Solomon, 1 Chron. 28:20; and it is repeated in substance to Israel. Isa. 41:10, 20. The Apostle teaches us that "whatsoever things were written aforetime were written for our learning, that "we through patience and comfort of the Scriptures might have hope," Rom. 15:4; and as "all the promises of God in him are yea, and in him Amen, unto the glory of God by us," 2 Cor. 1:20, all believers are encouraged to appropriate this precious promise in all their straits and difficulties.

V. 6.—So that we may boldly say, The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me.

We may therefore boldly say,—“The Lord is my helper,” &c. “The Lord is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?” Psalm 118:6.

V. 7.—Remember them which have the rule over you, who hate spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation.

The Apostle seems to refer to their leaders or elders, who had spoken to them the word of the Lord, and had departed this life; for he refers to the end of their conversation. They had finished their course, they had kept the faith, and entered into the joy of their Lord.

V. 8-9.—Jesus Christ the same yesterday, and today, and for ever. Be not carried about with divers and strange doctrines. For it is a good thing that the heart be established with grace; not with meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.

This is often understood as being connected with the preceding verse; but it is evidently to be connected with what follows. From the consideration that Jesus is the same yesterday, today, and for ever, the believers are cautioned against being carried away with those winds of doctrine which arise from time to time—they are termed diverse and strange doctrines. There appears, from what follows, to be a reference here to the Judaizing teachers who "taught the brethren, and said, Except ye be circumcised after the manner of Moses, ye cannot be saved," Acts 15:1; for the Apostle goes on,—*"It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace, not with meats,"* &c. It appears from the epistle that many had either apostatized, or were in danger of apostasy and of returning to the weak and beggarly elements. This error is exposed in almost all the epistles, especially in that to the Galatians; and those who inculcated such doctrine are characterized as false teachers. The Apostle would have the hearts of believers established with grace, with enlarged views of the boundless riches of Divine grace, through the one sacrifice of Christ.

V. 10.— We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle.

The Jewish sacrifices were offered upon the altar. Now we have an altar, by which is evidently meant Christ. He is at once the altar, the sacrifice, and the Priest. The whole of the Jewish dispensation pointed to Him on whom alone believers depend. The

priests in Israel who waited at the altar were partakers with the altar, 1 Cor. 9:13; part of the sacrifice was burnt on the altar and part eaten by the priest; but those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat the sacrifices of the Christian altar.

V. 11- 13.—For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sins, as burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach.

For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sins, are not to be eaten, but burnt without the camp, according to Lev. 16:17:—"And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goeth in to make an atonement in the holy place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel." All the sacrifices pre-figured Christ, and more especially the sacrifice on the great day of atonement. Now, as the priest was not permitted to eat of the flesh of the sacrifice offered on that day, but it was burnt without the camp, it is evident that the worshippers in the tabernacle have no right to eat of our altar; for, in exact correspondence with the Levitical law, Jesus, that He might sanctify the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us then go forth to Him without the camp, bearing His reproach, turning our back on the legal sacrifices, and on the altar where they were offered.

V. 14-15 —For here have are no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name.

And let us be encouraged so to act by the consideration that here we have no continuing city, but we look for one to come, that city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. This verse is a parenthesis. The 15th verse is connected with the 13th.

In it we are encouraged to go forth without the camp, bearing His reproach; and, in verse 15, are exhorted by him to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, namely, the fruit of our lips, Hos. 14:2; Psalm 69:30, 31; giving thanks to His name. As Israel approached God through their high priest, we are to approach through the great High Priest of our profession, for no man comes to the Father but by Him.

V. 16.—But to do good and to communicate forget not: for with such sacrifices God is well pleased.

But while we are to offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, we are not to forget to do good to others, and to communicate of our substance to the poor. Phil. 4:18. Probably the Apostle particularly refers to the fellowship or contribution for the poor, which is so frequently enjoined in Scripture. These are the sacrifices which the Lord now requires of His people, and with these sacrifices He is well pleased.

V. 17.—Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls, as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you.

In verse 7th and 9th the Apostle had exhorted the Hebrews to remember their departed leaders, who had spoken to them the word of the Lord, and cautioned them against being carried away with diverse and strange doctrines, from the consideration that Jesus is the same yesterday and for ever. Here he admonishes them to obey their leaders, and to submit to them. The authority given by the Lord to the bishops or elders of the churches of Christ is altogether different from the authority with which civil rulers are invested. The authority of the spiritual ruler is to be maintained by instruction and persuasion, and is not to be enforced by civil pains and penalties, like the authority of the civil ruler. We have an illustration of this in the history of our Lord. In consequence of the doctrine in one of His discourses proving very offensive, many of His disciples went away. He neither prevented

nor threatened them, but said to the twelve, "Will ye also go away?" But they were restrained the conviction that He was the Christ, the Son of God. John 6:67, 69. So the overseers are to commend themselves to every man's conscience, and to rule by the Word of God. The duty of submission is enforced, first, because they watch for the souls of those over whom they are placed, and must give account of the manner in which they have fulfilled their trust.

V. 18.—Pray for us: for we trust we have a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

The Apostle then requests their prayers, and he does this the more confidently because he trusted he had a good conscience. He was indeed maligned by many; but, whatever his calumniators might allege, he had the testimony of his conscience. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly to you-ward." 2 Cor. 1:12. It may appear strange that the Apostle does not speak with more confidence. He trusts he had a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly. Here he seems to glance at the deceitfulness of the heart. We may compare this with 1 Cor. 4:3, 4:—"But with me it is a very small thing that I should be judged of you, or of man's judgment: yea, I judge not mine own self. For I know nothing by myself; yet am I not hereby justified: but he that judgeth me is the Lord." He was not conscious of acting unfaithfully, but this did not justify him. His heart was deceitful and desperately wicked. He might form a false estimate of himself, but the judgment was the Lord's; and here he does not affirm that he has a good conscience, but he trusts he has a good conscience, in all things willing to live honestly.

V. 19.—But I beseech you the rather to do this, that I may be restored to you the sooner.

He had requested in general to have their prayers, and he desires them for a specific purpose, that he might be the sooner restored

to them. He was exposed to many dangers. He was exposed to deaths oft, 2 Cor. 11:23; and in many perils, ver. 26; and he desires the prayers of his brethren that he may be the sooner restored to them. Amidst all his varied and extensive labours he always felt peculiar interest in his countrymen, and appears glad of an opportunity of seeing and conversing with them.

V. 20.—Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant.

Here, in drawing to a close, he offers an affectionate prayer for his brethren; and it is expressed in a manner calculated for their instruction and edification.

He describes God as the God of peace. [It is an argument for Paul being the author of this Epistle that this title is only to be found in his writings.] He preaches peace to them that are far off, and to them that are nigh. He is the author of peace in all the Churches of the saints, 1 Cor. 14:33. The same Apostle prays that the Lord of peace may give the brethren peace always, by all means, 2 Thess. 3:16. By the blood of His Cross Christ hath not only reconciled His people to God, but made peace between Jews and Gentiles, making of two one new man, so making peace by abolishing the enmity arising from their separation by the peculiar dispensation under which the Jews were placed.

The prayer, then, is addressed to the God of peace, who is characterized as having brought from the dead the great Shepherd of the sheep. He feeds His flock as a shepherd, Isa. 40:11, and describes Himself as sustaining this character, John 10:11, and speaks of His sheep consisting both of Jews and Gentiles, verse 16, as given to Him, verse 29. He received a commandment to lay down His life for them, verse 18. Pastors are exhorted to feed the flock, but He is the great Shepherd of the sheep.

Through the blood of the everlasting covenant.—Some understand this to signify that Christ is the great Shepherd of the sheep

through the blood of the everlasting covenant, having purchased the Church with His own blood. But it is rather to be connected with His being brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. His being brought from the dead, or His resurrection, was the fruit of the perfection of His sacrifice, by which the sins of His people were cast into the deeps of the sea. He proclaimed with His dying breath that the work of redemption was completed, and the Father set His seal to the declaration when He raised Him from the dead. He is, therefore, said to be brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant. He had been made sin for His people, but their guilt was fully expiated by His blood. He had received the wages of sin, but, having made an end of sin, death could not retain him under its dominion; hence He was brought from the dead through the blood of the everlasting covenant, by which the covenant was ratified; and through the same blood all His blood-bought sheep shall be brought.

The everlasting covenant is opposed to the temporary covenant with Israel, which they broke, and the removal of which made room for the better covenant, which can never wax old, having been in the mind of God from eternity, and shall abide for ever.

V. 21.—Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom he glory for ever and ever. Amen.

Make you perfect in every good work.—Thus He prays for their progress, for their growth in grace, and increasing conformity to their great pattern and example.

Working in you...—Believers are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works. They were at first created in Adam; but they are born of the Spirit, and possess a new and divine nature, derived from their glorious Head; and, as they were at first changed into the image of Christ by the contemplation of His glory, the transformation proceeds till they see Him as He is, and are completely conformed to Him.

V. 22.—And I beseech you, brethren, suffer the word of exhortation: for I have written a letter unto you in few words.

He entreats them to listen to the instructions He had delivered, for He had written to them very concisely.

V. 23.—Know ye that our brother Timothy is set at liberty; with whom, if he come shortly, I will see you.

He informs them that Timothy was set at liberty, and expresses His intention to visit them along with him.

V. 24.—Salute all them that have the rule over you, and all the saints. They of Italy salute you.

All the Epistles were addressed to the Churches, and thus we are guarded against the error of considering the clergy, as they have been improperly called, as in themselves constituting the Church. The brethren are directed to salute their pastors, overseers, or rulers. Respect to them is intimately connected with the peace of the Church, 1 Thess. 5:13.

The Apostle adds, “and all the saints.” He also sends the salutation of the brethren in Italy, which shows the Epistle was written from thence.

V. 25.—Grace be with you all. Amen.

Grace, the Lord’s free and undeserved favor: He prays it may rest on them all.

The Epistle is said to be written from Italy, which is evident from verse 24; but it could not be sent by Timothy, for Paul only expected his arrival, and the notes appended to the Apostolic Epistles are of no authority.