

“GOD HATH SPOKEN”

by

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## Chapter One

### THE FINAL MESSAGE OF GOD

#### Preamble

The "Preface" to any book is intended to serve the purpose of letting its readers know what the writer has to say as to his purpose in writing, and anything that does not really form a part of the subject matter. While it ought to be regarded as important, many people do not read the Preface, and by not doing so, may unintentionally do the writer an injustice. To guard against this risk, I ask at the outset for a careful perusal of what follows.

I am well aware that what will be said will represent for multitudes of Christians today no less an upheaval and revolution than that which was presented at the beginning by the transition from Judaism to a fully-fledged Christianity as presented by the Apostles when they were through that transition and interpreted the significance of Christ. If it should cause or result in as violent a reaction and hostility, it will be no surprise.

There are two causes for comfort in such a case: one is the deep sense of Divine urge and commission to write, "whether they will hear or whether they will forbear"; and the other, the knowledge that for a long time and in an ever deepening way there has been a growing realization on the part of many that all is not well with Christendom, even with evangelical Christianity. With the exception of two classes of Christians, there is an increasing concern over the actual or comparative weakness and ineffectiveness of the spiritual life and witness of Christians and the churches. This concern shows itself in various ways. Sometimes by enquiries and discussions as to what is wrong, and sometimes in the holding of an increased number of conventions and meetings "for the deepening of the spiritual life."

The two classes excepted are, those who have so organized Christian activity as to have made it all a matter of a tremendous business to be maintained by drive and its own momentum: which unceasing activity is itself thought to be life and power: with the result that there is little time or interest to be given in the matter of spiritual depth, and Divine measure. The other class is comprised of those who are so settled in tradition and a fixed position in doctrine and practice as to make it wellnigh impossible for the Holy Spirit to lead into the way of a greater fullness of Christ. Both of these conditions marked Judaism in the first days, and they both provided a ground for the strong resentment and antagonism from which the Apostles and first believers had to suffer.

It is not too much to say that a time and state of crisis is upon traditional Christianity. This, and its nature, will be shown more fully in what follows; but in concluding the Preamble may I ask that, should you at any point be so vexed as to be inclined to put the whole thing aside, you will just pause and give place to a supposition. Supposing it *should* be right? In the year 1939 many responsible people, governments, and officials, came under severe condemnation because - it was said - they refused to believe facts. For years Germany had been most thoroughly establishing Fifth Column agents and forces in almost every country. But whenever anyone said so and warned the Governments of those countries that it was so, not only was the suggestion repudiated, but evil intent was disbelieved. Well, the persistently disbelieved reports proved true, but it meant suffering, sorrow, and horror unparalleled in history. Supposing that in 1939 someone had prophesied that in less than a year Germany would have defeated and overrun Holland, Belgium, and France, in addition to a number of other

European countries, what would have happened to such a prophet? He would have been ridiculed, if not put into prison or an asylum as a defeatist or a lunatic. He, himself, most likely would have been regarded as an enemy agent, as in effect were Jeremiah and other prophets of old. But those "unbelievable" things became actualities. Thus, untold suffering and loss are the price of refusing to entertain a supposition.

But there was another factor of a very subtle nature. It was a studied part of the success of that German technique that the agents should spread abroad the impression that no such evil intent existed. To disarm suspicion and impress with good will was a vital part of the success of the scheme. This has its counterpart in the "heavenlies," and it will only be those who keep much in the secret place with the All-knowing Spirit of God who will be saved from the infinite perils which lie in the way of a superficial optimism which is such a secret weapon of Satan's campaign against the fullness of Christ.

Pause then, and ask, Supposing what is here written should be right? Would it result in *spiritual and eternal loss* or gain? Supposing it should eventually prove to be God's message?

## **The Letter to the Hebrews**

### **(1) The Approach**

In the Preamble we have used the word Crisis. The letter which is before us had its occasion in a crisis in two dimensions or phases. Immediately, it was related to those who had taken a real step with Christ and were in peril of resolving Christianity into a Judaism which acknowledged rather than rejected Him. But it also related to the great event which was imminent, in which the whole Jewish system would be swept away, and all the prophecies as to Israel's rejection and scattering would be fulfilled. It is always important to remember that, when God deals with any of His people on a spiritual issue, there is always a literal issue bound up with it sooner or later. He would save us from the historic disaster which He knows to be coming by putting us into a spiritual position where the event will be no disaster *to us*. Thus the crisis is a turning point - as in a critical illness - with life or death as the issue. The letter repeatedly warns and entreats in the light of the tremendous consequences which are in the balances. We may say without fear of being contradicted that some of the most terrible things in the whole Bible are found in this letter. Thus does it become us to note the significance of the opening statements.

God in past times spoke in fragments and various ways, but now He has spoken in fullness and in one all-inclusive way, and that with finality. He will not speak again; He will neither add to nor vary what He has said in the final way. The fragmentary speech of God in past ages had very great consequences involved in man's attitude and reaction; but that was small compared with what is bound up with this final Speech. This kind of approach is preserved like a theme through the whole letter; it comes to the ear in various connections, sometimes beautiful, sometimes terrible. The upshot of it all is this: You have had in your midst and available to you the full Revelation of God's mind. For that you are now responsible. That Revelation was, and is, intended to bring you into a certain spiritual position and to govern the entire order of your life. The measure of your spiritual life in terms of Divine satisfaction will be determined by your living apprehension of and obedience to that Revelation. *The degree of your ineffectiveness and unfruitfulness, individually and collectively, will declare the degree of your failure in your apprehension of that Revelation.*

The letter is intended to be tremendously serious. While it contains most glorious things, it is the possibility of missing these (a possibility so nearly becoming an actuality in the case of its first readers) which makes the tone so solemn at times. Thus our approach must be with the shoes off our feet: the shoes of prejudice, self-sufficiency, pride, formalism, and such-like. Having adjusted our approach, we are able to contemplate something of the import or implications of the letter.

## **(2) The Implications**

It is here that we have to begin to say some of the things not easy to say, and still less easy to accept.

This letter to the Hebrews sets forth the all-inclusive revolution or reconstitution which God made when He brought His Son, Jesus Christ, into the world - that is, the *religious* revolution. This revolution, which was rejected by Judaism, has been almost entirely overlooked or lost sight of by Christendom since Apostolic times. The entire present system of Christianity as generally accepted would be impossible if the meaning of this letter were received as a heavenly revelation in the power of the Holy Spirit. That is - if it came into the heart by the Spirit's power with the effect of a revelation in the same way as the Apostle Paul came to see who "Jesus of Nazareth" is, then a Christian-Judaism, or Judaistic-Christianity (which Christendom so largely is) would be impossible; as it became in his own case. The Letter to the Hebrews is only one other aspect of the battle fought out in the Letters to the Romans and Galatians. In the light of such a spiritual eye-opening a whole lot of things would go: but being a "heavenly vision," there would be no tears, no sense of loss, and no fond farewells. The gain and joy would rather put all such things into the category of a worn-out and no-longer-to-be-desired suit of clothes. In saying this we are only contemplating the full-tide of spiritual life known before any of these things came into being. These things only came in when the fullness of the Spirit had gone out, and being an artificial substitute they can never but be limiting things in the realm of Divine purpose. And yet, behold how these things have become the very nature of traditional and organized Christianity! So much so that to touch them in any way which threatens their existence is to meet something more bitter and formidable than any persecution from the world. This is not said carelessly. Religion can be, and is very largely, a terrible force; and Christianity has become a religion. There are very few communities of Christians - even the most evangelical, and spiritual - who wholly escape the tendency or propensity to persecute or ostracize other bodies of Christians who might be regarded as rivals in *their* field of activity. All the talk about "sheep-stealing" has little or nothing to do with stealing from *the* fold or *the* Shepherd, but only relates to some private religious fold of organized Christianity.

We have - without mentioning them specially - spoken of things which would have to go if a true spiritual revelation were received, and doubtless the reader is wondering what those things are. Well, this letter which we are considering will make them plain, so let us come closer to it. On the very face of it there appears for all who have eyes the contrast between Judaism and Christ. Judaism was an earthly religious system: Tabernacle, Temple, Priests, Vestments, Rites, Sacrifices, Feasts, Ministries, Orders, etc. The New Testament, and this letter in particular, has some very clear things to say about this Jewish system.

## **(3) As To Its Intent And Purpose**

It was instituted by God as a copy of things in the heavens. Not that heaven contained such things literally, but just as all visible and created things were

intended to embody heavenly laws and principles, so this system was intended to represent the centremost spiritual things of God's universe. But the instrument or type was never intended to do more than serve a purpose *for a time*. It represented a dispensation, or method of God for a period only. Never was it intended to be an end in itself, nor was it meant to be carried on in any detail or respect beyond a certain point in time. God meant it ever and always to be a prophecy of "better things to come," and to be held so loosely as to constitute no difficulty when the "better things" arrived. The letter which is before us affirms that the era of the "better things" had arrived some time since. "God... hath at the end of these days spoken... in His Son."

But the new era and new order had brought out a new and mightier-than-ever conflict. A very serious and grim part of that conflict was with the religion of tradition, the religion which worshipped the same Lord, and embodied *in a symbolic way* all the truth of the new era. One great warrior apostle was the champion of the new spiritual order - himself one who had been deeply and powerfully embedded in the old system, but by a mighty revelation emancipated from it. He called that revelation "the heavenly vision," and that word "heavenly" defined for ever the nature of the change in the dispensations. Into this battle he was forced by the ubiquitous Judaisers. It was fought in his letters to the Romans and to the Galatians. Whether or not we believe that Paul wrote the Letter to the Hebrews, there is no doubt that he had a big part of influence in it, and in it again is the same battle carried on.

If the main feature of Judaism is sought, it will be found to be the resolving of heavenly and spiritual things into a purely earthly system. It is the making of the things of God purely sentient, a matter of the physical and soul senses: sight, sound, feeling, reason, emotion, etc., with the numerous and various complex elements of human constitution. One of the inclusive arguments of this letter is that a religious system based upon the natural senses has no power to bring those who adhere to it to spiritual fullness. Such the Jewish system was, and it failed utterly and tragically. God did not mean it to do more than lead to something other; and in this dispensation even that is set aside and the other has become the first and only thing in God's acceptance. The earthly, natural, and temporal has been supplanted by the heavenly, spiritual and eternal, which lay behind the illustration. The failure was inevitable because it was never intended to be an end in itself, and because of man's condition. It only operated at all in the realm of man's soul, a very unstable and variable thing; whereas everything with God is a matter of man's spirit, *in the first instance*. This is the point of verse twelve of chapter four, which should be considered with the context preceding.

The whole thought of God, running right through this letter, is spiritual fullness; and any religion - even Christianity - mixing and confusing soul and spirit, the sentient and the spiritual (as did the Christian-Judaism and as does organized Christianity) is doomed to the destiny of Judaism. If we draw upon the soul resources of people to build up Christianity, instead of recognizing that "all things are out from God" - that all must first come from Him and have its first point of contact with man in his spirit, which, being renewed (made anew) becomes the vessel and vehicle of all divine things for ever after - no matter how immense may be our structure, it is going to crash when the great "shaking" comes. Christianity now is very largely a built up thing with many Jewish features in it; i.e., outward orders, forms, vestments, titles, buildings and rigidly fixed boundaries of apprehension of truth. Viewed from a heavenly standpoint, it is all so much nonsense, child's-play; albeit so seriously regarded by its children.

It is important to recognize that this letter was addressed to a people who - for a long period - had held the position nationally of a people whom God had taken

out of the world unto Himself. It seeks to explain their nature and history in the light of Christ and true spiritual Christianity. It shows that even such a people may make their separation earthly and earthbound, and that for so doing they have been "overthrown," and will - even as Christians - be overthrown again if they repeat in Christianity what their fathers did in Judaism. There is something here much more than typology interpreted and the interpretation accepted as to salvation from sin and judgment; it is the essential and indispensable heavenly relatedness and life of the Lord's people as *inwardly* detached from the natural life even in a religious sense.

## Chapter Two

### THE ALL-INCLUSIVE OBJECT

So far we have been mainly negative in our approach to the "Letter to the Hebrews," albeit seriously so, and we shall find it necessary as we go on to constantly strike the note of what God's mind concerning His people is *not*.

In commissioning His servant Jeremiah the Lord said that his ministry would be twice as much corrective and destructive as it would be constructive (Jeremiah 1:10). This indicated how much there was to be got out of the way before God's end could be reached. It was like Nehemiah's "much rubbish" in the way of the constructive work later on. But the best way to the corrective is always the positive, that is, presenting the purpose of God as fully as possible.

So, then, that which governs everything here in this letter, as everywhere else in the New Testament, is the believer's attainment unto

#### The Fullness of Christ

and the strongest warnings - with terrible examples - are given as to failure in this matter. The fatal weakness of so very much of the Church's work, both in its evangelism and in inside activity, is its failure to realize that God has never been satisfied with just having converts or adherents, but has considered it so important to bring such to spiritual full growth as to make the abiding monument of Divine Revelation - the New Testament - ninety-nine percent a volume for Christians as to their spiritual life after conversion; this, first and foremost, is God's way of saying two things.

Firstly, that the end, apart from the attaining of which His eternal counsels would have broken down, is Christ *in fullness*, not in aspects alone. Secondly, that only a Church which has a large measure of Christ can adequately and effectively fulfil the purpose of the evangel. There is far more of spiritual force to be overcome in and around this world than can be met by the novitiate Church or Christian. Only Christ in fullness can do this, and the measure of effectiveness will ever be according to the measure of Christ. That the "Letter to the Hebrews" has so fully to do with this matter is to be seen from the fact that - in principles - it embraces and comprehends the whole New Testament revelation and meaning, doctrinal and practical. Sit down with it and see if you cannot find in it the essence of "Romans," "Corinthians," "Galatians," "Ephesians," "Philippians," "Colossians" and "Peter". And does it not set the basis for the interrogation of the churches in the "Revelation"?

But to come more immediately to the inclusive object, just take the thought of fullness and read the letter through with this as your guide. When you have done so, and have recognized that it is this which governs all, then start again with this second thought; in what way is Christ revealed here as fullness for our apprehending and attainment? A third question will eventually arise; what adjustments are necessary if that attainment is to be realized? We will seek to answer these questions in order.

#### Fullness - the Governing Object

God does not believe in either emptiness or partial occupation. This is clearly shown throughout the entire Scriptures. If at any given time He speaks in a particular way, on a particular line, and with a particular emphasis, it is only by way of building up to a whole and bringing all to completeness. This is the point



in the first statement in this letter. God has in times past spoken in portions and ways, but all the portions and manners pointed to the whole, and eventually that whole is found to be Christ - His Son. He is not merely another way or form of speech, He is the sum and consummation of all. He has been implicit in all parts, but never complete in any one. All the parts were - in principle - aspects or features of Him. But fullness is not just the combination and coordination of the parts as types and figures, manners of speech. Rather is it the Divine *meaning* of all that has gone before. The fullness is spiritual, heavenly, eternal, not temporal, earthly and passing. This is a point which must make us pause and think again. Fullness will be found in the essential nature of God's thoughts, not in their symbolic representation. Thus sonship, when understood, is the greatest revelation ever given by God to man, and the greatest of all Divine thoughts for man. So chapters one and two sum up all in sonship.

First there is the presentation of the Son.

He has been made heir of *all things*.  
He was the instrument in the making of the ages.  
He is the fullness of the revelation of God.  
He sustains all things in cohesiveness and being.  
He accomplished purification of sins.  
He sits at the right hand of God.  
He is superior to the angelic orders.  
He has inherited an ineffable name.

It is a presentation of Christ on two sides of His being, sonship in two connections - Son of God and Son of Man. Only in Paul's letter to the Colossians (chapter 1) and John's Gospel (chapter 1) is there anything to compare with this as a presentation of the fullness and transcendence of Christ.

The point which we must now make sure of grasping is that, while fullness has ever been God's thought and intention for His creation, there has been no *possibility* of real spiritual fullness since the fall of man until Christ, the Son, was seated at God's right hand after His circuit of humiliation, suffering, death and resurrection. God *begins* from fullness He does not work towards it. Only in experience does fullness progress, but it is really, in God's mind, working *back* to the initially fixed realization in Christ. When the Son - the Divine standard of fullness - has been set before us, then sonship in relation to Him (not in Deity but as Son of Man, chapter 2) is brought out as to the believing family. All family titles are used: "children," "brethren," "sons," and "God's House."

This not being a detailed exposition of the letter, very much must be left without comment, although it is so valuable. We are governed by one thought.

When the Son and the sons have been presented, and with them God's thought and intention of fullness as governing the creative work, especially in relation to "man" and "the Son of Man" (2:6), then the great and significant phrase is used "Partners in a heavenly calling". By this phrase we are precipitated into the whole object of this letter, its subject matter, and the crisis which it represents.

1. 'The heavenly calling.' What is it?

The dominion over "the inhabited earth to come, (whereof we are speaking)" (2:5).

a. Man, in the first place was intended for this, but he missed it or forfeited it.

b. Israel was a type of an elect people with this as their destiny. *They* forfeited it (see chapter 3, etc.).

c. The dominion has been fully secured in "the Son of Man," Who is Son of God - "Thy throne, O God" (1:8) - and Who is now "crowned with glory and honour". And this "inheritance" is for the Church.

2. But there are two factors of major importance.

a. This "heavenly calling" is essentially heavenly and spiritual. It has no connection with this present earth excepting as to spiritual testimony.

b. Its full realization and fulfilment is "to come," it is future, after this age.

Let us look at these two things more closely. What is the aspect of this letter? It is entirely upward! See the heavenly references.

"Heavenly calling," (3:1); "heavenly gift," (6:4); "heavenly country," (11:16); "heavenly Jerusalem," (12:22); "heavenly things," (8:5; 9:23); "passed through the heavens," (4:14); "higher than the heavens," "High Priest," (7:26); "throne of the Majesty in the heavens," (8:1); "entered into heaven itself," (9:24); "in heaven a better..." (10:34); "enrolled in heaven," (12:23); "Him That speaketh from heaven," (12:25); "make to tremble the heaven..." (12:26).

So, the Lord and everything of Him is looked at as from below. The counterpart of the whole Old Testament system is seen to be in heaven, and it was only a temporal representation of the heavenly and spiritual reality. Christ is in heaven, and all of our religious bonds with God are through Christ as there. Every bond with the earth is broken, even while we are walking on the earth. Christ in heaven takes the place of all earthly figures and representations in ritual. It is important to recognize that this letter was addressed - in the first place - to a people who for centuries had held the position of a people whom God had taken out of the world unto Himself, explaining their own nature and history in the light of Christianity, showing that even such a people may make their separation earthly and earthbound. Everything here and now is essentially spirit, but it is shown that there can be a false spirituality, a pseudo-spirituality. It was thought by the Jews, as it is thought by multitudes of well-meaning Christians, that the performing of certain rites, the preserving of certain forms, the following of a certain ritual, the wearing of certain garments, the employment of certain instruments, language, tones: and, indeed, the recognition of a set of more or less sentient accompaniments: if bathed in an atmosphere of reverence and solemnity, is spirituality. This letter in which we are meditating most definitely cuts clean in between soul (of which the above is the expression) and spirit (4:12). In effect its corrective is that when you have true spirituality you need none of the above; and, indeed, this is the age in which that has all given place to what is purely and solely spiritual. But you can have all that, and not be really spiritual people. The more truly spiritual you are the less you will be impressed by, or taken up with, these things. They will be to you like so much child's play. This can be proved by the fact that in the realms where ritual is the greatest the gap between personal knowledge of the Lord and ritual is also the greatest. Whereas a deep rich life in God is usually found where there is little or nothing of outward forms in the sense of a system of religion.

Let it be noted, as we close this chapter, that it is in this very realm and connection that the appeal, the warnings, the exhortations, and the argument of this letter lie. Not concerning Corinthian sensuality or worldliness or divisions; not the sins of Christians; but the immaturity, childhood (chapter 5:12 to chapter

6:12) of those who, although "once enlightened," were in danger of having their spiritual life limited and frustrated by becoming conformed to a traditional and fixed earthly religious system which, although instituted by God at one time to serve in the lower classes of the school of the ages, has, with this age, been left behind, and *all* who are of this dispensation begin their spiritual life and education at an entirely different level, and with an entirely superior equipment.

This equipment is twofold, making for such transcendent possibilities and responsibilities; Christ in full revelation; not in types and symbols, but in living reality; actually Himself the Priest, the Sacrifice, the Altar, the Mercy Seat, the Tabernacle, the Holy of Holies, etc., etc.; and then the Holy Spirit given to make Christ, in all that He is, a living *inward* reality, so that we live in the good of all by the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. But Christ is infinitely vaster and fuller than has ever been conceived by man, and the growing revelation and apprehension of Him by the energy of the Holy Spirit keeps the believer's life ever moving forward and growing, so that Christianity should never be a static system but an ever-expanding life. Hence the constantly recurring appeal, "Let us go on," "Let us... let us..."

## Chapter Three

### THE TRANSCENDENT THOUGHT OF SONSHIP

Having, in our consideration of the message of the "Letter to the Hebrews," identified the all-inclusive object as the fullness of Christ, we proceed to crystallize that object, or see that it is here crystallized, into the Divine meaning of sonship. This thought runs right through the letter, but at points the keynote is struck with particular emphasis.

1. *THE SON.* "Hath at the end... spoken... in His Son" (margin: *a son; literally sonwise*). (1:2).

"*Thou art My Son.*" (1:5).

"*But of the Son He saith.*" (1:8).

"*Christ as a Son, over His (God's) house.*" (3:6).

2. *THE SONS.* "...bringing many sons unto glory." (2:10).

"*My son, regard not lightly the chastening of the Lord... and scourgeth every son whom He receiveth... God dealeth with you as with sons... the Father of our spirits.*" (12:5-7, 9). (See also "brethren," "children").

"*Ye are come... to the church of the firstborn... enrolled in heaven.*" (12:22-23).

The central truth then, around which all else circles, and in the light of which all else must be read, is the mystery or hidden nature of sonship. There is no greater thing in all Divine revelation than the thought and purpose of sonship. But this letter shows (as do other parts of the New Testament) that sonship is not an initial relationship but an ultimate one. It is not what is meant by being born of God or being a child of God, although sonship is implicit in that, but it is the maturity and therefore responsibility of those born of God; it is just that motive of all the exhortations, entreaties, encouragements, and warnings in the letter, at one point set over against unduly delayed growth in the words "Let us go on to full growth," (6:1). Let us hasten to mention that we are not thinking or speaking of Deity. We are not called to that unique Sonship which belongs to Christ as Son of God in terms of Godhead, but we keep strictly to what is meant by the use made of the words of the eighth Psalm in chapter two of this letter with its backward relation to Adam and its forward relation to Christ and the "many sons," "brethren," "children," "partners". So then, sonship means spiritual full growth which carries with it the placing in responsibility to govern the world to come (2:5).

The great implication, if not obvious statement, of this letter as a whole is that all "children" of God will not "go on" to realize the full meaning of their birth, but, while they may not lose their life, they may lose their "calling" or the full intention of their birth.

Thus, we are able, by recognizing the governing object of this letter, to link up with those things which show what sonship means. There are many such links; we can take but two of them.

The first obvious link is between "Hebrews" and the fourth chapter of John's Gospel.

## The New "Hour" of the Son

*"...the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall ye worship the FATHER... the hour cometh, and NOW IS, when the true worshippers shall worship the FATHER in spirit and truth: ...God is Spirit: and they that worship Him must worship in spirit" (John 4:21-24). (The emphasis is ours.)*

Now, everyone knows that the all-governing object of John's writings was to bring out Christ's Sonship. A study of relevant words - "Father," " Son," etc., will serve as an initial indication of this.

But a second unmistakable characteristic of those writings is the essentially spiritual nature of everything in relation to Christ. Here is a simple example. With Christ a new "hour," or day, or dispensation has come, and in this new day geography, place, material building, traditional association, religious centre, or ecclesiastical hierarchy have nothing whatever to do with it. It is now an inner relationship of a spiritual nature between Father and son. So chapter four follows chapter three in John. "Hebrews" just develops John 4 and gives the so-much-greater range and content of its implication. Thus, in the first place, sonship is a heavenly thing. It takes its rise in heaven: "born from above" (John 3:3, margin). Then it is an inward thing like a heavenly well, springing up unto life eternal (John 4:14), and it is not in any way earthbound. "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem." It is not historical but eternal; not temporal, but spiritual. As the Letter to the Hebrews so quickly passes from the personal to the corporate, from the individual to the family, so in "John" there is a distinct point at which there is a transition from the many personal and individual incidents to the gathering of all those separate features into a corporate company in which the full glory of the Son and of sonship is to be expressed. This consummation is reached in chapter 17.

Another clearly defined link between "Hebrews" and the Gospels is seen in the Transfiguration, and this sees sonship in its consummation, as what we have just said sets forth its initiation and nature.

## The Consummation of Sonship

On the mount of transfiguration three things are noted.

- a. Moses and Elijah; corresponding to "divers portions and in divers manners" (Hebrews 1:1).
- b. Jesus glorified; corresponding to "we see Jesus... crowned with glory and honour" (Hebrews 2:9). (See also 2 Peter 1:16-18.)
- c. "Hear ye Him"; corresponding to "God... hath at the end... spoken... in His Son" (Hebrews 1:2).

Thus we have,

- a. A new dispensation:
- b. Taking its character from Jesus in heaven, glorified.
- c. The absolute fullness and finality of God's work and speech in His Son.

Let us here remind ourselves of the supreme conflict that has ever circled round this matter of sonship. In the case of the Lord Jesus Himself it was the focal point

of all the fierce controversy and bitter hatred. It was the point of Satan's personal and direct attack: "If thou be the Son." Later, demons referred to it through their victims of possession. It was the occasion of the Jewish assault, and it headed up in the combined assault of devil, demons, and men, issuing in His crucifixion. Paul not only regarded the Jews as responsible for His death, but said the "principalities and powers" invested Him in the cross, and He stripped them off (Colossians 2: 15).

The battle was carried on against the Church, and almost every New Testament letter has as its object the urge and constraint of believers not to stop short at spiritual infancy or immaturity, but to go on to fullness. This fullness is what is meant by and involved in sonship. There is nothing so feared and hated by Satan and his powers as sonship in its full attainment and expression. As "Prince of this world," having wrested the kingdom and dominion from Adam, he loses it to the Son of God - the Son of Man; and the full and universal manifestation of that loss is to come with "the manifestation of the sons of God," that Body of Christ which is "the fullness of Him," the "partakers of a heavenly calling" to have dominion over the world to come (Romans 8: 19; Ephesians 1: 23; Hebrews 3: 1; 2: 5).

Any ministry or instrumentality which has real spiritual full growth and sonship as its anointed function will meet what such has ever met; firstly from the enemy himself directly and nakedly, then from whatever direction and means he can find available. If he cannot *directly* destroy, he will seek Balaam's method of subterfuge. His one persistent method through the ages has been to divert the people of God from the Son to a system.

The Letters to the Hebrews, the Galatians, and the Romans are outstanding instruments of God in relation to this very thing. Thus, early in "Hebrews," in bringing in the sons with the Son, mention is made of a matter which is much more fully developed later. It is that of

### **Death in Relation to Sonship and Spiritual Fullness**

The inclusive statement in this connection is in chapter 2, verses 9, 14 and 15:

*"That... He should taste death for (in behalf of) every man." "That through death He might bring to nought him that had the power (hold) of death, that is, the devil; and might deliver all them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage."*

The question of life and death is later taken up and opened out in relation to priestly function. Aaron and his successors were unable to bring anything to fullness and finality because death broke in in every case and cut their work short. Melchizedek is then introduced as type of another priesthood. "Without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like unto the Son of God after the power of an endless life" (7: 3, 16 and context).

You will thus see that sonship, eternal life, and spiritual fullness are linked together.

Death is the great enemy of spiritual fullness, but death is - in this letter and everywhere else - not just a physical matter. Israel is here spoken of as having died in the wilderness and is used as a warning to Christians. But the warnings have to do with the *purpose* of salvation in its fullness. Death is a spiritual thing, and it is an enemy ever seeking to ambush the child of God. So this whole letter is one solid and comprehensive document and treatise on the fact that spiritual

life can be curtailed, arrested, and thwarted of its possibilities by the child of God being brought down, even in a religious way, to an earthly position with all the trappings of a bygone dispensation, and losing the essentially heavenly and spiritual position. "Dead works" the writer calls them (6:1).

In chapter 1, verse 5 we have a quotation from the second Psalm related immediately to sonship in Christ.

"Thou art My Son, this day have I begotten Thee." That quotation is made again in chapter 5, verse 5, in relation to His endless-life Priesthood. In Acts 13:33, the same quotation is made as prophetic evidence of the resurrection of Christ, and thus, sonship and resurrection are linked. This does not mean that Christ was not Son before the resurrection, but the New Testament shows that in resurrection there is a feature of sonship which was not there before, namely that Christ is "the firstborn among many brethren" in resurrection. As Peter puts it "hath begotten us... by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead." We are not thereby incorporated into Christ as Son of God in the sense of Deity, but as Son of Man in a new creation family.

For the moment, then, the point is that the new life of resurrection union with Christ as the principle of sonship must not be put into the old wineskins of earthly traditions and systems, but into the new wineskins of an entirely heavenly and spiritual order. This was probably the occasion of this letter. It was possibly written as an appeal to the strong section of Hebrew Christians in Jerusalem who found the ever-widening trend of Christianity too much for their conservative habits of Judaistic thought. As the cleavage between the Temple and the Synagogue on the one hand, and the Church and the Apostles on the other, became more marked, the Judaisers were inclined to snap the new ties for the old. The new wine was bursting the old wineskins, and, like many today, they were not prepared for that. But the issues were, and are, infinite.

Thus we have arrived at one of those infinite issues which are exercising most Christians and Christian bodies today, the issue of

### **Fullness of Life in Christ**

Yes, life in fullness is the question. Many bodies of Christians who have a great past and great tradition are deeply concerned with the inadequacy or lack of life amongst them today. This poverty of life is leading to great organized efforts, largely outside of the churches, to try to bring fullness about. Its lack has been the occasion for the abnormal development of many spurious and pseudo-spiritual movements and teachings. For want of it multitudes are passing by the churches as things which do not count. In many ways the great enemy has triumphed against the Church by countering its very life impact and testimony. A major and largely inclusive way of this achievement is the specific point of our letter. Make Christianity into another Judaism, i.e., an earthly religious system of precepts and practices, and you have made it dead! Is not this the point at chapter 6:1-6? I am not one of those who believe that the Apostle was there referring to Jewish ordinances. Some of my reasons for this are these. Chapter 6:1-6 must be read strictly in conjunction with chapter 5:12-13. "The rudiments of the first principles (or beginning) of the oracles of God" are the same as "the first principles of Christ," linked together by the "Wherefore". Jewish ordinances were not the first principles of Christ. They were the "dead works" referred to in the phrase "Repentance from dead works." "The teaching of baptisms" does not refer to Jewish "washings". It is the *teaching* as to the difference between John's Baptism (or any other) and baptism into Christ. Acts 19:1-6 ought to settle this conclusively; and note the context of 18:25. (What a pity that the chapters are

divided where they are, instead of after 18:23!) In this same place (Acts 19:6) the "laying on of hands" (Hebrews 6:2) is seen as a doctrine of Christ, not a Jewish ordinance. No, the point of the Apostle is that, having laid this sixfold foundation we should "go on to full growth." Life only begins in the foundation; its fullness requires the whole building. The peril is that even the first principles can become another legal system imposed upon people, and thus the things intended to lead to fullness of life may be made an arrest of life. Satan is very clever.

The recovery of life and its constant increase unto final fullness will only be as we get away from mere tradition and earthliness to a new living apprehension of Christ in His fullness as a Divine Representation of God's thoughts for His people; away from types, figures, symbols, to spiritual realities. Even if there are to be expressions of "first principles" they must come out of the living reality, and not be mere forms and things in themselves. We must do nothing with a view to perpetuating forms of doctrine and practice, but the expression must be that of life, and the spiritual meaning and value of everything must be ever growing. Only so shall we "go on to full growth".



## Chapter Four

### HOW LIFE IS MAINTAINED. THE PRINCIPLE OF THE NEW COVENANT

In our last chapter we laid special emphasis upon the necessity for everything to be preserved in life, as against even Christianity becoming resolved into another system of "dead works". For, what the writer (of the Epistle to the Hebrews) said was necessary as to Judaism in his time, has now become a necessity in relation to much of Christendom, namely "repentance from dead works" (6: 1).

In this chapter we shall gather our thoughts around a principle which is implicit in the whole purpose and argument of the letter. It is that of how life is preserved and maintained. This is one of the most difficult matters to convey unless there is a real measure of spiritual understanding, and it might well suffer in the same way as did the "many things" regarding Melchizedek in chapter 5:11. However, the spiritual situation is such today as to justify every attempt at solving it.

The first phase of the problem is this; seeing that there is a sum of Christian doctrine and practice embodied in the New Testament, and that certain clearly defined beliefs and practices represent the substance or foundation of Christianity: that these are not to be added to or taken from: is it possible that Christianity should not become a set system, tradition, or form? There are some phrases in the New Testament which would seem to imply that it is such. It would seem impossible to avoid this when once the first newness, novelty, and wonder have passed, and age succeeds age in Christian teaching, work and practice. But to accept such a conclusion and position is really to violate the most vital and crucial facts in New Testament Christianity, and to agree to a state of things which is a caricature and denial or contradiction of Christ. If Christianity were a system of truths and practices then the above-mentioned result would be inevitable. But it is not! It is a living Person, known only in the power of the Holy Spirit. Yes, and not known all at once, but to be known by continuous and ever-growing revelation of the Holy Spirit. That brings us to our point.

#### The Old and the New Revelation

In the letter under contemplation, among many comparisons and contrasts between what was and what is, reference is made to the two Covenants. Before considering the crucial point of difference between them, let us remind ourselves of the nature and meaning of a Biblical Covenant.

Firstly, a Covenant was an expression, revelation, or making known of God's thoughts, mind, desires, and will. In those presentations of God's mind the character and nature of God was made known. When we read the terms we have to say, That is what God is like.

Then, upon that revelation of Himself God offered and moved to bring His people into an active relationship with Himself as to purpose and destiny. He made a Covenant with them on that basis. It was a mutual understanding that - if they accepted the basis - He fulfilled promises.

The Covenant was sealed or ratified by blood. The blood was provided by God and symbolized life. In a way prescribed by God, man - the other party to the Covenant - had to participate by an act of identification with the blood-donor. So it became a case of sharing in one life. It was this that made blood so sacred in Old Testament times. Of course this opens up the whole realm of Blood Covenant, but here we do no more than hint at it. To violate the terms of this Covenant was

to rupture the very bond of life. The focal point of all warning and judgment was idolatry, which was spiritual fornication, or - in principle - unlawful mixture of bloods - i.e. life.

Thus we are able to come to the heart of the Letter to the Hebrews. These Hebrews would understand it well. Look again at the Blood, the Life, and the Covenant in this letter. Here we are able to appreciate the whole question of sonship, with which we dealt in the last chapter. But here we are brought right up to the all-dominating feature of the Person of Christ.

### **The Living Person Governs All**

No, it is not a new system of truth. It is not a new and superior religion. *It is a Living Person of Whom the truths and practices are but spiritual features.*

Let us look at this briefly in three aspects.

Firstly; the Letter to the Hebrews (and indeed the whole New Testament) does not say that we have to come to believe and accept certain doctrines such as those mentioned in chapter 6 - Repentance, Faith, Baptism, Laying on of hands, Resurrection of the dead, Eternal Judgment - in order to be New Testament Christians. Although the passage *seems* to contradict that statement, we are very insistent upon it, for it is upon this that we are sure the whole question of life and death rests. It is here also that a very great peril lies in the preaching and propagation of New Testament truth. If these matters have a place, as they certainly do, that place is subsequent to something else. Does it sound strange - in the light of certain Scriptures - to say that, *in the first instance*, we are *not* commissioned to preach repentance? While it may be less surprising to be told that the same is true regarding baptism, etc., yet it is as true of the one as of the other! The Holy Spirit always demands and secures a background of and occasion for precipitating a reaction from man's side, and that ground is not just that men are told that they must do certain things. No, this letter, like all New Testament preaching and teaching, opens with a revelation and presentation of the Person of Christ in living fullness. It was ever and only as people were convicted by the Holy Spirit as to the sovereign supremacy of the Lord Jesus and were actively ready to capitulate utterly to Him that these other things became a living and eager expression of that capitulation. Until people have really seen Christ by Holy Spirit revelation or illumination and conviction, there is no adequate motive for repentance, and the rest. It is not repentance for *sins!* That would make salvation a matter of degree according to the number or nature of the sins. It is all a matter of the Person. "Of sin, because they believe not on Me" (John 16:9). Hence, New Testament preaching was little more than a proclaiming of Christ - crucified, raised, exalted, glorified - with its implications and challenge. The Holy Spirit's way of overthrowing and uprooting false systems and positions has never been that of exposing the falseness, but that of bringing Christ in His greater fullness into view and convicting concerning Him! It is always positive, never negative. So it is the shadow of a Glorified Man - God's Son - that lies right over all the detail of the letter, and the New Testament as a whole.

Secondly; all the truths and practices are but

### **Features of the Living Person**

and must be seen in the light of the inclusive revelation of Himself. Take the matters referred to in particular in chapter 6. "Baptism" is not an ordinance, it is Christ expressed in death and resurrection as representing the old creation judged and doomed, and the new creation which is wholly out from God without a

trace of judgment ground in it. Baptism then is the way in which a believer declares that he or she has been crucified with Christ, and, although living, yet it is not himself or herself but Christ.

The New Covenant, in the first place, is in the blood of Christ, i.e. His life, and in participation in His nature as "firstborn among many brethren". Glance again at chapter 2 of this letter.

The "Laying on of Hands" in the New Testament signified that Christ is now no isolated and separate Individual, but Head of the Church - His Body - and that the Spirit in anointing upon the Head is for all the members in relatedness to Him and to one another; the Spirit being the power, the wisdom, the capacities, the qualifications, the energies, and the endowments for the Body's functioning as a heavenly Body. Hence, with the Laying on of Hands *at the beginning* the Spirit *demonstrated for all time* that Christ and His members are one for the accomplishment of eternal counsels. This is no ordinance, it is Christ corporately expressed.

It is in this way that all doctrine and practice must be seen. Not as things in themselves, but as features of the Living Person, and they must be kept in that relationship.

Thirdly; and here we come to the principle which lies at the heart of all. Nothing that is in the New Testament can be taken and reconstructed into a system just because it is there. There is no system of doctrine and procedure which lies within that vast compass called "Christianity," however divergent or contradictory, however nominal or extreme, however fantastic or doubtful, but bases itself upon Scripture, and supports itself by the New Testament. It is no guarantee that there will be life because a framework, a body, has been put together and built up according to the exact technique of the New Testament. Many efforts have been made to reconstruct the "New Testament Church" in the belief that the nearer to the model the surer and fuller the Divine commitment. But it just doesn't work! The order of the New Covenant is just the reverse of the Old. Then God wrote upon tablets of stone and presented it as a tangible and objective completeness. In the New, the Spirit of God - *dwelling within* - writes upon the heart and mind. Then God appeared in unapproachable and unendurable glory so that men were devastated by His presence. Now "God... hath shined into our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ" (see 2 Corinthians 3, 4, and 5).

The *face of Jesus Christ*.

The *glory of God* in the face of Jesus Christ.

The *knowledge* of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

The *light* of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

*In our hearts* the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ.

Now, the crucial point is this. The principle of the New Covenant is a first-hand individual revelation of Christ as the knowledge of God in terms of glory in the heart of the believer. Every individual believer only comes into true Christianity by a revelation of Christ in his or her heart, so that the knowledge of Christ is all their own, and as real as when God commanded light to shine in darkness. But that is not all. That shining must be progressive. Christ is far too vast to be seen

in more than minute degrees at any one time. The bulk of the New Testament is taken up with getting Christians to see what an immense realm it is into which they have come, and how they must go on; and that is the object of the letter under consideration.

Christianity can only be kept living and fresh and full of impact as Christians are living in an ever-growing apprehension of Christ as the Holy Spirit reveals Him in the heart.

This apprehension may only come as necessity is laid upon us by reason of suffering and trial. Capacity will increase by the stretching of suffering (see chapter 12, and read "child-training" for "chastening"). There is no succession in Christianity other than that of the revelation of Christ to the heart by the Holy Spirit. It is not a system to be perpetuated, but a life to be possessed. The value of the Scriptures is that they contain depths and fullness's which have never yet been fathomed; and when we speak of "revelation" we do not mean anything extra to them, but of that which is in them, but only known by the inward "writing" and "shining" of the Holy Spirit. The great peril into which Christendom has fallen is that of stultifying the vastness of Christ by putting Him into a framework of credal statements, each one of which seeks to be the beginning and end of the matter. Moreover, the Church and its work have been reduced to a formula, and no room is left for anything that goes beyond that formula. It is just possible - and indeed it has sometimes happened - that the Lord should throw such a freshness and fullness of light upon some Scriptural statement of truth as to transform and revolutionize it and lead out into an altogether new life and ministry; and this without any contradiction of its essential and true meaning. There is such a thing as holding down the truth in tradition, as well as holding down the truth in unrighteousness (Romans 1:18).

Let us try to summarize what we have said and meant.

(1) It is doubtful whether a full and complete system of doctrine and procedure can be reconstructed from the New Testament, so that on all matters we have a precise answer to every question as to what should be done, and how it should be done at any given time. There certainly are basic and fundamental truths, but the Holy Spirit is still needed.

(2) It is, moreover, doubtful whether the Lord meant that there should be such a complete verbal framework; so that everything could be applied, repeated, and duplicated mechanically.

(3) The only living way to the realization of the Divine thought and intention is by an apprehension of spiritual principles. When these principles are grasped, then the object, the means, and the methods of their expression are *livingly* appreciated.

For instance:

(a) Sonship. When we recognize that sonship is a full Divine thought, and not just an initial one, as in birth, we shall then have the motive for "pressing on to full growth". It is a principle.

(b) Corporate union, life, and service. When we see the *corporate* principle as governing spiritual fullness, and that it is not possible for any unit of the Body of Christ to come to fullness, apart from relatedness with other members, then we really have apprehended the true nature of the work, way, and end of God, and, amongst other things, we have the most powerful motive for fellowship.

(c) The Holy Spirit's revelation in terms of life. "The law of the Spirit of life" is the principle of all that is of God. A thing can be in the Bible, and we can have read it a thousand times, but until the Holy Spirit makes it life to us it will be unfruitful. Hence, there is a place and need for an inward revelation of the Word of God, and this is the only true succession. Nothing can be preserved alive through generations save as every one entering its realm does so on the basis of such a personal, inward, living, and *growing* revelation of the truth, so that the *origin* and *beginning* is constantly repeated in experience.

These are principles. The Epistle to the Hebrews has been called the Book of the Open Heaven, and this is its meaning.

## Chapter Five

### “THEM THAT HAVE FAITH.” “NOW FAITH...”

You will have read many books and heard many addresses on the classic Hebrews eleven: “The heroes of faith”; “The Roll-call of the Faithful”; and it is doubtful whether this chapter has ever been dealt with, in whole or in parts, without *examples* of and encouragement to faith being the point focused upon. And rightly so. But not often do we hear or read anything on it which makes the whole context of the letter the object. The chapter is usually taken in itself, with the first words of what follows often added.

What we desire to indicate here is that chapter 11 is really the Apostle’s gathering up of his whole theme as he begins to round off his letter. He has presented Christ “crowned with glory and honour”. God’s Son in uniqueness of sonship; and then he has shown the Divine thought of securing and bringing to glory many sons, not sharing that uniqueness, but being made partakers of His incarnation and through “adoption,” i.e., “child placing”. He has shown that everything of God in this dispensation is of a spiritual and heavenly nature, and not temporal and earthly. He has urged that spiritual fullness in Christ is the goal of the believer’s calling, and that it is terribly possible to fail of it, with grievous consequences.

Now, as to all this, and its values for God’s people, he shows, by triumphant examples, that faith is the link between calling and destiny, between Divine thought and its realization.

#### The Supreme Feature of the Life of Faith

is that the people of God are tested by their position. There is no more testing position than that to which believers are called in this dispensation. God has not promised us anything on this earth in this dispensation which will be our vindication before men, the literal and material justification of our abandonment of all for Him. The nearer we get to the Divine thought the further away do we get from what can be “written up,” pointed to, and advertised as the result of our work. Such things belong to the elementary stages of life, and God never prolongs them. His most abiding and solid work is underground where the sensation hunter cannot get at it, and where the publicity department will be hard put to it. If faith is really *faith*, and if the end times are to be more testing as to faith than any others (and the Scriptures say emphatically that it will be so) then there will be much less in the consummation of things to relieve faith by sight than at other times. But this principle holds good at all times *when God is after something more than the superficial*. The people mentioned in our chapter were all tested by their position. This is most clearly seen in Abraham and in Israel with Moses. God was there and then acting on the line of material responses to faith, but they were severely tested by the position in which they were placed by God’s act.

This is a spiritual age, and it is that fact which constitutes the test which *very few* Christians are prepared to accept. If anything becomes big, or if it can be made so: if names of world fame and titles of worldly importance sponsor it, or if they can be persuaded to do so: how much is made of it all! How very gratified is that flesh when things appear to be going well! Yes, yes, we are still so much of this earth, and we have failed to see how very small the biggest thing here is when seen from even ten thousand feet up, to say nothing of God’s throne and His spiritual measure.

What our writer is really saying is that real measure is that of faith, because the realm into which we are now called is one in which there is nothing apart from faith. The first stage is now of faith, and so is every subsequent increase. The whole dispensation is an immense advance upward in Divine thought, and sets the background for something much more inward than ever before. In the previous dispensations everything was outward and tangible - sacrifices, altars, meeting places, priests, vestments, feasts, rewards, etc.; but in this age all these things are gathered into the all-inclusive "In Christ," and are essentially spiritual aspects of the One Heavenly Man; to be known, enjoyed, and comprehended only by faith. The long generations of sentient gratification in religious things were in the very blood of these Hebrews, and they craved for the seen, the felt, the heard, the physical and emotional system of the past. Thus, all that is said from the beginning of the epistle is carried up to the most spiritual of all attributes - faith, which worketh by love.

The encumbering weights impeding the running in the race of chapter 12:1 are the legal aspects of external Law. The "sin which doth so easily beset" is doubt or unbelief, 'unfaith'; for "whatsoever is not of faith is sin".

Thus sin, in this letter, is resolved into a matter, not of morals, but of how much we reverse the nature of the dispensation by putting temporal elements and ideas in the place of spiritual. It may never have occurred to many that ritual, vestments, and ecclesiastical regalia and forms may be sin in this respect, that they undermine, supplant, or weaken the truly spiritual, and, rather than help faith, only act as crutches which keep people from having "their senses (spiritual faculties) exercised" (Hebrews 5:14).

This leads on in the unbroken sequence of thought to what is - in our unfortunate, mechanical divisions of chapters - in chapter 12. Here the "fathers of our flesh," and the "Father of spirits" are compared. Child training ("chastening") unto "son receiving" (literally, "placing as sons") has to do with our spirits; not firstly with our bodies, or our souls. The spirit is the very new man himself with which God is linked by new birth. All God's paternal attentions are taken up with this "inner man of the heart". Spirit cannot really be fed with temporal things. The soul may be greatly stimulated by blessings in the temporal realm, but it is here that one of the most vital and far-reaching distinctions is made by the Word of God, and one most grievously overlooked by the vast majority of Christians; and especially is it the point of default by the majority of Christian leaders. It is thought that if there is much soul stimulation along the lines of emotion, feeling, and 'zeal' or enthusiasm: reason, argument, information to the mind: and action, work, drive, volition: this is essentially the mark of spiritual life. In the New Testament it is the other way round; there was a deep inward work of the Holy Spirit in those days, before the effects - the instruction or teaching, the zeal, and the works. To put the cart before the horse in this matter may be just Satan's great illusion by which he brings about the most deadly reactions, so that the afterward is more hopeless than before. It may be well at this point to give a reminder that Satan's point of the conquest of man was man's soul - reason, argument: desire, feeling: volition, choice, action. Through and by his soul man capitulated to a course of unbelief, which severed his spirit from fellowship with God. (God is Spirit, not soul. When God is referred to as having soul, it is only speaking after the manner of men, not actually the truth about God.) The undoing or destroying of the works of the devil in man and in a new race will be by rebirth of man's spirit in union with God by the Holy Spirit, and by that being "joined to the Lord, one spirit" to make for the full growth of a spiritual man (Hebrews 5:14, 6:1; R.V.) thus bringing the soul into captivity with its moods, variations, and its inherent weakness toward doubt. The "dominion" of chapter 2 is now reserved unto spiritual people, and this is the heart of the whole Letter to

the Hebrews with its particular connection, as it is the heart of the whole New Testament in its manifold application.

The "placing as *sons*," which is the issue of "child-training" is spiritual "full-growth". Here is the link between chapters 11 and 12. It was not only what those heroes of faith did through faith, but what they attained unto. There was a Divine "perfection" as the goal of fellowship with God. The word "perfect" (Greek, "complete") is used eight times in this letter.

"To make the Captain of their salvation perfect" (2:10).

"Having been made perfect, He became... the Author of eternal salvation" (5:9).

"The law made nothing perfect" (7:19), etc., and thus, having shown the object of God, and incidentally of this letter, the writer brings us to two consummate statements:

a. "Apart from us they should not be made perfect" (11:40).

b. "Ye are come... to the spirits of just men made perfect" (12:23). We leave the second till later, only noting again where completeness lies.

So, with all their faith and its manifold and wonderful expression two things issued:

a. They "received not the promise," but "died (still) in faith". They awaited completion or completeness; the full fruit of their faith had yet to ripen and be gathered.

b. "The spirits of (these) just men made perfect." "Apart from us they should not be made perfect" (made complete).

Note: This is not numerical completeness; that we were necessary to be added to them. That might be true, but it is not what is meant here. It is their own completeness.

Something then has happened between their dying and our time. Yes; their faith was, in its essence, prospective. It looked on. See statements as to this in the record of chapter 11, etc. What did it look on to? Well, with greater or lesser clearness and definiteness it linked with the Christ, their Vindicator, their Redeemer, their Prince. This *link* of faith - not abstract faith, but its Divine Object - made it justifying faith; "it was accounted unto (them) for righteousness." Hence they are "just," or justified men, and their faith carried them over centuries to the Justifier, to our day; and in the "perfect" - finished, full and final - work and speech of God in Christ (Hebrews 1:2) they, with us who have faith, are made complete, and their spirits are in the rest of faith. This is all so much of a piece with the whole letter that we are considering, as will be seen.

So "Faith is the assurance (confidence, giving substance to) of things hoped for, a conviction of things not seen." Someone has translated it "the title deeds" of things hoped for. Then the inheritance is now - at length - in possession.

In our next chapter we shall have something more to say on this matter, drawing upon chapter 11, as we move to the second part of chapter 12.



## Chapter Six

### “SOME BETTER THING”

In our last chapter we came to the matter of “completeness” as the governing object of the faith of all those mentioned in Hebrews 11. “Apart from us they should not be made perfect (complete).” Now we take that up in relation to the clause which precedes it. “God having provided (foreseen) some better thing concerning us.” We pointed out that this being “made perfect” or complete had to do with justification or righteousness by faith. “All... had witness borne to them through their faith”, (“Abraham believed God, and it was reckoned unto him for righteousness”, “Wherefore... it was reckoned unto him for righteousness”; Romans 4:3, 22, etc.) thus making them “just men” (Hebrews 12:23) first potentially through faith, and then actually when the object of faith, the Christ, had come and made the work of righteousness perfect. We now have to carry that faith further as to its results.

In an earlier chapter we have dealt with ‘sonship’ as the supreme Divine revelation, brought out so much in this letter to the Hebrews. We have to return to that for a little while in our present connection. It is tremendously impressive how much referred to in chapter 11 directly relates to Christ in type and figure, and then how large a place sonship has there.

No one will dispute the typical factor of Abel, as to the virtue of the blood of Christ (12:24); of Isaac, as he that was raised from the dead; of Joseph, as he who was exalted to “the right hand of the Majesty on high” - three stages in the course of Christ. But sonship lies either patent or latent in so much. We shall not take this up in detail, but instances are clear in the case of Abraham and Isaac; of Jacob and Joseph; of the birth of Moses, etc. The point, however, is that sonship and spiritual fullness are the same thing, and that is what this letter is all about. Faith is shown to be the basis of spiritual completeness and therefore it leads to sonship.

To indicate something of the nature of this sonship we take one person out of chapter 11 - David. No doubt David’s faith is there connected with “obtaining promises” (verse 33). See 2 Samuel 7:11-12; 1 Chronicles 22:9, etc. These promises had to do with a son, one Divinely marked out from among many sons (1 Chronicles 28:5). This son was going to be the fullest example in type of God’s thoughts as to sonship that the Bible contains. But there was a point of transition in David’s life. After many years of chastening - child-training - numerous and varied experiences of suffering and trial and proving the Lord’s faithfulness, the point was reached where the one passion of his life came immediately into view. For this he had prayed, longed, and planned. For this he had been in quest, and it had so possessed him as to make him determine not to go up into his bed, nor give sleep to his eyes until his quest was successful. We might truly say that for David to live was that house for God. And now, at long last, he divulges to Nathan the prophet what was in his heart. Nathan, knowing that God was with David, gave him instant encouragement to do all that was in his heart, only to have to go back a little later at the Lord’s command and withdraw that encouragement and tell David that he was not to be allowed to fulfil his desire nor carry out his life ambition *for the Lord*. What a blow! What a shattering disappointment! What an opportunity for being offended with the Lord! And what an occasion for faith to freeze, and for despair to overwhelm him! Not he, but his son, should build the house. If this whole matter had been a personal interest, if it had been for his own gratification, well might he have been embittered and spent his closing days in brooding over and nursing his disappointment. But no! He is too big a man for that. So long as the Lord gets the house it matters not

who builds it, nor whether David is allowed to have any hand in it. Moreover, he will give his own treasure to help it forward. What a magnificent triumph over the smallness of man!

### **David Passes to Sonship**

So David passes from the child-training through faith's ultimate test into sonship; and no one, after all, ever thinks of David without that grand issue of his life - the Temple and its service; and no one ever thinks of Solomon without remembering that he was the son of David. And more, how often is Christ referred to as "son of David."

Thus we can see something of the nature of sonship; it is spiritual stature, measure, greatness. It is fullness born out of discipline. Carry this back into Hebrews 11 and 12. Spiritual stature is determined very largely by disinterested devotion to the Lord's interests, by how little we come into the picture, and by how much we are ready to serve the Lord's ends without any gratification to ourselves, without having our hand in it. "By faith... David... obtained promises."

What we have said above forms a fitting setting for what we have as the application of the message as found in verses 1-3 of chapter 12.

### **The Race, the Runners, the Witnesses, the Captain**

Before we can proceed we must correct a possible doctrinal error. The Apostle truly employs a common spectacle as his illustration. The stadium, the course, the runners, the onlookers, and the captain. But he would not have us to think that he means that the "cloud of witnesses" are those "with Christ" who are all conscious of and interested in our lives here in this world. There is nothing in the Scriptures to support this idea, and we can only believe that it would not be "far better" if they knew all about our wavering faith and impersistent progress. Put yourself in their place! Rather would the Apostle have us think of them as having borne witness in their lives, and in some way linked with us in the way of faith, so that their ultimate interests and ours are one. But *conscious* observers of our course - No! They do say that, in all ages, not only in this age, faith has been the law and governing factor. Faith links all ages in one goal - fullness. Well then, this is a course to be run, and everything that makes for weakness in the running must be repudiated.

We have already pointed out that in the context of the whole letter the "weight" is the legal system. "They bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders" (Matthew 23:4). This refers to the endless definitions and interpretations of the Law made by the scribes or lawyers, which just keep men bound to burdens of legal impositions. No one can move freely in legalism, Jewish or Christian. The "sin which doth so easily beset" we have seen may represent the formalism which is lifeless, and to which religion is so persistently and easily susceptible.

But it may be of wider application. Weights may be anything which has the effect of bearing us down. Seeing that it is the *spirit* that is the object of fullness the weight would be whatever hangs heavily upon our spirit. There are many things of spiritual anxiety and strain for which God has provided a remedy, and this letter refers to some of them. All-inclusively union with Christ is to find "rest unto your souls." "My burden is light." "There is... no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made... free from the law of sin and of death." "We who have believed do enter into... rest." What

burdens your spirit so that you cannot run? There is something somewhere in God's Word that will relieve you of that.

"The sin which doth so easily beset." I find that these last five words are what is required in English to express one Greek word. That word means "standing round about." Linked with the race course it may refer to people or things which are not really a part of the race, but just stand around and - because they are not in the business - get in the way of those who are. They are "sins" in the sense that they would weaken faith and slow down spiritual progress. What is there in our lives, having an influence upon our spiritual progress, which really does not belong to this business? We must each answer that question as to our own case. The Lord's word is "lay aside every weight" and thrust away the unrelated hindrances, like a runner brushing aside the obstructing people on or around the course. Do not be put off or put back. Faith is the test of all. What effect has this or that on faith? That will decide what is to be done with it.

### **The Captain**

When the Apostle bids his readers to look unto Jesus, the author and finisher of (our) faith, he really says more and other than our translations convey.

Firstly, it is looking *beyond* or *onward* unto Jesus." In 11:26 Moses is said to have looked 'beyond' (same preposition) unto the recompense of reward.

Then it is "unto *Jesus*." This is the title of the incarnation and earthly life, and its use here indicates - as the next words show - that this faith course was taken up and completed in One Who was "in all points tempted like as we, sin apart." A Man in utter dependence upon God, never employing His deity for His own support, has compassed the whole course of faith triumphantly; and inasmuch as He did it by the same Eternal Spirit as is given to us - no more, no less - it shows that *it can be done*, and there is no *need* for failure.

"The author and perfecter of faith." There is no "our" in the original text. Literally it is "*the foremost leader of faith*." This word is the same as in 2:10 - "to make the foremost leader of their salvation perfect through sufferings." "Perfect through sufferings." Now we are back to our word "perfect" (=complete), and He Who has been made complete along the same way of faith as we are called to traverse is our "perfecter," i.e., the One Who makes complete. In Him this faith way was initiated, and in Him it is completed.

Now then, the exhortation, so full of doctrine. If we look at the way, or the difficulties, or at ourselves, and become occupied with them, we shall not finish the course; and even if we do, it will be slow and jerky. The focal point of faith here is to link ourselves by it with the Triumphant Lord, with His perfected work, and reckon His triumph ours. It is not abstract and merely psychological, but there is a definite Divine Object - a Living Person - Whose work the Holy Spirit is ready to make good in us. When the Apostle comes to his benediction in 13:20 he will use the phrase "Make *you* perfect (complete) in every good thing." We leave that for the moment, with but this remark - faith fastened upon Jesus and His embodiment of a perfect work is the basis upon which "the God of peace" makes us perfect.

## Chapter Seven

### THE APPROACHING GREAT SHAKING

As the writer of this letter (to the "Hebrews") approaches its conclusion; after repeatedly giving great and terrible warnings as to the peril of failure to apprehend the full purpose and meaning of God in Christ, he gathers all up into a prophetic forecast which is itself the inclusive warning.

*"He hath promised, saying, Yet once more will I make to tremble not the earth only, but also the heaven. And this, Yet once more, signifieth the removing of those things that are shaken, as of things that have been made, that those things which are not shaken may remain" (12:26-27).*

It is necessary for us to be sure that this has still a future application, and was not fulfilled in the destruction of Jerusalem and the dispersion of the Jews which was imminent when the letter was written. Undoubtedly it had a partial fulfilment in that terrible event, but, as is so often the case in prophecy, was there not a double aspect, as there unquestionably was in two outstanding instances in the New Testament? One is the case of our Lord quoting Isaiah 61 at Nazareth, and stopping at "the year of the Lord's favour," not going on to "the day of vengeance of our God" (Luke 4:18-19). The other is the quotation from Joel on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16-21). This prophecy was obviously not wholly fulfilled on that occasion, but only partially so.

If we look at the passage in Haggai (2:6, 9) quoted in Hebrews, we shall see ample reason for doubting its already fulfilment.

*"Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land; and I will shake all nations; and the precious things of all nations shall come; and I will fill this house with glory, saith the Lord of hosts.... The latter glory of this house shall be greater than the former."*

Not one part of that prophecy has yet been fulfilled literally. If the apostle employed that prophecy in relation to the *destruction* of the Temple rather than to its filling with glory and peace, there remains much to be desired both as to Biblical usage, interpretation, and fulfilment. A spiritual interpretation of the Day of Pentecost would get nearer to the features - i.e., heaven and earth shaken: the sea and dry land (the multitudes of mankind): the nations; and the nations yielding treasures; the house filled with glory, etc. But even so we are left with the future aspect of the passage in Hebrews 12.

The sense of verse 28 is that we are in process of receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, but this corresponds to verse 5 of chapter 2:

*"Not unto angels did He subject the inhabited earth to come, whereof we are speaking."*

The whole of this paragraph should be carried over to "the kingdom which cannot be shaken" together with "partners of a heavenly calling" (3:1). It will then be seen that the "once more," literally "only once," in its universal sense must yet lie ahead, and doubtless in relation to the Lord's coming again.

The last verse of chapter 12 seems to clinch this argument - "for our God is a consuming fire," and surely it belongs to the events of which Peter wrote:

*"The day of the Lord... in the which the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall be dissolved with fervent heat, and the earth and the works that are therein shall be burned up. Seeing that these things are thus all to be dissolved..." (2 Peter 3:10-11).*

Some of these phrases are very intelligible to us, and we are quite sure that Peter knew nothing about atomic bombs - "elements dissolved with fervent heat"; but the Holy Spirit did, and does! (It is well to read the whole of this chapter from Peter.) Peter's words in his first letter (4:17) are also very relevant to Hebrews 12:26, where he says that

*"The time (is come) for judgment to begin at the house of God."*

Having, then, as we think, good ground for believing that the great shaking still lies ahead, we are able to say something with regard to its object, its need, and its call.

### **The Object of the Shaking**

In the light of this entire letter, and indeed, in the light of the entire New Testament revelation, the one *object* by which everything is ultimately tested and judged is Christ, as being the constitution of everything in a spiritual way. God's one inclusive purpose is to have everything constituted according to Christ. This must be organic, the very nature and essence of Christ. It cannot be by imitation, duplication, or organization. It can only be by conception, not observation. This kingdom "cometh not with observation." Therefore it must be spiritual. It must come from within by 'in-birth'. Thus, the measure of Christ as the spiritual life and nature of everything or anything working from within is the basis and standard of all Divine judgments. It will not be sound doctrine, extra truth, devoutness, zeal, many works, etc., but just Christ Himself, known, lived, and expressed, in the power and grace of the Eternal Spirit. In a word, it will be a matter of our true spiritual life as spiritual people in living and growing identification with Christ by the Holy Spirit. God has reduced His whole judgment to this. "He will judge the world by (or in)... Jesus Christ," and this is not just official, but spiritual - Christ is not only the Judge, but the standard of judgment. This is why the Book of the Revelation, which is a book of judgments, first of the Church, and then of the nations, begins with a full-length presentation of Christ the Living One. Then it shows that judgment is not so much as to *things*, more or less good or bad, but what is Christ or what is inimical to Him constitutionally.

### **The Need for the Shaking**

We have been at pains in our earlier chapters to show that Christianity has become, very largely, another Judaism, an outward system and a historic tradition. But it has become more than this. In its principles, methods, and means, it has largely become conformed to this world or age. Were we wanting to deal with the negative or defective aspect of things, it would not be difficult to write whole chapters on the weaknesses of present-time organized Christianity; but we would rather use our time and space on the positive line. Let us, however, appeal to our brethren in responsibility to think again and seriously before the Lord as to the true nature and origin of much that goes to make up the means of propaganda and publicity of work for God. Let us take account of such things as the prominence given to human honours, glories, titles, reputations, distinctions. That men have gained these or been given them in various spheres of life - politics, philanthropy, industry, adventure, war, sport, entertainment, science, art, or education - may be quite all right in itself, but that these things should be so largely used as the ground of appeal may just imply that Christ is not sufficient

as standing on His own merits, but must be surrounded by these natural embellishments (?). Must Christ be recommended or His servants accepted because of some human association of the word "great" in some earthly connection?

Again, let us be very careful, for the same purpose, of the encroachment of the entertainment feature of sacred service. "Lovers of pleasure" is an end-time characteristic, and the age is running headlong thither. Is it necessary to go with the age in order to attract? Is the Gospel dependent upon this "makeup" for its effectiveness and appeal?

Once more: let us watch that we are not carried away by the illusion of bigness. Many a once powerful instrument of God - personal or collective - has lost its spiritual value and impact when it has become big or popular. There is a Satanic snare in bigness, and we may by this illusion lose our very faculty for seeing just where God is doing His deepest work, and how. Often, God's truest work is hidden. It is becoming difficult, if not impossible, for many servants of God to believe or understand that anything of real account can be done unless it is well known and in the public eye.

When David put the Ark upon a new cart and things went just so far and then came to an ignominious and tragic impasse, it was not due to a lack of sincerity, devotion, zeal, energy, or wholeheartedness, but because he had all unwittingly drawn up from his subconsciousness an idea and method which had originated with the Philistine diviners. Those diviners had once put the Ark upon a new cart to send it back into Israel. David had fled in an hour of weakness to dwell in the land of the Philistines, and had been infected with the methods and means of that world. When God made the breach upon Uzzah that he died before the Lord it would have been too hard and severe, in the light of the zeal for the Lord, if there had not been some extra factor. That factor was the hand of another spiritual system back of "this present evil world" of which the diviners were the representatives and servants, and whom God had already plagued and cursed. (Read the story in 1 Samuel 5, 6, 27; 2 Samuel 6). There was no reason why Uzzah should be spared and the Philistines destroyed if the same factor obtained in both cases. No amount of zeal can save us in the end if the principles are false. But note how subtle it all was. There was not the remotest idea that things were basically wrong. The idea of bringing up the Ark (the Testimony) to its right and full place was right and according to God's mind. The earnestness and utterness left nothing to be desired. The motive and its passion were wholly commendable. But somewhere, somehow, Antichrist (in principle) was hidden in the constitution of things: the energy of the flesh, the soul-life actuated or taken charge of by that which was not the Spirit of God. If the soul, which is the natural side of man's being, is *predominant*, on any or all of its sides - intellectual, emotional, or volitional - then the door is wide open to deception; and deception, being what it is, does not mean that there is no zeal for God, but rather that it is zeal but not according to knowledge. It is only as the child of God lives in and is governed by the Holy Spirit through his renewed spirit - not *firstly* his soul - that he will be made aware of "the things that differ," even in his service for God. David eventually was shown what the Holy Spirit had indicated in the Scriptures as to God's principles of service, and he found by tragic experience that spiritual principles are more important than zeal and energy, although these latter were no less when the true basis was established. Satan is very subtle and will espouse our zeal for God if by so doing he can eventually bring shame and dishonour into God's testimony.

God sees through it, and would warn us of it. The trouble so largely is that, as in David's case, the drive and abandon associated with a great idea for God just ride

rough-shod over quiet waiting upon God and enquiry of Him as to His mind concerning the means and methods to be employed. The point at which disaster will befall very much that is engaged in for God in all sincerity is that which leaves no time for quiet detachment, for unhurried waiting upon God. There may be prayer, but it is prayer with a drive of work behind it, instead of the other way round. The question is, Did you get that method, that means, that programme in the secret place with God, direct from Him? Have you put everything back until all heat and hurry have been subjected to the judgment of the Holy Spirit? Or are you just getting on with it because it is for the Lord?

Do you think that judgment is upon men and things as such? Was there not enough genuine devotion to the Lord in David, Uzzah, and all the others to prevail against that terrible breaking in of God? Would the Lord not be slow to anger if that were all? Oh, why then this severity of God? Why must judgment begin at the house of God? It cannot be because of a greater or lesser degree of Christian goodness or zeal. There must be something more in it than that! Yes, there is, and we have touched upon it. The "eyes of flame" (Revelation 1:14), "the consuming fire," have beheld an insinuation - in principle or element - of the great *evil one*, who will deceive even to the point of simulating Christ or "an angel of light," in order that - sooner or later - the real Christ impact shall be neutralized.

This is all so relevant to our consideration in these chapters, and is undoubtedly behind the terrible nature of the warnings in this letter. We could never over-emphasize or exaggerate the terrible consequences to Christians and Christian work of failure to take sufficient account of the significance in verse 12 of chapter 4 linked with verse 9 (last part) of chapter 12.

But when all has been said both there and here, will you stop, can you stop, to get a sure place in the Spirit, or are you so involved, committed, driven, that the "still small voice" of the Spirit has no chance of being heard? It is in this whole realm of things that the great shaking will have its first effect. I was recently told in America on very good authority that fifty per cent of the missionaries who go to the mission field never return there after their first furlough, they cannot stand up to it. If that proportion were only half the truth it would be a startling - though small - sample of what the great shaking will mean in the matter of discovering how much there really is of Christ back of all early enthusiasm and well-meaning intentions. Not less zeal, devotion, and energy, but more depth, spiritual measure, and Divine understanding lies behind the appeal of this letter - "Let us go on to full growth."

With that appeal we shall deal particularly in our next chapter.

## Chapter Eight

### THE REITERATED APPEAL

Very early in this letter to the Hebrews the writer, having made a many-sided and very great comparison and contrast between the greatest persons and things of the old dispensation and Jesus the Son of God, launches an inclusive appeal and warning in superlative terms. "How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" Throughout the letter he applies that in various connections, but he does so as always governed by that last clause

#### "So Great Salvation"

So that is what it is all about! Salvation. *Great* salvation. *So great* salvation! As there cannot be two salvations, this one and some other, but this one is really what God intends by salvation, it is as well that we look again at what has been said in these pages as to the greatness of Christ, the greatness of our calling, the greatness of our intended destiny, and the greatness of our responsibility. One thing ought to emerge from this consideration, that is, that salvation is a much greater thing on the side of its *unto* than on the side of its *from*. That is, there is much more in God's purpose for man than to save him from sin, judgment, death, and hell. However great redemption is, it is only to get man back to the place where the original full intention of God can be proceeded with. It is a very costly 'fall' that has happened to man, but his recovery has far more in it than the recovery itself. The Gospel of Salvation as it is usually preached is so largely occupied with man himself and the immediate advantages and benefits of being saved. To promise, and get him to, heaven is about the limit. The "so great salvation" has immense issues bound up with it and includes all the superlatives and "mysteries" of Paul's unparalleled unveilings of "the eternal purpose." Salvation's greatest aspect is what it is unto, however great may be what it is from. If more of this greatness had broken upon the preachers, and were the mighty motive of their preaching, as it was in Paul's case, and others, the impact upon men would need little of the upholstery mentioned in our last chapter.

It is in the light of this more positive aspect that our writer so repeatedly appeals, urges, and warns, and it is now our intention to close our meditations by surveying these calls quite briefly.

While the writer was too moved by his theme to stop for systematizing his matter, it may help if we do something in that way. We can therefore, quite without straining, put these reiterations into three connections - A, B, and C.

It is assumed by this letter that those to whom it was written were believers in the Lord Jesus and that they had given themselves over to Him. They are called "holy brethren" (3:1) which implies consecration to Christ. On this assumption the writer bases his appeals and warnings.

#### (1) The Basis of Consecration

This basis is seen in the first series of appeals governed by the words "Let us."

##### 1. (4:1) "Let us fear."

If the consecration to the Lord is a genuine one upon an adequate apprehension of His superiority to all others, it will have in it this element of holy fear. The context shows that it is the great prospect which has come into view with Christ that creates such a fear lest it should be missed. Holy fear should always be a



feature of a Christian's life; not fear of judgment; not dread of the Lord; but fear lest there might be a missing of *all* that is implicit in the call of grace. The presence of such an exhortation is itself enough to prove that just to have accepted Christ is not enough to guarantee the attainment (to use Paul's word) of all that which is included in our having been "apprehended by Christ Jesus."

2. (4:11) "*Let us give diligence*"; literally "hasten".

This bears upon the time factor, especially the spiritual time factor. "So long as it is called Today" or "Today, if ye shall hear" is the ground of appeal here. The lack of urgency and diligence will have two effects. God's actual time opportunity - which is never shown to be other than now - may be missed; and, or, our capacity or ability to make good all that can be apprehended may slip past, and we be found like ships stranded on a mud bank.

3. (4:14) "*Let us hold fast*" literally "grasp".

It is so easy to lose grip and firmness of hold, and become loose or slack. You have made a confession; reaffirm, and do not let its full meaning and value slip out of your hand, or be taken from you. Close your hand tightly upon it against all that would steal it from you.

4. (4:16) "*Let us... with boldness.*"

False fear, timidity, uncertainty, or any member of that large family of Doubt, will keep us away if possible. The Throne of Grace is there. The Blood has opened the way. The High Priest in all sympathy holds out God's hand to take yours. Why be hesitant, doubtful, wavering? Staying away means only to be more and more involved in despondency and Satan's accusations. Make the bold plunge of faith in God's mercy and love; give Him credit for meaning what He says, and "draw near".

## **(2) The Development of Consecration**

1. (6:1) "*Let us go on...*"

The real value of this exhortation is found in the implication of the Greek word used. It is the same word as in Acts 2:2 ("rushing") and 2 Peter 1:21 ("moved"). It really means to be borne along by another. This would indicate that God is moving on, the Spirit of God is going forward. He is not tarrying or delaying, but with great energy is pursuing His goal. Let us fall in with Him. Let us be caught in His goings. Let us yield to His energies. Let us not be left behind by the Lord. "*Full-growth*" is His goal; let us not remain infants or immature.

2. (10:22) "*Let us draw nigh.*"

This is not the same as No. 4 above. That was a matter of adjustment of ourselves to being received. This is unto communion following the adjustment. In the one we need not, and must not, stand without, asking whether, peradventure, we dare approach. In the other, we should not come with reserves that will keep us from entering positively into the communion that is there for us.

3. (10:23) "*Let us hold fast.*"

Again, this is not the same as No. 3 above. That was taking hold, taking a firm grip. This is maintaining our hold. It is a matter of tenacity as to "our hope," "that it waver not." This goes right to the root cause of this whole letter. It is a costly

and difficult way. It is "outside the camp, bearing His reproach." We made a confession. Perhaps we weakened. Having tightened our grip, let us not weaken again, but be pertinacious.

4. (10:24) "*Let us consider one another.*" Rather "study" one another, with a view to:

(a) Emulating the good in one another.

(b) Inciting one another to good; to love and good works.

In short, let us take account of one another with a view to positively helping one another toward the goal - not to noting one another's faults and defects and so retarding their progress and our own.

### **(3) The Characteristics of Consecration**

Having made his appeal for renewed consecration, and having shown what consecration is, by the same phrase - "Let us" - the writer proceeds to a series of exhortations which indicate the kind of person a really consecrated person will be; what is necessary as characterizing such an one.

1. (12:1) "*Let us lay aside.*"

If we really mean business in relation to this "heavenly calling" (3:1) we must and shall look at everything from the standpoint of whether it is positive or negative as relating thereto. Does this thing help? If not it must go. For it to hinder, or retard, or make heavy going is its condemnation. The course must be as clear as we can make it, and anything or anyone not in the real business, but just obstructing or loitering, must be pushed aside. This will apply to 'the luggage of life'; it will apply to distractions and diversions; it will also apply to discouragements and disheartenments. There is no place for temperamentalism and moodiness in this race, and the easily-besetting sin of doubt and mistrust will bring the pilgrim quickly to the Slough of Despond.

2. (12: 1) "*Let us run.*"

Not talk about consecration; not be interested in it; not be merely a member of the 'Consecration Committee'; not be an expert in the technique of athletics, knowing about running and runners, courses, rules, outfit, and prizes; but "*Let us run,*" let us do it. How many know all the teaching and doctrine of consecration who are slow starters, or poor runners, always needing to be urged, encouraged, get refreshments, or have a rest! Let us get on with it, and "with patience." *Keep on with it.*

3. (12:28) "*Let us have (or take) grace whereby we may serve...*"

Here the Greek word for serve suggests that it is return for something received. Grace is a great blessing and benefit. The grace which has called us with *such* a "heavenly calling," into *such* a 'partnership' (3:1) surely creates a responsibility born of indebtedness. Let us take this grace with grateful hearts and prove our sense of indebtedness by service.

4. (13:13) "*Let us go forth unto Him without the camp.*"

In appreciation of the supreme greatness of Christ and of the grace bestowed upon us, let us show that we are not ashamed of Him, but rather are prepared to

suffer with Him and share His reproach. If we are really consecrated to Christ we shall be glad to stand by Him while and where He and His fullest interests are excluded, even from the Christian-Judaistic system which is more for itself than for Him.

5. (13:15) "*Let us offer up a sacrifice of praise continually.*"

This is the top-stone, the crown, of consecration. Reproach and rejection, yes, and all else involved; but is He worth it? Will the end justify it? Sonship, dominion, partnership with Christ crowned with glory and honour, God's House for ever; these are the things held up to view in this letter. If we have really seen *Him*, and what partnership with Him means, so that we are abandoned to Him, we shall be in that priestly course of singers which - in David's constituting - never ceased. This letter is so largely on the line of the House and the Priesthood and the Sacrifice, so that it is not surprising that it should end on the "twenty four courses of the singers" by implication - a course for the whole circuit of the sun, day and night. "A sacrifice of praise continually," or "a sacrifice of perpetual praise."

Thus fourteen times in this letter the appeal is made against any and every failure to be always characterized by an active outreach after God's fullest thought for His people. The spirit of Caleb is so apropos to it all; he "wholly followed the Lord," and at an advanced age requested hill country and a mountain to prove that he was still of that mind, and that the Lord honours such with supplies of spiritual vitality. He had seen that God had made known what was His mind for His people and that was what mattered. He - Caleb - would not accept anything less. He would not talk about that being 'the ideal, but quite impracticable,' or 'the state of things being what it is - in ruins - we must accept it, and make the best of a bad job.' Any such talk would be to Caleb treachery or betrayal: disloyalty to the Lord: an admission that God had intended something, but it had proved unworkable and must be scrapped for something less. The mind of Caleb was *that*; the majority might take the other attitude, but until God gave another and modified revelation of His purpose, though he were the only one to "go on" he was going on. This attitude, spirit, and activity God fully honoured, and not only did Caleb inherit, but Judah came into their inheritance because of his faithfulness. And Judah stands for something in the Divine thought!

While "Hebrews" and "Ephesians" still remain a part of the Bible, that is what God means for His people, even if but a comparatively few "go on". It can only mean serious and grievous loss to take any other attitude. Hence with the repeated "Let us" the writer links a repeated warning note "Lest". The nine occurrences of this warning note are worth considering. They cover every form of possible cause of failure - from the lack of alertness necessary to grasp the mooring as the vessel is carried by the current either out to sea or onto the rocks, to a definite hardening of heart against the appeal "Today, if ye shall hear His voice". This last is an appeal to Christians, not *here* to the unsaved as it is almost exclusively used by preachers.

All this, then, brings us back to our starting point - the implications of this letter - and should cause us to examine modern Christianity and our own position to see if it is a set system, a tradition, an inheritance; or whether it is really - and *now* - bringing to the Land and the goal, the fullness of Christ.