

THE EPISTLES
TO THE THESSALONS

WHO WROTE IT AND WHY?

—C. S. LEWIS

THE EPISTLE
TO THE HEBREWS

WHO WROTE IT AND WHY

By

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INTRODUCTORY ACKNOWLEDGMENT

Discriminating readers of our books have probably noticed that not one of them contains a *Preface* written by a friend. The reason for this is simple. In such a preface the writer is too apt to laud the author and to explain how eminently qualified he is to have written this particular book. There are exceptions, of course, but is not the *Preface* generally an opening word of praise for the author?

Please bear with us if we seem unduly critical of such prefaces, but sincerely, would it not be more appropriate for the reader himself to decide on the value of the book *after he has read it*? Most certainly an all-knowing God *will* evaluate it entirely apart from all human judgment.

In this case however, it is our desire, as the author, to render due thanks to those who have *helped us to write* this book.

For the past forty years, or so, our writings on the *Hebrews Epistle* have received wide response from our readers. Some have offered criticisms, suggestions, further light, encouragement, confirmation, etc., while many have simply asked questions but, while they may not have realized it at the time, *all were helping us to write the present volume*. Even criticisms were welcomed. They sent us back to “the lab,” as it were, to reevaluate things we had said or implied. And this was good. So, heartfelt thanks to our correspondents for your part in producing the book we now send forth to the public.

But of all who have helped us in this way, our beloved friend and colleague, Pastor Paul Sadler, stands out uniquely. At our request he kindly took home with him our *complete* manuscript of this commentary on *The Epistle to the Hebrews* and examined it thoroughly for errors of any kind: typographical, grammatical, theological, choice of words, style, locations of Scripture passages, etc. Laboriously he examined the whole, and when he returned with the results, had numerous criticisms and suggestions to offer. Many of these were valid and gladly accepted. For this close examination of this commentary on *Hebrews* we are most grateful to our dear brother and are pleased to acknowledge him as one who has most significantly helped the author in his efforts.

May God now bless this commentary, actually the work of many, to His own glory and the blessing of His people.

—Cornelius R. Stam

CONTENTS

	PAGE
Introductory Acknowledgment.....	3
The Author's Preface.....	5
	Chapter I
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS Its Author	6
	Chapter II
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS Its Purpose	14
	Chapter III
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS The Eternal Covenant	21
	Chapter IV
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS The Impress of Pauline Authorship	25
	Chapter V
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS Our Great High Priest	30
	Chapter VI
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS Eternal Security	37
	Appendix
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS Random Thoughts	48

THE AUTHOR'S PREFACE

The author has often remarked to his friends that he has enjoyed studying and teaching the *Epistle to the Hebrews* more than any other book of the Bible.

Why, then, has he not written a commentary on this great epistle much sooner, so that others might share the blessing with him? Let us explain.

In years gone by feelings ran high with some as to the authorship of *Hebrews*. Some felt that to attribute its authorship to Paul was practically a repudiation of Paul's distinctive message. The result was that in some cases more heat than light was being generated.

Under these circumstances we were reluctant to stir up more strife. Yet, recognizing the need for clear teaching on this subject, and on the Epistle itself, we did write brief articles on *Hebrews* in the *Searchlight* through the years, dealing with the various aspects of its message.

Now, thank God, the situation has changed considerably. While there are still disagreements over *Hebrews*, its author and its message, both sides now tend to consider the subject more objectively. This is always a great advantage in the study of the Scriptures. Hence, with the author now 82 years of age, he has felt it high time to publish the present volume.

Please bear in mind that this is *not* a *verse-by-verse* commentary. It is rather a book *about* Hebrews. The chapters that follow this *Preface* are taken, with little change, from earlier issues of the *Berean Searchlight*, and the *Random Thoughts* of the *Appendix* are taken from *only four* out of *fifty* annual volumes of the *Searchlight*. Had we gleaned such observations from all fifty volumes the result would have been another, and larger, book!

The above does show, however, that the author's heart and mind have long been inspired by the teachings of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* and that he has sought to share these blessings with our *Searchlight* readers, to help them to "understand and enjoy" the Epistle.

Please remember also that this volume, gathered from articles previously published in the *Berean Searchlight*, may contain a repetition here and there. In such cases bear in mind that we often learn best by repetition.

And now we send this volume forth with joy, trusting that its consideration of the authorship of *Hebrews*, its purpose, its message, its types, its emphasis on God's "eternal purpose," its unique and glorious High Priest, and other great truths may furnish the reader with many delightful hours of Bible study.

—Cornelius R. Stam

Chicago, Illinois
May 1, 1991

CHAPTER I
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
Its Author

The authorship of Hebrews is not only an interesting subject; it is of prime importance to a clear understanding of the Bible and especially of God's message and program for the present dispensation. Most editions of the English Bible, of course, ascribe the authorship to Paul in their titles. Are they right or wrong?

EXTERNAL EVIDENCE

As we speak of *evidence* here, we refer to "that which tends to prove, or gives ground for belief." A preponderance of such evidence may result in *conclusive* evidence. While the Epistle nowhere *states* who its author is, there is real, hard evidence as to certain points involved which are tantamount to *proof*.

While we can never accept the recorded testimonies of Church fathers as final and conclusive in settling any Bible problem, it is reasonable that their testimony should at least be considered in this case, since they lived nearer to the recipients of the letter, both as to time and place, and would be most apt to know who the author was. *The volume of such testimony is surprisingly great and one-sided in favor of Paul as the author.*

The early Church fathers overwhelmingly ascribed the authorship of the Hebrews epistle to Paul. Among them Eusebius' testimony is, perhaps, most important. He was the well-known historian of the early Church, called, "the father of ecclesiastical history." He went to great pains to gather technical data regarding the Scriptures. He knew that some in the western Church rejected the Pauline authorship not only of Hebrews but, indeed, of some of the other Pauline epistles, but it was his considered opinion that there were "*fourteen epistles of Paul, manifest and well known.*" This was about 300 A.D.

While, as we say, there were some, even then, who questioned Paul's authorship of Hebrews, there appears to be *no external evidence* for *any* other author, only suggestions that it might have been Luke, Barnabas, Apollos or someone else among Paul's contemporaries. Indeed, those in our day who question Paul's authorship of the book, offer no real *evidence* as to who *did* write it.

But the testimony of men of later date should also be considered where painstaking study of the facts involved has taken place. For while their *testimony* must be considered external evidence, *they* carefully considered both external and internal evidence in their studies. Among these later witnesses we include:

The well-known *Textus Receptus* (Received Text). In this Greek Text, this epistle is titled, *The Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*. Surely, in a volume of this kind, this title was not chosen without careful consideration.

The King James Version of the Bible (the translation authorized by King James and completed in 1611). This English Version of the Bible entitles this epistle: *The Epistle of Paul the Apostle to the Hebrews*. It must not be overlooked that more than forty scholars in Greek and Hebrew participated in this work and, under God, gave us the greatest translation of the Bible which the English-speaking world, probably, has ever possessed. The work was done with tenacious care, by men who were ready to give up their lives for the truth of the Word. It was the *Reformation Bible*. And while they did not claim that the titles of Scripture were inspired, they certainly must, in view of the fact that the authorship had been questioned by some, have given tenacious and untiring deliberation to this question, taking all possible evidence into consideration. And *this* group of Godly, learned men ascribed the authorship of Hebrews to *Paul*. This testimony should weigh heavily with sincere enquiries into this question.

Coming now to more modern men of God who have carefully studied this question we can include but a few, though there are many.

The Companion Bible (compiled mostly by Dr. E. W. Bullinger), states: “*The arguments in favor of the Pauline authorship are much more weighty than those in favor of all other candidates put together...*” “*Its anonymity is eminently in favor of Pauline authorship*” (P. 1823).

The Student’s Commentary (by George Williams): “*The Author of this letter was the Holy Spirit. The Hebrew whom He trained to write it was the Apostle Paul. This is proved [sic] by 13:25, which was his token in every epistle that he wrote*” (P. 971). “*In Him [whom Hebrews presents] the worshipper finds his Priest, his Altar, his Sacrifice, his Baptism, his Pascal Supper, his Circumcision and his Place of Worship. The Epistle to the Romans is the Court of Justice. The Epistle to the Hebrews, a Temple of Worship. Contrast rather than comparison is prominent in this epistle.*” (Ibid).

Sir Robert Anderson: After disposing of Luke, Barnabas, Apollos and Clement of Rome as possible authors, he adds: “*As for the other companions of the Apostle, their claims rest on mere conjecture; there is not a scintilla of evidence to connect them with the book*” (P. 1).

We could name many others who testify in strong words as to the authorship of Hebrews, but those sited above are well known as having been tireless and able students of the Word. Here again, as with the Church fathers, the testimony is amazingly one-sided in favor of Paul’s authorship.

Luther and Calvin both questioned the Pauline authorship of Hebrews, but John Owen, the translator of the English edition of Calvin’s *Commentary on Hebrews*, writes: “*As far, then, as the testimony of history goes, almost the whole weight of evidence is in favor of Paul being the author....Luther indeed, ascribed it to Apollos—a mere conjecture. Calvin, as we find, supposed that either Luke or Clement was the author; for which there are no satisfactory reasons. Beza differed from his illustrious predecessor, and regarded Paul as the writer; and such has been the opinion entertained by most of the successors of the Reformers...*” (*Calvin’s Commentaries*, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1949, *The Epistles to the Hebrews*, P. VIII).

INTERNAL EVIDENCE

Internal evidence, that is, evidence from the Scriptures themselves, must always be considered stronger and more weighty than external evidence. In this case we believe that this evidence amounts to conclusive proof that Paul was the author even though, for good reasons, it does not specifically say so. We shall divide this internal evidence into three categories: Technical, Doctrinal and Logical.

Technical Evidence

There is considerable evidence of a technical nature which points to Paul as the author of Hebrews.

1. It is evident from II Pet. 3:15 that Paul did write a letter to Hebrews. If the epistle we are now considering is not that letter, where is it? What has become of it? We have no evidence of any other such letter. And the next verse in II Pet. 3 (Verse 16) indicates that *all* of Paul's epistles are inspired of God and that it is "unlearned and unstable" men who "wrest" them, "to their own destruction." Is part of God's Word, then, missing? Must we not rather conclude that the letter referred to in II Pet. 3:15 is the well-known *Epistle to the Hebrews*?
2. The author of Hebrews wrote from prison in Italy (13:18-24) and we know that Paul was a prisoner in Rome. Also, he hoped soon to be released (13:19, 23; cf. Phil. 2:17-24). Further, he sent greetings to the Hebrew Christians from the saints *in Italy*, not merely in Rome (13:24), and who would be so apt to know believers throughout Italy as Paul—or who would be so apt to send greetings from these believers to others whom they probably had never met? (See the closing verses of most of his epistles).
3. The writer addresses those who had (on another occasion) shown compassion toward him in his bonds (10:34). Now we know that Paul had spent more than two years in prison in Caesarea in Palestine (Acts 23:23; 24:27) before sailing for Rome and that many Jewish believers in the vicinity had been solicitous of his welfare.
4. Timothy is mentioned in 13:23. He had been the writer's *fellow-prisoner* until recently and was now expected shortly to *travel* with him. Was Timothy thus closely associated with anyone else beside Paul? We know how close a companion he was to Paul, how two of Paul's prison epistles, Philippians and Colossians, were written jointly with Timothy, and how the Philippians letter expresses Paul's hope to send Timothy to Philippi "so soon as I shall see how it will go with me" (Phil. 2:19, 23). Does not all this point to Paul as the author of Hebrews?
5. Finally, the *style* of the epistle, we feel, points to Paul as its author. It is argued by some that the style of the Hebrews Epistle differs too widely from that of his Gentile epistles to admit of its authorship by Paul. But should we not *expect* an epistle written to Hebrews to differ widely in style and approach from one written to Gentiles? And as to the writer's thorough and intimate acquaintance with the Law, the priesthood and Judaism, who would qualify as well as Paul? (Acts 22:3; Gal. 1:14).

Doctrinal Evidence

The doctrinal evidence for Paul's authorship of Hebrews is even stronger than the technical evidence.

1. In Heb. 3:1 the writer calls these Hebrew brethren "*partakers of the heavenly calling.*" This is important for Paul is the *only* Bible writer who discusses the "one Body" and its heavenly calling.

We are well aware that some argue that even Abraham and his seed had a heavenly calling because Heb. 11:16 says that they "desired" a "heavenly city" (Lit., place of citizenship). But this commonwealth, or place of citizenship, was to be heavenly *in character, not in sphere*, for it is plain that they looked for it *on earth*, since God had promised them "*all the land of Canaan*" (Gen. 17:8). It will be at the fulfillment of this promise that God will be a God to Abraham and his seed, and that the kingdom of heaven will be set up on earth. This will indeed make Canaan a heavenly "country," or place of citizenship, for them.

2. The outlook of Abraham and his physical seed was always earthly in sphere. Not until *Paul* do we read of a joint body of Jewish and Gentile believers with a heavenly calling, position, and prospect, and here the apostle calls these Hebrew brethren "*partakers of the heavenly calling.*" Indeed, he enlarges upon this, indicating beyond a doubt that this "heavenly calling" is the unique portion of the members of the Body of Christ, the Church of the present dispensation.

3. In the third verse of the Epistle the writer declares that "*when [Jesus Christ] had by Himself purged our sins, [He] sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.*" In other words, the work of redemption *finished*, He sat down at the right hand of His Father in heaven. And now the writer exhorts these Hebrew believers to "enter into His rest" (4:10). This, we submit, is the thrust of Pauline epistles to the Gentiles, for he likewise urges them to *occupy* their position in the heavenlies in Christ, their redemption having been accomplished. The only difference is in the terminology.

4. In Heb. 10:19 we read: "*Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.*" Surely the writer does not refer here to the holiest place in the temple *on earth*, but to the holiest *in heaven*, the presence of God Himself. In what way does this differ from the "access" which we, the Gentile members of the Body of Christ, have to God in heaven, according to Paul's epistles? (See e.g., Eph. 2:16-18).

5. The writer of Hebrews calls his readers to “go forth” unto Christ, “*without the camp, bearing His reproach*” (Heb. 13:13).

Now the twelve had previously been very careful *not* to start another sect apart from Judaism (Acts 2:46, 47; 3:1). They had been careful to stay *within* the camp, the camp, of course, being Judaism. Does anyone object that they were the believing remnant and therefore outside the apostate camp? In that case it would be clear that they had formed another “camp,” but now the writer of Hebrews exhorts them to *leave the camp* and take their place *with the rejected Christ alone*. Is not this distinctively *Pauline* truth?

6. But not only does he call them to go “*without the camp*”; he calls them “*within the veil*” (Heb. 6:19, 20; 10:19, 20; etc.). The veil referred to is surely not that which barred the way into the holiest place on earth, but that which had barred the way into the presence of God Himself—and this was removed by the death of Christ (Heb. 10:19, 20) and the glorious truth declared that believers may now enter into the holiest *in heaven*. Surely all this is peculiarly *Pauline* truth.

7. This epistle bases salvation and “a good report” on *faith alone*. Indeed, in Heb. 11 the writer demonstrates the fact that while believers of other ages necessarily responded to *what God had revealed to them*, it was actually their *faith* in thus responding, that obtained for them all “a good report” (Heb. 11:2, 39). Is not this the very essence of the Pauline revelation: “that all believers in every age were actually justified by faith, on the basis of the redemptive work to be wrought by Christ at Calvary, and that this having now been *revealed*, men are justified by faith *apart from works*”? Read Rom. 3:21-26 and 4:1-8 and note the phrases “But now” and “at this time.” See also Gal. 3:23, 25 and note the words: “before,” “afterwards” and “no longer.”

8. But what about those passages in Hebrews which, superficially at least, sound more like Peter dealing with kingdom truth, than like Paul dealing with the truth for this present dispensation? For example, such passages as 2:3, 4, 5 have caused some to reject the Pauline authorship of Hebrews—though they can find no evidence for any other author. Let us, then, consider this passage.

In verses 3, 4 he warns his readers about neglecting “*so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him; God also bearing them witness, both with signs and wonders...*” etc. Surely, it is argued, this is not the salvation which we proclaim from the Pauline epistles. But do not be too hasty here. The *terms* of salvation have indeed been changed, but our Lord on earth, like Paul years later, proclaimed *salvation to sinners*. This salvation was, of course, first proclaimed to Israel. The angel had announced to Joseph that our Lord should “*save His people from their sins*” (Matt. 1:21). Our Lord Himself declared to the Samaritan woman: “*Salvation is of the Jews*” (John 4:22), and Peter confirmed this at Pentecost (Acts 4:12). Even Paul, during the earlier part of his ministry declared to the Jews at Pisidian Antioch: “*Men and brethren...to you is the word of salvation sent*” (Acts 13:26), and later: “*It was necessary that the Word of God should first have been spoken to you:*” (Acts 13:46).

But finally, at Rome, he was forced to say to the Jewish leaders there: “*Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles...*” (Acts 28:28). Thus the “salvation” which once had been “*of the Jews*” was now “*sent unto the Gentiles*” (See Rom. 1:16).

In writing to Jews, then, who had been under the kingdom program, how appropriate it was of Paul to approach the subject of our “great salvation” by explaining that this “*began to be spoken by the Lord and was confirmed unto us by them that heard Him*”! It is important to guard against being so taken up with the *distinctions* between past and present facts that we do not see the *connections* between them.

9. In Verse 5 the apostle refers to the “*subjection*” of “*the world to come, whereof we speak.*” Some have objected that it was the kingdom saints, not the members of the Body, who looked forward to ruling in “the world to come.” Here again it is simply a matter of *approach*. It is true that redeemed Israel will reign *on earth* in the Millennium, but it is equally true that we shall reign *over* it, much as do the principalities and powers in heavenly places now. Thus the apostle begins with what they are naturally interested in, the subjection of “the world to come,” but then leads them on to a higher truth. Note carefully: Psalm 8, which the apostle quotes here in Heb. 2, it is not predicted merely that *Israel* will reign on earth, but that “*man*” will reign over the *universe*. Thus the apostle proceeds from his appropriate approach, to declare: “*But now we see not yet all things put under him [man]. But we see Jesus, who,*” like and for man “*was made [for] a little [while] lower than the angels for the suffering of death*”—we see Him “*crowned with glory and honor: that He, by the grace of God, should taste death for every man*” (Heb. 2:8, 9). And thus our future glory is secured! A Man—the God-Man—has already been crowned with glory and honor, becoming “the Captain of our salvation,” leading “many sons to glory.” (Ver. 10).

10. Most, if not all, of the passages which have caused some to reject the Pauline authorship of Hebrews on dispensational grounds are simply answered in this way. Writing to Hebrew believers, who had been under the Law and the kingdom program, the apostle naturally *approaches* the higher truths of his special revelation from the ground on which they have been standing. Meanwhile we keep looking in vain for explanations of the many passages and phrases in Hebrews that could hardly be ascribed to any but Paul: “Partakers of the heavenly calling,” “entering into His rest,” “the throne of grace” (cf. Mercy Seat), “an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec [not Aaron]” taking us “into the holiest” *in heaven*, the law “disannulled,” the keyword “better,” “washings [Lit., baptisms]” done away, truths “now made known,” the reason why Christ is now seated in heaven, “a new and living way,” the “approaching” day, “compassion” on which prisoner?, the many variables and the one constant of Heb. 11, “God having provided some better thing *for us*,” “without the camp,” “within the veil,” “let us go on unto perfection,” etc. All these surely must weigh heavily against the Hebraisms we have discussed and those we have not.

11. One thing is clear: the writer sought to lead these Hebrew believers on from “the primary things of the doctrine of Christ,” urging them to “go on unto perfection [maturity]” (Heb. 6:1). Who but Paul could have done this? Even at that, they were not able to take in all he had to give them (5:11, 12) but, like Peter, found some of his writings “hard to be understood” (II Pet. 3:16).

Logical Evidence

The evidence from logic again leads us to the conclusion that Paul is the author of the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, for if he did not write *this* epistle, necessity would have demanded that he write just such an epistle to them—and he alone was in a position to do this. Consider the peculiar situation of these Hebrews—all at least professed believers in the Lord Jesus Christ. They had heard the message of Pentecost, how Christ had been raised from the dead to sit upon David's throne (Acts 2:30, 31). Peter had promised that if Israel would repent “the times of refreshing” would come, and God would “send Jesus Christ” back to earth (Acts 3:19, 20). They had not only hoped for this event, but had begun practicing its program (Acts 4:32-37). But years had passed since then. Their number had grown to “myriads,” or tens of thousands (Acts 21:20), and still Christ had not returned, and the kingdom had not been set up.

Meantime God had raised up *another apostle*, Paul, to go to the Gentiles *apart* from Israel's instrumentality, with a message of salvation by grace, through faith alone. True, Peter had written to the Jews of the dispersion: “*Wherefore gird up the loins of your minds, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought unto you at the revelation of Jesus Christ*” (I Pet. 1:13), but still He had not come, and now Paul had made the awful pronouncement upon Israel: “*The heart of this people is waxed gross [calloused] and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed....Be it know therefore unto you that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles...*” (Acts 28:27, 28).

Should we not now *anticipate* that Paul should write to these Hebrew believers, calling them now to take their place *outside* “the camp” of Judaism, with the *rejected* Christ (Heb. 13:13), who though despised by men had been exalted *far above all*, so that those trusting Him should be led to heavenly glory? (Heb. 1:3, cf. 4:9, 10; also 2:9, 10; 3:1; 10:19-22). Thus the apostle shows them the “better things” and higher blessings which are now theirs, along with the other members of Christ's Body where: “*There is neither Jew nor Greek...neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus*” (Gal. 3:28).

It is clear from Paul's early epistles that *in Christ* Jewish and Gentile believers were already one, and the events of Acts 10:11, 15 had indicated that “the middle wall of partition” was toppling. Now, with the nation Israel set aside, the Jewish believers who still had gone on under the kingdom program must be shown their position and blessings *in Christ* and must be called “*outside the camp*” and “*within the veil*.”

Who was the natural person to write to them about all this? Surely Paul alone. And does this not explain the anonymity of his epistle? He was the apostle of the Gentiles and God would keep him such, since the present dispensation is, practically speaking, a *Gentile dispensation*, with but a small proportion of believing Jews included in the joint Body.

Certainly, if these Hebrew believers meant *to go on in their “kingdom” calling and program* and were *not* to become partakers of the higher blessings of this dispensation of grace, neither Paul nor anyone else would have been in the will of God in writing such an epistle to them.

Conclusion

It is sometimes argued that because the Book of Hebrews is anonymous God evidently does not wish us to know who wrote it and that therefore we should not seek to find out who he was. But this argument is fallacious for several reasons:

(1) The book of Hebrews is anonymous only in the sense that Paul did not sign his name to it. His identity was evidently well known to his readers as Heb. 13:18, 23, 24 alone prove conclusively.

(2) Most of Paul's letters also do not state when or from whence they were written. Does it follow, then, that we should not compare Scripture with Scripture to ascertain these facts, or other facts which may be important, though not specifically stated?

(3) As the *Companion Bible* states: "Its anonymity is eminently in favor of Pauline authorship," for this permits Paul to be considered the more consistently, "the apostle of the Gentiles."

Chapter II
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
Its Purpose

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* contains rich blessings not to be found in any of Paul's epistles to the Gentiles. The Gentiles knew little or nothing about the Law and the priesthood, hence in these epistles the apostle did not deal at length with the rich symbolism of Judaism, its beautiful comparisons with that which we have in Christ, and especially its striking *contrasts* to our position and blessings in Christ.

Moreover, Hebrews is the *grand proof of God's eternal purpose* in Christ. There is no indication in the Old Testament Scriptures as to the meaning of the types, nor even a single declaration that they *were* types at all. But *now* we can look back and see their blessed meaning and exclaim, "God had this in mind all the while. His heart was full of it!"

But let us begin at the beginning.

The purpose of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* is threefold:

(1) To provide the solution to the believing Hebrews' dilemma

(2) To prove beyond a doubt that the "mystery" revealed through Paul, and "the dispensation of the grace of God" committed to him, were indeed God's *eternal purpose*...given us in Christ Jesus *before the world began*"

(3) To prove that God's blessings under grace are infinitely "better" than anything Israel, or we, ever knew, or ever could know under the Law

I. THE SOLUTION TO THE HEBREWS' DILEMMA

To correctly interpret any book of the Bible it is helpful to place ourselves, as it were, in the position of those to whom, or about whom, that book was written. Let us begin, then, by placing ourselves in thought among those addressed in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*.

Imagine yourself listening to Peter's Pentecostal address and, deeply convicted, joining those who "came forward" and tremblingly asked, "*Men and brethren, what shall we do?*" and hearing Peter reply:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost" (Acts 2:37, 38).

Now suppose you *do* most heartily repent. Suppose you *are* baptized for the remission of sins, and *do* receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. Suppose all this is fully verified by the way you live, joining all the other disciples of Christ as they live spontaneously and affectionately *for one another* as our Lord commanded in His *Sermon on the Mount* (Acts 2:44-47; 4:32-37).

Suppose further that you hear Peter pledge to Israel the return of her risen, ascended Messiah and the long-promised “*times of refreshing*” upon her repentance and the “*restitution* [making right] of all things” (Acts 3:19-21).

Would you not now be bitterly disappointed if Israel’s leaders, instead of recognizing the overwhelming evidence that Christ was alive, and accepting the offer of His return to reign, persecuted His disciples and sealed their hatred of Him by murdering Stephen while *he* pleaded that they might be forgiven?

And would it not further discourage you if God responded to the stoning of Stephen by *saving* the leader of the rebellion against Christ and sending *him* forth to proclaim salvation by free grace to *the Gentiles*, while Jews from Jerusalem to Rome continued to reject their Messiah (Acts 22:18; 13:46; 18:6; 28:25-28)?

Would you not ask: “What about *us*?” We believe in Christ. And what about all the Old Testament promises about Israel’s redemption and her “times of refreshing” under the reign of Messiah? As the nation continued in her rebellion might you not well ask, “What can Peter’s ‘Hope to the end’ (I Pet. 1:13) mean now? Israel’s rulers have ‘*set themselves against the Lord and against His anointed*’ and will not change. Must we conclude that God has failed to keep His Word, or that His millennial promises were but a glorious dream?”

This was the predicament in which the believing Hebrews under the teachings of the Twelve now found themselves. In such a situation would not this letter from Paul provide the greatest encouragement? He knew, and was already proclaiming the truth that:

“...God hath concluded them all [both Jews and Gentiles] in unbelief that He might have mercy upon all” (Rom. 11:32; cf. Ver. 33).

To Paul the exalted Lord had revealed a sacred secret (a “mystery”) not yet made known to the Judean disciples, and probably not yet fully understood by all his own Jewish followers among the Gentiles. Hence this *Epistle of Paul to the Hebrews*, explaining how, through the blood of Christ shed at Calvary, they could rejoice with the Gentile believers¹ as “*partakers of the heavenly calling*” (Heb. 3:1).

II. THE ETERNAL PURPOSE

Again and again, in his Gentile epistles, the Apostle Paul stresses the fact that God’s present work of grace was His “*eternal purpose*.”

God today is saving men on the basis of an “eternal covenant,” a covenant He made, not with any man, but with *Himself* before the world began, with respect to “eternal life,” to be vested in Christ, who was to die for our sins.

¹ Appropriately the apostle did not go so far as to teach these Hebrews the truth of the one “joint body,” for would *Hebrews* naturally rejoice at being one with *Gentiles*? Surely not, until having come to see the *truths* in which saved Gentiles were now rejoicing.

But while the apostle refers to this eternal purpose again and again in his epistles to the Gentiles, he gives conclusive *evidence* of its *validity* in this epistle to the Hebrews, *demonstrating* through its many types that God's heart was full of this "mystery," this sacred secret, long before He revealed it to Paul.

Hebrews is God's great commentary on the types. Seldom does Paul mention any of the Old Testament types in his Gentile epistles. But in writing to Hebrews this is naturally quite different. Hebrews deals with *far more* types than all the rest of Paul's epistles put together, and his Hebrew readers would naturally be interested in their significance.

Does the reader object that if the glories of the "mystery" were typified in Old Testament times they were not a *secret*? We reply that this objection stems from a misunderstanding of typology, for how many of the Old Testament types were said or even known *to be* types at the time, or were said to foreshadow anything still future? Consider them all—and each one individually: the priesthood, the altar, the offerings, the shed blood, the camp, the tabernacle, the holiest place, the ark, the mercy seat, the washings (Gr. *baptismois*), Sinai, the Sabbath and all the rest. Did God reveal at the time that any of these were typical at all, much less what they typified? Search and see. Thus the "mystery" was still a secret indeed in Old Testament times.

It is only *now*, through the revelation of the "mystery" to Paul that we can clearly see that God had the blessings of the present dispensation in mind all the while, indeed, that His heart was filled with them.

Here we must express our disappointment over some who hold that the mystery revealed to Paul involves only one particular truth, such as that of the joint body, or our heavenly position, while, indeed, it is that great body of truth which we rightly call *Pauline*, beginning with salvation itself, for who before Paul ever arose to declare:

"But NOW the righteousness of God *without* the law is manifested..." (Rom. 3:21).

"We declare, I SAY, AT THIS TIME, His [Christ's] righteousness, that He [God] might be just and the justifier of him which believeth in Jesus" (Ver. 26).

Israel's rejection of Christ did not take God by surprise. The temporary blinding of Israel, and the ushering in of the dispensation of grace were integral parts of "*the mystery...hid from ages and from generations, but now...made manifest to His saints*" (Rom. 11:25; Col. 1:26). But there is more:

III. THE BETTER THINGS OF HEBREWS

The *Epistle to the Hebrews* has long been known as "the book of *better* things," and rightly so:

"For the law made nothing perfect, *but the bringing in of a better hope did*" (Heb. 7:19).

It must be clearly understood, however, that the “better hope” of Heb. 7:19 has no reference to the New Covenant², for note:

1. The *New Covenant* was *promised* about 600 years before Christ, when God said, “Behold *the days come...that I will make a new covenant...*” (Jer. 31:31 cf. Heb. 8:13).
2. The *New Covenant* was made at Calvary (Matt.26:28).
3. The *New Covenant* will be *fulfilled* when our Lord returns to “*turn away ungodliness from Jacob*” and “*all Israel shall be saved*” (Rom. 11:26, 27). Thus the *New Covenant* has not yet been “brought in,” or fulfilled, but the “*better hope*” of Heb. 7:19 has indeed been “brought in” by the revelation committed to Paul. This is the “better hope” of God’s “eternal covenant,” the promise He made to Himself before the ages began.

Thus the “better” things of *Hebrews* do not look forward to the coming reign of Christ; they are vouched to us now, indeed were vouched to the Hebrew believers to whom Paul wrote at the *dawn* of the dispensation of grace.

Further, if the Hebrew believers were meant to go on in their “kingdom” calling and program, and were *not* to become partakers of the higher blessings of the dispensation of grace, as some teach, then neither Paul, nor any one else would have been in the will of God in writing such an epistle to them as that which we are now considering.

The types of the Old Testament, which had no future significance at the time, now blossom with meaning and shower us all—and particularly the Hebrew believers of Paul’s day—with blessings far better than anything the Law ever offered or could offer: Let us see:

The Levitical Priesthood, comprised of *many* priests, has now been replaced with *one Priest*, the Lord Jesus Christ, “a priest forever, after *the order of Melchisedec*,” who was not even a Hebrew, much less a Levite.

“*Those priests*” could not continue in office “by reason of death,” (Heb. 7:23). But *this Priest*, “*because He continueth ever, hath an unchangeable priesthood*” (Ver. 24).

The Levitical priest, says the apostle:

“...standeth daily, ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

BUT THIS MAN, AFTER HE HAD OFFERED ONE SACRIFICE FOR SINS FOREVER, SAT DOWN ON THE RIGHT HAND OF GOD” (Heb. 10:11, 12).

² *The New Covenant*, discussed at some length in Heb. 8 and 9 is a separate subject and should be dealt with more fully in a separate study. Meantime see the author’s booklet, *The Lord’s Supper*.

How much, how very much more, could be said about this “better” Priest in contrast with thousands who had lived and died under the Old Covenant, but we will deal more fully with this in Chapter III.

The Altar, of course, has been replaced by Calvary and our Lord’s *finished* work of redemption.

The Church of Rome has erected an altar, indeed, thousands of altars, for the *continued* sacrificial offering of Christ in the *Sacrifice of the Mass* when supposedly, “the real body and blood,” of our Lord are offered again and again, but this is not only unscriptural; it is blasphemous. Even an earlier *Catholic Dictionary* (Cath. Publ. Soc.) states under the word “altar”: “Whether the Christian altar is mentioned by name in the Bible is doubtful.” We can answer that: There *is no* “Christian altar” mentioned *anywhere* in the Bible. Our altar is the cross, where Christ offered Himself for our sins “*once for all.*” Thus Paul declares:

“We have an altar, whereof they have no right to eat [partake] which serve³ the tabernacle” (Heb. 13:10)

The Offerings of Old Testament times are now seen to typify the *one better offering*, the offering of Christ Himself as our Savior and Redeemer. We are saved, not again and again, by the offerings of slain beasts, much less through some ritual immolation of Christ in the Mass, but “*through the offering of the body of Christ once for all*” (Heb. 10:10).

Moreover, in Old Testament times our Lord was seen as the *victim* in sacrifice (e.g., Isa. 53:7), but here in Hebrews He is *the Victor* (Heb. 1:3, *et al*). In the Old Testament He is *offered* in sacrifice; here *He offers the sacrifice*—Himself.

“...that through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil,

“And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Heb. 2:14, 15; cf. Col. 2:14, 15).

The Shed Blood, rivers of it from the Levitical offerings, have now been replaced by “*the precious blood of Christ*”; His life’s blood poured out to pay our debt of sin. And we may be assured that the blood from the 22,000 oxen and the 120,000 sheep offered in sacrifice at the dedication of Solomon’s temple (II Chron. 7:5) did not even *begin* to match the value of the blood of Christ shed at Calvary.

“Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by [in virtue of] His own blood He entered in once into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us” (Heb. 9:12).

³ I.e., *still* serve.

The Camp, i.e., *Judaism*, too, has been replaced by a *Person*. Paul's closing appeal to these Hebrews (Heb. 13:13) was *not* to go forth from camp to camp, i.e., from one camp to another, as from Judaism to some denominational Church, but to,

“...go forth unto HIM, *without the camp*, bearing His reproach.”

Thanks be to God that in bearing His reproach we enjoy “*the fellowship of His sufferings*” (Phil. 3:10).

The Tabernacle, of course, was typical of, and has been replaced by, “*the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not man*” (Heb. 8:2). The former tabernacle (and the temples that followed), says Paul, were evidence that the way into “*the holiest of all*,” i.e., the true holiest place in heaven, was “*not yet made manifest*,” as it is now to us.

The Holiest place of the tabernacle, still closed to Jewish believers at that time (except representatively through the High Priest once each year) reminds us of our free entrance into “the holiest of all” in heaven itself. By grace we enter the very presence of God:

“...by the blood of Jesus ...a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb. 10:19, 20).

Think of it! The old dead way replaced by “*a new and living way*,” specially consecrated to our use. This is the great Pauline doctrine of our access to God (Rom. 5:2).

The Ark of the Covenant is now seen to be “*the coffin of the covenant*.” The word *ark* does not mean much to most people, but we all should know that the *first* occurrence of this Hebrew word, *ahrohn*, is found in Gen. 50:26, where it is rendered “coffin.”⁴ And the covenant it enclosed was *the Law* (Ex. 25:16, 21, 22), already typified as in a coffin, covered with a “mercy seat,” from which God (representatively) met with His people. Ah, little wonder Paul speaks of the Law (the Covenant) as “*that being dead wherein ye were held*” (Rom. 7:6).

The Mercy Seat is now replaced by a “*Throne of Grace*,” to which we are all freely invited, not only once a year, under the severest restrictions, but “*in time of need*”—*our need!* (Heb. 4:16).

The Baptisms (Gr., *baptisma*) or washings of Judaism were “imposed on them until the time of reformation” (Heb. 9:10). They were a *temporary* institution. Now, thank God, He says:

“...ye are washed...in the name of the Lord Jesus, and by the Spirit of our God” (I Cor. 6:11).

Mount Sinai cried, “Get away; get away; don't come near,” with the mount “altogether on a smoke” and an earthquake and thunderings and lightnings driving the people back. But grace says, “*Come; draw near*” (Heb. 4:16; 10:22): the blood has been shed, the price had been paid, the way is open.

⁴ This is not the same word used for either Noah's ark or the ark in which little Moses was laid.

Finally, the **Sabbath**, the day of rest. This too has been fulfilled in a *Person*. Since Christ, with His Father, rests in the finished work of His redemption, we find our rest *in Him*. This is surely the appropriation of our position in the heavenlies.

“For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His” (Heb. 4:10).

Pastor Edward Drew used to say: “Our Lord came down to earth to *do* something, and when He had finished what He had come to do, He went home and sat down. And now *we* can rest in *His* finished work.”

Truly, we have just begun. Think of all the other types referred to in this great book: Pharaoh, Egypt and its slavery, the wilderness, the manna, Canaan, the fall of Jericho, the harlot Rahab, the scarlet cord and still others. Little wonder Hebrews is looked upon as the Bible’s great “*Commentary on the Types*”—types explained by Paul, the revelator of “the mystery” and its riches of grace!

Chapter III
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
and
The Eternal Covenant

“Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus Christ, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant,

Make you perfect in every good work to do His will, working in you that which is wellpleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen”

—Heb. 13:20, 21

Years ago we heard our beloved brother, Russell Youngstrom (more than 40 years the superintendent of *Chicago Gospel Mission*) speak on the beautiful benediction found in Heb. 13:20, 21 above. Not only did his message inspire and bless us, but it showed us that our thinking should be somewhat revised where the “everlasting [eternal] covenant” is concerned.

We have said that “God is saving men now not according to *prophecy*, but according to the *mystery*, not in fulfillment of any *covenant*, but by *grace*.” This is true if “any covenant” is understood to refer to any covenant *made with man*, such as the *Adamic*, the *Noahic*, the *Abrahamic*, the *Mosaic*, and the *Davidic* covenants. God is not saving men in fulfillment of these or any other covenants *made with man*.

But God *is* saving men today in fulfillment of a covenant, a promise, which He made *to Himself* before the world began. This “eternal covenant” is elsewhere called His “eternal *purpose*,” since He made the promise *to Himself*.

Thus, technically, the truth would be more accurately stated if we said, as in our later writings, “God is not saving men now in fulfillment of any covenant save that solemn covenant which He made *with Himself* ‘before the world began’.”

Is it strange that God should actually make a promise to *Himself*? Certainly not! Have you never, beloved reader, made a promise to yourself? Of course you have, probably your whole *spirit, soul* and *body* entered into it. By *faith* in *God’s Word*, and with all the *determination* in your *soul*, you clenched your *fist* and said to yourself: “By God’s grace I *will*, or I *will not*, do this or that.”

Now the triune God too made a promise to *Himself* far back in eternity past. This promise concerned our eternal destiny, and was vested “in Christ.”

A TOUCHING BENEDICTION

Heb. 13:20, 21, above is truly a touching benediction, indicating that God is saving men today, not in fulfillment of any covenant made with man, but rather in fulfillment of a covenant, or promise, which He made to *Himself* before the ages began. This “everlasting⁵ covenant” is elsewhere called His “*eternal purpose*,” since He made the promise to *Himself*. This should bring to mind several other passages directly related to this subject.

In Tit. 1:2, 3 we read that “God, who *cannot lie, promised*” eternal life in Christ “*before the world began*,” but “*in due times*” manifested this great truth *through Paul*.

It is sad and almost unbelievable that in many cases even ministers of the Word overlook or ignore Paul’s Spirit-inspired assertion here that the proclamation of this message of grace and eternal life was, “in due times,” committed specifically *to him* to make known to others. Consider the *wording* of this passage:

“...eternal life, which God...promised before the world began;

“But hath in due times manifested His Word through preaching which is committed unto me, according to the commandment of God our Father.”

Again, in II Tim. 1:1, 9, we have light on this subject:

“Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in [i.e., vested in] Christ Jesus.

“Who hath saved us and called us with an holy calling, not according to our works, but according to His own purpose and grace which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began.”

Still another is Eph. 3:11, where, in language so typical of Paul, he speaks of,

“...the eternal purpose which He [God] purposed in Christ Jesus our Lord.”

Thus God, today, is saving men on the *basis* of an *eternal covenant*,⁶ a promise He made to *Himself* before the world began, with respect to “eternal life,” to be vested *in Christ*, who was to die for our sins. This is the *true* “covenant of grace”!

⁵ The *King James Version* renders this Greek word (*aionios*) “everlasting” 24 times, but “eternal” 42 times. The word appears several times in the passages used in this article. It refers not, essentially, to *how long* a thing will last (though it sometimes implies everlasting duration) but rather to *uninterrupted* duration, and often (as here) takes in the past, as well as the present and the future. Thus this covenant will not merely *last forever*, but concerns ages past, present and future, since it was made “before the world [or ages] began,” and will continue in operation through “the ages to come.”

⁶ True, several other covenants are also called *aionios* but to which of them could Heb. 13:20 refer? Which bases the resurrection of Christ from the dead on the blood that confirms it? Further, to which of them could the term, “the everlasting [or “eternal”] covenant” be applied?

It will be a great blessing to go further into the entire benediction found in Heb. 13:20,21, but here let us simply note how significant it is that this beautiful benediction is found, not in one of Paul's epistles to the Gentiles, but in the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. We believe that this is the crowning evidence as to the identity of the author, who writes here in His *Epistle to the Hebrews* about God's *eternal purpose*.

A PAULINE CONCLUSION TO A PAULINE EPISTLE

With all due respect to—and affection for—brethren who believe otherwise, it is our conviction that on the grounds of external evidence as well as internal evidence; on the grounds of historical, technical, doctrinal, textual and logical evidence, the *Epistle to the Hebrews* was authored by the Apostle Paul. Certainly we have been presented with no *evidence* for its authorship by any specific person *other* than Paul, and *Textus Receptus* and the *King James Version* ascribes it to Paul.

Through, sixty years of Bible study we have often considered the objections to the historical belief that Paul wrote the *Epistle to the Hebrews*, but have found none that seemed insurmountable. Certainly the different *style* of writing from that which Paul employs in his Gentile epistles should raise no problem. Would we not expect a Hebrew scholar, well grounded in the Hebrew Scriptures and writing to Hebrews, to use a different style and approach from that which he uses in writing to Gentiles? Thus the appearance of such terms as temple, priesthood, altar, sabbath, and the discussion of such subjects, should pose no more of a problem—in a book which presents the “better” things of Christianity—than the Apostle's recounting of Jewish *history* found in his sermon in the Pisidian synagogue, the *real thrust* of which was full justification from sins, not through the Law, but through faith in Christ alone.

And now, here at the close of the Apostle's letter we have a beautiful benediction about an “eternal covenant,” made by God with Himself and vouched to sinners through the shed blood of Christ, now “*brought again from the dead*,” and highly exalted. Thank God, on the basis of this covenant He can:

“Make [us] perfect in every good work to do His will, working in [us] that which is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen” (Heb. 13:20, 21).

To those who have hitherto questioned the Pauline authorship of *Hebrews* we say: We sincerely believe that the study of this book will yield infinitely greater light and inspiration to you as you begin to recognize that Paul was indeed the human author, writing to “stranded” Hebrew believers about the blessings of the dispensation of grace.

This great book, going back into the types, teaches what none of the Gentile epistle could adequately set forth: i.e., that during the centuries before the mystery was revealed God had this wonderful plan of grace in His heart and mind all the while.

The types were not understood at the time, nor even designated as being types at all, but *now* we can see that God's loving heart overflowed with a glorious secret He could not yet reveal! It is only *now, through Paul's writings*, that we can see what so filled His heart and that these "better things," prepared for "us" who live under the present dispensation of grace (Heb. 11:40), were offered to believing Hebrews in the epistle we have been discussing.

How could an epistle so filled with Pauline truth and the glories of the mystery, have been written by any other person than Paul himself?

Chapter IV
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
The Impress of Pauline Authorship

For years we were bombarded with presumptive evidence from the Hebraisms of *Hebrews* that Paul was not its author. Despite our responses some of our critics still cling to this view.

Now we have a modest request to make of *them*. We now ask *them* to prayerfully consider such passages in the epistle as seem, to this writer at least, to bear the impress of Pauline authorship; passages which *could not* have been written by any *but* Paul.

The closing benediction of *Hebrews* opens with the phrase, “*the God of peace.*” Paul employs this phrase at least five times in his epistles to the Gentiles, while it is not to be found anywhere in the epistles written by others. Other examples are as follows:

Heb. 2:8, 9: “...but now we see not yet all things put under him.

“But we see Jesus, who was made a little [while] lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, should *taste death for every man.*”⁷

Who but Paul ever revealed our Lord as “crowned” in heaven “with glory and honor,” *as the taster of death for every man?* (Cf. I Tim. 2:3-7)

Heb. 2:14: “...that through death He might *destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil.*”

Here compare Col. 2:15, and note the words “*spoiled*” and “*triumphing,*” so typical of Paul’s teaching as to the cross.

What Bible writer makes as much of Christ’s *victory* at Calvary as does the Apostle Paul?

Heb. 3:1: “...partakers of the heavenly calling....”

This phraseology is distinctively Pauline, for it is in his epistles *alone* that we learn of the “one body,” with its heavenly calling and blessings (See Eph. 1:3; 2:6; Col. 3:1-3). Furthermore, Israel’s calling, both past and future, is *earthly*, not heavenly in sphere. Her destiny is associated with the *promised land* and the coming of Messiah to reign in that land at Jerusalem, on the throne of David.

To keep arguing that “the heavenly calling” here is *not* that concerning which Paul has so much to say, is like trying to fill a sieve by continually pouring in more and more water.

⁷ This rendering might make it appear that our Lord died twice for sin: once on earth and once in heaven. The *Received Text*, however, reveals that “on account of the suffering of death” He was “crowned with glory and honor,” so that He might now be known as the One “who tasted death for every man.” This, evidently, is the correct sense of the passage, for our Lord clearly did not die in heaven.

Heb. 4:10, 11: “For he that is entered into His rest, he also hath ceased from his own works, as God did from His.

“Let us labor, therefore, to enter into the rest....”

Here, as in Paul’s Gentile epistles, the reader would learn of his heavenly position and of God’s desire that he should *occupy* this position *by faith*. When the work of redemption was accomplished the Father and the Son sat down in *the rest of a finished work*, and believers are to earnestly seek to *enter into* this rest *by faith*, having *already been given* this position in Christ at God’s right hand. This is closely associated with Heb. 3:1, and also distinctively Pauline.

It is true that Peter’s epistles refer to our Lord’s finished work, but not to our entering into His rest or *experientially occupying* our position in Christ.

Heb. 4:16: “Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.”

Access into the presence of God is one of the great themes of the Pauline epistles.

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ,

“By whom also we have *access*....” (Rom. 5:1, 2).

“For through Him [Christ] we both [Jews and Gentiles] have *access* by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

And mark well, ours is not the “mercy seat” of Judaism, but the “*throne of grace*.” It is in Paul’s epistles alone that we learn that grace has been enthroned; “*that grace might reign*” (See Rom. 5:20, 21, *et al*).

Heb. 5:12-14: “For when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat [solid food].

For every one that useth milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness; for he is a babe,

But strong meat [solid food] belongeth to them that are of full age....”

This too is *distinctively Pauline*. Peter teaches his followers to grow by the use of “sincere,” or pure milk, but Paul alone draws the analogy between milk and solid food for babes and grown-ups. (See I Cor. 3:1, 2).

Heb. 6:1: “...let us go on unto perfection....”

Who but Paul has so much to say about leaving infancy and infant things and going on to perfection (maturity)? (Cf. Eph. 4:14, 15).

Heb. 6:20: “Whither the forerunner is for us entered, even Jesus, made an high priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Our high priest does not approach God in our stead. Rather from the above verse and Heb. 10:19, the apostle’s Hebrew readers would learn that through His shed blood He became our “Forerunner,” leading us into the Holiest, the very presence of God Himself. Paul alone, of all Scripture writers, teaches us this precious truth. (Cf. again Rom. 5:2 and Eph. 2:18).

Heb. 8:13: “In that he saith, A new covenant, He hath made the first old. Now that which decayeth and waxeth old is ready to vanish away.”

What could be more Pauline than this passage, for it is Paul alone who teaches consistently that the Law has been “blotted out, taken out of the way, and nailed to the cross” (Col. 2:14); that it has been “abolished” (Eph. 2:15) and is “dead” (Rom. 7:6). Here in Heb. 8:13 the Apostle points out to his Hebrew readers that the very promise of a “new covenant” implied the passing away of the old. Furthermore, it is Paul and *no one else*, who calls himself and his co-workers “able ministers of the New Testament [New Covenant]...,” showing how by grace we receive all the spiritual blessings promised to Israel of the future. What they will receive by promise we now receive by grace.

Heb. 10:12-14: “But this man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down on the right hand of God....

“For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified.”

Note here the “once for all” aspect of the work of Christ at Calvary, emphasized so consistently in Paul’s epistles, and in his alone.

Heb. 11:39, 40: “And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise.

“God having provided some better thing for us, that they without us should not be made perfect.”

Here compare Paul’s statements in Rom. 3:21 and 26, and note the phrase “now...manifested” and “to declare, I say, *at this time.*” How this harmonizes with Heb. 11:39, 40!

We now know that “the *remission* of sins that are past” (Ver. 25), or that were committed “under the first covenant” (Heb. 9:15) was actually, or essentially, *by faith*, and that the sacrifices brought for sins at that time were *expressions* of that faith. Thank God, we may now rejoice in these “better things” not yet revealed in the Old Testament times.

Heb. 10:19-22: “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,

“...a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us through the veil, that is to say, His flesh....”

Let us draw near with a true heart, in full assurances of faith....”

The veil that barred entrance into “*the holiest of all*”⁸ has now been torn away so that the entrance into the Holiest in heaven now stands open to the believer. What was the “veil” that was thus torn asunder? The passage itself answers: “*His flesh.*” Surely this all belongs to the revelation committed to Paul. (Here cf. Rom. 4:25-5:2; and Eph. 2:14-18).

Heb. 12:22: “...the heavenly Jerusalem....”

In Gal. 4:26 Paul calls this “Jerusalem *which is above*” “THE MOTHER OF US ALL” (i.e., of Jewish and Gentile believers). Or, are there *two* heavenly Jerusalems?!

Heb. 13:13: “Let us go forth therefore unto Him [Christ] without the camp [Judaism], bearing His reproach.”

It should be carefully observed that the twelve apostles had been very careful *not* to start another sect separate from Judaism. They had faithfully remained *within* the camp, for God had not yet cast Israel aside (See Acts 3:25, 26). But now, the nation having rejected their Messiah with brutal finality, the Apostle Paul urges his Jewish readers to follow Him “without,” or outside, “the camp.” Did any of the other apostles issue such an appeal?

Heb. 13:18: “...we trust we have a good conscience....”

This expression is almost exclusively Pauline. He employs it no less than 28 times—and often in connection with the proclamation of *his special message*. (See II Cor. 1:12; 4:2; I Tim. 1:19; 3:9).

Heb. 13:20: “...brought again from the dead....”

This phraseology, peculiarly Pauline, we find also in I Thes. 4:14, where we read that *as* “Jesus died and *rose again...even so* them also which sleep in Jesus will God *bring with Him,*” (i.e., from the dead). Where else do we find such phraseology?

⁸ In heaven.

Heb. 13:21: “The blood of the everlasting [eternal] covenant....”

We are back where we started from. Here the reader should take the time to carefully consider Tit. 1:2, 3; II Tim. 1:1, 9 and Eph. 3:11. If the “eternal covenant” of *Hebrews* is not that spoken of in these verses, what is it, and with whom was it made? Clearly it is that covenant, or promise, that God made with and to *Himself* “before the world began”: His “eternal purpose,” dealt with at length in Chapter III.

As we have said, the one book of the Bible we have enjoyed studying and teaching more than any other has been the *Epistle to the Hebrews*. We do not question that this is because we have recognized its Pauline authorship. Otherwise it *could not* have been so clear and meaningful.

The types were not understood at the time, nor even *designated* as being types at all, but *now*, through the Pauline revelation and writings we can see what so filled the heart of our loving Father in Old Testament times. And thus the “better things” prepared for “us” who live under the present dispensation of grace (Heb. 11:40), were offered to believing Hebrews in the epistle we have been considering.

CHAPTER V
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
and
Our Great High Priest

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood...what further need was there that another priest should rise...? (Heb. 7:11).

Some sincere believers hold that the members of the Body of Christ, the Church of today, have no High Priest, and some indeed conclude that therefore we have no “throne of grace.” This is a reaction to legalism on the one hand and Romanism on the other. Their objection to the doctrine of the present priesthood of Christ has, in this writer’s experience, been based generally upon five propositions. It is our purpose in this chapter to put these propositions to the Berean test.

Proposition No. 1: “Priesthood in the Bible pertains to Israel.”

Our reply: *But not this priesthood.*

Repeatedly, in Paul’s Epistle to the Hebrews, he insists that the Lord Jesus Christ is an High Priest forever “*after the order of Melchisedec*” (Heb. 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:11, 21; cf. Psa. 110:4).

Melchisedec first appears in the record of Scripture in Genesis 14, long before there was an Israel. Indeed, he appeared, *not* to Abraham (Abram’s *covenant* name), but to *Abram*, “while yet in *uncircumcision*,” and while for very special reasons we read nothing of Melchisedec’s parents or genealogy, or of the dates of his birth or death, it is evident beyond the shadow of a doubt that his priesthood *could not* have pertained in any way to Israel, for it antedated Israel’s priesthood by hundreds of years.

Just as Paul, in writing to Gentiles, so often goes back to Abraham, the father of believers, to illustrate justification by faith alone, so in writing to these Hebrews, now “partakers of the heavenly calling,” he goes back to Melchisedec, to show them that they now have a “better” High Priest in Christ, their ascended Lord.

Proposition No. 2: “Priesthood pertains to the Law.”

Again we reply: *But not this priesthood.* Heb. 7:11, 12 clearly states:

“If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?

“For THE PRIESTHOOD BEING CHANGED, there is made of necessity A CHANGE ALSO OF THE LAW.”

This is clear enough. If the sacrifices, oblations and baptisms of the Levitical priesthood could bring perfection (cf. Heb. 10:1-3), what need was there for *another* priest, not from among the sons of Aaron the Levite, but from another quarter altogether? And since God *did* terminate the Levitical priesthood, is it not evident that He also terminated the Old Covenant, the Law? It is important here to observe that the word “change,” in Heb. 7:12, does not indicate some slight alteration *in* the Law, but rather a change *from* law to grace. See the context:

Vers. 15, 16: “And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

“Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life.”

Vers. 18, 19: “For there is verily A DISANNULLING OF THE COMMANDMENT GOING BEFORE for the weakness and unprofitableness thereof (Cf. Rom. 8:3).

“FOR THE LAW MADE NOTHING PERFECT, but the bringing in of a better hope did; by the which we draw nigh unto God.”

Proposition No. 3: “Priesthood implies estrangement.”

Our reply again: *But not this priesthood.*

It is true indeed that the Levitical priesthood implied estrangement from God, as does any human priesthood. This the apostle himself emphatically declares in Heb. 9:7, 8:

“But into the second⁹ went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

“The Holy Ghost this signifying, that THE WAY INTO THE HOLIEST OF ALL¹⁰ WAS NOT YET MADE MANIFEST, while the first tabernacle was yet standing.”

The people of Israel could not simply walk into “the holy of holies” and into the presence of God. Only a priest could do this—and not just any priest; only the high priest. And *he* could not come whenever he wished; only one day a year—and not a day of *his* choice, but a prescribed day, *the day of Atonement*. Nor could he just walk in boldly. He must appear before God as a sinner, “not without blood,” shed for himself and the people. All this “that he die not” (Lev. 16). This indeed spoke of estrangement from God because of sin.

But none of this is applicable to our Lord’s present priesthood. Rather than implying estrangement from God, Christ’s priesthood *brings us to God, into His very presence.*

⁹ The second part of the tabernacle proper, the holiest place of all.

¹⁰ I.e., the true Holiest place; the presence of God in heaven.

“Which hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that WITH IN THE VEIL;

“WHITHER THE FORERUNNER IS FOR US ENTERED, even Jesus, made an High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec” (Heb. 6:19, 20).

Here our Lord is presented as the believer’s “Forerunner,” *leading him* “within the veil;” into God’s presence! This the Old Testament high priest could never do.

“But Christ, being come an High Priest of good things to come...by His own blood...entered in once into the Holy Place, HAVING OBTAINED ETERNAL REDEMPTION FOR US” (Heb. 9:11, 12).

The finished, all-sufficient work of Christ at Calvary is ever the basis upon which believers may now enter into the holy presence of God.

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the Holiest by the blood of Jesus,

“...a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say His flesh....

“Let us draw near, with a true heart in full assurance of faith...” (Heb. 10:19-22).

We have purposely omitted the second “By,” with which Verse 20 commences, for it does not appear in *Textus Receptus*, and is evidently not in the original. Verses 19, 20 do not contain *two* elements as bases for entering into God’s presence, but one. “The blood of Jesus” by which we “draw near.” This our Roman Catholic friends do not see, even though their own *Confraternity Edition* of the New Testament, and even the old Rheims-Douay Bible, render the passage correctly, thus condemning Rome’s own teachings.

The old dead way, with all its ceremonies, failed to gain for man an entrance into God’s presence, but the “new and living way” succeeded! How blessed to contemplate that this “way” has been “*consecrated*” to our use!

Those who deny the present priesthood of Christ for the members of His Body, frequently argue: “Why would we need a priest to bring us into God’s presence? In Christ we are already there, seated in the heavenlies at God’s right hand.”

This is true—in *Christ*. But the Scriptures are always careful to distinguish between our *position* and our *condition*, our *standing* and our *state*. We too rejoice in our position before God *in Christ*, “accepted in the Beloved One,” and this is most eternally important to us. But is it not equally true that *experientially* we must *appropriate* the position again and again by faith? Let us never forget that the *same epistle* that has so much to say about our *position* at God’s right hand *in Christ*, also speaks of our *access* to God *through Christ*!

“For THROUGH HIM we both have ACCESS by one Spirit unto the Father” (Eph. 2:18).

Thus it is that the apostle exhorts “partakers of the heavenly calling”:

“Let us therefore come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:16).

Remember too that under our Lord’s priesthood we have, not a “*mercy seat*,” but a “THRONE of GRACE,” and that we do not merely find “mercy,” but also “*grace to help*.” And *when* may we appear before the Throne of Grace? Not merely once each year, in a carefully prescribed manner, but freely, “*in time of need*”! God is always ready to receive us, the veil having been torn away by Christ’s death for sin, and a “new and living way” having been “consecrated” to our use as a special invitation to “come boldly.” Let us not fail to avail ourselves continually of this blood-bought privilege.

Proposition No. 4: “Priesthood implies imperfection.”

Once more we reply: *But not this priesthood.*

We have already seen from Heb. 7:11 that the *Levitical* priesthood of Mosaic Law failed utterly to bring perfection, as would any human priesthood, but the Law has now given way to grace and the Levitical priests have been superseded by Christ,¹¹ “made an High Priest forever after the order of Melchisedec.”

Thus while “the law made nothing perfect...*the bringing in of a better hope did*, by the which we draw nigh unto God” (Heb. 7:19). Our High Priest does not continue endlessly offering sacrifices for us, much less is He Himself offered in a “perpetual sacrifice” for our sins.¹²

Rather, He “entered in *once* into the holy place [in heaven], *HAVING OBTAINED eternal redemption for us*” (Heb. 9:12). Nowhere is this emphasized more strongly than in Heb. 10:1-4:

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

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

“But in those sacrifices thee is a *remembrance* again made of sins every year.

“For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins.”

¹¹ Not by another failing human priesthood.

¹² As taught by the Church of Rome.

Mark well that so utterly *impossible* was it for the ceremonial sacrifices of the Old Testament to “take away sins,” that they actually included a yearly “*remembrance* of sins.” This, of course, took place on the great annual *Day of Atonement*, when the children of Israel were instructed to “afflict their souls” for the sins committed during the past year, while the high priest went into the holiest with the blood of sacrifice to seek mercy from the Lord. “*Ye shall afflict your souls,*” was the command, “*and do not work at all*” (Lev. 16:29) and whoever took this command lightly was to be “cut off” from the congregation of God’s people. Ah, but now the Apostle Paul, by divine inspiration, draws the contrast between the ministry of Israel’s priests and that of our great High Priest:

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

“And every priest standeth¹³ daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:

“But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins, forever, sat down on the right hand of God....

“For by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are sanctified” (Heb. 10:10-14).

Priesthood implies imperfection? *Not this priesthood!* Our Lord’s priesthood *perfects* believing sinners forever, fully justifying them before the bar of God, so that we can exult:

“Who shall lay anything to the charge of God’s elect? It is God that justifieth.

“Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died, yea rather that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for us” (Rom. 8:33, 34).

Proposition No. 5: “The Priesthood Was a Temporary Institution.

Our reply, to the end, remains the same: *But not this priesthood!*

“For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda, of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

“And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchisedec there ariseth another priest,

Who is made, NOT AFTER THE LAW OF A CARNAL COMMANDMENT, BUT AFTER THE POWER OF AN ENDLESS LIFE” (Heb. 7:14-16).

¹³ There was no seat of any kind in the tabernacle, except God’s own “mercy seat.” The work of Israel’s priest was never done (Cf. Heb. 1:3, and Verse 12 above.)

“(For those priests were made without an oath; but this with an oath, by Him that said unto Him, THE LORD SWARE AND WILL NOT REPENT; THOU ART A PRIEST FOREVER AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHISEDEC:)

“And they truly were many priests, because they were not suffered to continue by reason of death;

“But this man, BECAUSE HE CONTINUETH EVER, HATH AN UNCHANGEABLE PRIESTHOOD.

“WHEREFORE HE IS ABLE ALSO TO SAVE THEM TO THE UTTERMOST THAT COME UNTO GOD BY HIM, SEEING HE EVER LIVETH TO MAKE INTERCESSION FOR THEM” (Heb. 7:21-25).

How blessed to know that ours is not a *human* priest, merely appearing before God in our behalf, a priest fraught with imperfections and unable to bring us into God’s presence, but a *divine* Priest, the eternal Son, now appearing in the presence of God “for us,” and bidding *us* to “come boldly” before the Throne of Grace! Not that anyone needs to *plead* with a just and holy God in behalf of those for whom Christ died. Our Lord’s very presence at God’s right hand is all the plea that is needed.

TO SUM IT ALL UP

“Now of the things which we have spoken, this is the sum:” (Heb. 8:1).

<u>The Levitical Priest</u>	<u>Our Great High Priest</u>
Ventured into the holiest <i>on earth</i> .	Boldly entered the Holiest <i>in heaven</i> .
Entered the holiest only <i>once each year</i> , in a prescribed manner, “ <i>not without blood.</i> ”	Entered into the Holiest, “ <i>once for all,</i> ” “ <i>having obtained eternal redemption for us.</i> ”
Entered the holiest on earth <i>in behalf of</i> the children of Israel under the Law.	Entered the Holiest in heaven as <i>the “Forerunner”</i> of “partakers of the heavenly calling.”
Offered sacrifices “ <i>day by day, continually.</i> ”	Offered <i>one all-sufficient sacrifice.</i>
Offered “ <i>bulls and goats.</i> ”	Offered <i>Himself.</i>
“ <i>Stood daily,</i> ” their sacrificial work never finished.	“When he had by Himself purged our sins, He <i>sat down.</i> ”
Their sacrifices “ <i>could never make the comers thereunto perfect.</i> ”	His sacrifice has “ <i>perfected forever</i> ” those who are sanctified.
They appeared <i>before</i> the mercy seat.	We appear at the <i>throne of grace.</i>

CHAPTER VI
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
And Eternal Security

Hebrews 6:1-9 has long been the chief battleground on which Arminians and Calvinists have fought over the subject of Eternal Security. The passage reads as follows in our English translation:

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

“Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment.

“And this will we do, if God permit.

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

“And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

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

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

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

“But beloved, we are persuaded better things of you, and things that accompany salvation, though we thus speak.”

—Heb. 6:1-9

**DOES THIS PASSAGE TEACH
THAT THE SAVED MAY BE LOST AGAIN?**

Pastor Charles F. Baker’s answer to this question is challenging. He says: “If this passage proves the possibility of losing salvation, it also proves the impossibility of ever regaining it” (*A Dispensational Theology*, P. 456). This cannot be gainsaid, for the passage itself states: “*It is impossible...if they shall fall away to renew them again unto repentance....*” (Vers. 4, 6).

But let us go back to the beginning. The “Therefore” of Ver. 1 takes us back to the preceding verses, which teach us that these Hebrew believers had known Christ for a long time. By now they should have been teachers of the Word, yet they themselves needed to be taught again what are the “first principles of the oracles of God” (5:12). Spiritually they were “babes,” who could not digest the solid food of the Word, but had need of milk (5:12, 13). The passage itself interrupts this to mean, in simple words, that they were, or had become, “*unskillful in the Word of righteousness*” (5:13).

Worst of all, this had come about because they were “dull [slothful] of hearing”; not that they could not hear well but that they did not *care* enough to “*grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ,*” by studying the writings of Paul, as Peter had exhorted them to do in II Pet. 3:15-18. *This* was why Paul could not now continue teaching them the wonderful truths about Christ as “an high priest after the order of Melchisedec” (5:10, 11). They were “*dull of hearing,*” indifferent to the wonderful glories that lay before them.

“*Therefore*” these Hebrews sorely needed to learn the lesson so forcefully taught in the first nine verses of Hebrews 6.

A DISPENSATIONAL KEY

Two facts of basic importance to this subject should be borne in mind as we study the first nine verses of Hebrews 6. (1.) This epistle was written by *the Apostle Paul*, and (2.) it was addressed *to Hebrews*. This immediately introduces *two* dispensational factors into the subject: *Paul writing to Hebrews!* A recognition of these two factors is the key to this passage and to an understanding of the *Epistle to the Hebrews* as a whole. In fact the great “apostle of the Gentiles” here uses 14 phrases, *all* of which, in their context, naturally apply to Israel, and *most* of which *can only* apply to Israel. They are:

No. 1. “leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ,”

No. 2. “let us go on unto perfection [maturity].”

No. 3. “repentance from dead works,”

No. 4. “faith toward God,”

No. 5. “the doctrine of baptisms,”

No. 6. “laying on of hands,”

No. 7. “resurrection of the dead,”

No. 8. “eternal judgment,”

No. 9. “once enlightened”

No. 10. “taste of the heavenly gift,”

No. 11. “partakers of the Holy Ghost,”

No. 12. “tasted of the good Word of God,”

No. 13. “the powers of the world [or age] to come,”

No. 14. “they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh.”

Let us now examine each of these phrases in particular.

No. 1. At Heb. 6:1 the *Authorized Version* is faulty and, indeed, misleading as it stands. Surely God has never instructed anyone to “leave the *principles of the doctrine of Christ.*” If the Greek word, *arche*, had been rendered “rudiments,” or “*elementary principles,*” or even “*first principles,*” as in 5:12, there might have been little reason for objecting, but as it stands—read it again—it is an exhortation to *leave the principles of the doctrine of Christ.* This we may be sure Paul would never do. Actually he refers here to these Hebrew believers being taken up with the *elementary* teachings about Christ, Christ “after the flesh,” and he says in II Cor. 5:16, that we should no longer know Him thus for He is now glorified “far above all.” Thus Phrase No. 1, when correctly translated fits beautifully in an epistle to Hebrews. Indeed, it *could only* apply to Hebrews, for Gentiles never knew Christ “after the flesh” (Matt. 10:5, 6; 15:24; Rom. 15:8, 16).

Further, it must not be overlooked that the *Received Text* renders Ver. 1: “*Having left*” the “beginning,” etc., rather than “Leaving.” And, indeed, it does seem that the apostle is not dealing here with two stages of Christianity, backward and advanced, but is rather urging the Hebrew believers to make a clean and final break from Judaism, to rejoice with him in “*the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery*” (Rom. 16:25).

They *had left* Judaism years before, taking their stand with the “little flock” of Christ’s disciples. But a fresh and final departure was needed, for their occupation with the earthly Christ had inevitably brought them back into some aspects of Judaism: circumcision, the sabbath, the Jewish feast days and other aspects of “the Jews’ religion,” faithfully observed by Christ. They had taken a stand with Christ *in* “the camp” of Judaism; now the apostle urged them to take a further stand:

“Let us go forth therefore unto Him without the camp, bearing His reproach” (Heb. 13:13).

Only in thus taking a stand *outside* of Judaism and bearing the reproach of the *rejected* Christ could they achieve spiritual maturity.

Paul had written them about all this (II Pet. 3:15-18), but Heb. 5:11-14 clearly indicates that these Hebrew believers had *gone backward*.¹⁴ Thus he now exhorts them to leave, finally and fully, the religion of Judaism with its shadows, for *Christianity*, with its substance and reality.

No. 2. The English phrase, “*Let us go on unto perfection,*” in its context, has led some to think that sinless perfection is a requisite to eternal life, but this is a most disappointing error, for who has ever attained to sinless perfection?

I John 1:10 declares that:

“If we say that we have not sinned we make Him [God] a liar, and His Word is not in us.”

The solution is that the word “perfection” here is simply old English for *maturity*. This same root, *telios*, is rendered “*full age*” in 5:14.

Surely these Hebrew believers could not grow to spiritual maturity while practicing “*the gospel of the kingdom,*” with its *Beatitudes*, its *Sermon on the Mount*, its “*all things common,*” etc. Paul, by divine inspiration, declared more than 1900 years ago that believers under grace are “established” by “*my gospel, and the preaching of Jesus Christ according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret since the world began, but is now made manifest....*” (Rom. 16:25, 26), and Peter confirmed this in the closing words of his second epistle (See II Pet. 3:15-18). Yet, few are the pastors and evangelists who proclaim their “gospels” from the Pauline epistles.

Note that in Ver. 1 the apostle refers to “the doctrine of *Christ,*” not “Jesus Christ,” or “Christ Jesus,” or “the Lord Jesus Christ,” combinations so often found in Scripture, but “*Christ*”: *Messiah*, and our Lord was *Israel’s* Messiah, her Savior-King. Thus to Israel—Israel alone—the twelve proclaimed “the gospel of the kingdom.” (See Luke 9:1, 2; Acts 2:5, 14, 22, 36).¹⁵ But the King, rejected on earth, is now, “exalted far above all” as *the dispenser of grace to all mankind* (Acts 15:7-11; Rom. 3:21, 22; Rom. 11:32, 33). This and much more was to be recognized by the Hebrews before they could rightly be considered mature, but it certainly has nothing whatever to do with “sinless perfection.” It has rather to do with the advance of God’s people with His revealed program from Peter and “the gospel of the kingdom” to Paul and “the gospel of the grace of God” (Acts 20:24).

No. 3. “repentance from *dead* works”: Note, not *evil* works, but *dead* works. He refers to the “good works” and “religious works” of Judaism which could in no wise save.

Paul had taught them the truth of Tit. 3:5:

“Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, by the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Ghost.”

¹⁴ Cf. Gal. 4:8-10. It was their occupation with Christ after the flesh that had drawn them, at least partly, back into Judaism.

¹⁵ “This gospel of the kingdom” will not be proclaimed to the Gentiles until Matt. 24:14 is fulfilled.

They should not have to lay this foundation truth of Christianity again. They should never have doubted that salvation is by grace alone, without works, religious or otherwise.

No. 4. “*faith toward God.*” From this point on it seems that these Hebrew believers had actually thought of laying foundations for Judaistic concepts, so it became even more important for them to heed Paul’s words, “*not laying again.*” The fact was that *no* foundation needed to be laid. Moses had laid the foundation for Judaism and dispensation of the Law, but these had been “*abolished,*” (Eph. 2:15), “*blotted out...taken out of the way,*” and “*nailed to the cross*” (Col. 2:14), making way for Paul, by revelation, to lay the foundation for “the dispensation of the grace of God.” In I Cor. 3:10, 11 he says:

“According to the grace of God which is given unto me as a wise masterbuilder, I have laid the foundation, and another buildeth thereon. But let every man take heed how he buildeth thereupon.

“For other foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ.”

Thus the foundations had been laid for both Law and Grace, the dispensation of Grace superseding that of the Law, the one founded on Christ as King on earth, the other on Christ now exalted far above all and the dispenser of grace to a doomed world (Rom. 5:20, 21; II Cor. 5:16-19).

The Jewish concept of “faith toward God” has now given way to that of faith *in* the Lord Jesus Christ, God the Son. This foundation was laid by Paul in his preaching and in his writings. It did not affect the Jew alone, but Jew and Gentile alike. And those saved by grace, through faith, can never be lost again for “upon believing” they are “*sealed* with that Holy Spirit of promise” (Eph. 1:13; cf. 4:30).

No. 5. “*the doctrine of baptisms.*” In the Old Testament, washings, whether of people or things, are called “baptisms.” In Mark 7:1-5, where the subject is unquestionably that of washing, two Greek synonyms are used alternately five times: *nipto*, to rinse, and *baptismos*, to wash. This passage alone shows how erroneous it is to associate baptism with *burial*. Neither then, nor now have men ever buried their dead in *water*, except in burials at sea, which were unavoidable.

From our Lord’s earthly ministry through Pentecost, repentance and baptism were the very keys to the kingdom (Mark 1:4; Acts 2:38), but these Hebrews were now to go from “the doctrine of baptisms” to the “one baptism” of Eph. 4:5. By this “*one baptism*” the “*one Spirit*” baptizes believers into “*one body.*” (See I Cor. 12:13, cf. Eph. 4:5).

How can we possibly reconcile “the doctrine of baptisms” with the “one baptism” of Eph. 4:5, especially when Heb. 9:10 informs us that these “divers baptisms”¹⁶ were “*imposed on them until the time of reformation.*”

¹⁶ Gr., baptismois.

No. 6. “*laying on of hands,*” From Lev. 16:21 through the Pentecostal era, the laying on of hands was practiced in Judaism on a great variety of occasions: blessing imparted, prayers uttered, sacrifices offered, generally speaking of *identification*, e.g., the sinner laying his hands on the head of the beast, transferring his sins, as it were, to the beast, who then would be slain for them to make an atonement for the sinner’s soul. There was also the high priest laying his hands on a priest being inducted into office.

But the oneness between believers today is *in Christ*. We are one *in Christ* (Rom. 12:5), and this makes for the closest identification, the most blessed unity the soul could wish for. Indeed, we are exhorted to “*endeavor*” to “*keep* the unity of the Spirit,”

“Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:12, 13).

This these Hebrews were now to aspire to rather than returning to the formalism of “the Jews’ religion.”

No. 7. “*Resurrection of the dead.*” Here belief in the resurrection is specifically named as one of the distinctive features of Judaism (See also Dan. 12:2, 3; John 11:24). Indeed, Paul appealed to the *Hebrew Pharisees* when he cried out in the Sanhedrin:

“Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee: of the hope and resurrection of the dead I am called in question” (Acts 23:6).

The truth of the resurrection had long been one of the foundations of Judaistic belief. Why, then, should this foundation be “*laid again*”? If this were done would not the result be little more than an article in a creed, no more authoritative than a hundred other such articles in religious creeds?

No. 8. “*eternal judgment,*” is here stated to be one of the “*first principles,*” or elementary teachings of “*the doctrine of Christ.*” Why should this foundation be “*laid again*”? In Luke’s record of Paul’s appearance in Felix’ court, we find Paul preaching on it with great power.

“[Felix] sent for Paul and heard him concerning his faith in Christ.

“And as he reasoned of righteousness, temperance, and judgment to come, Felix trembled...” (Acts 24:25).

And later, when he stood before Agrippa (with Festus present), and Festus ridiculed him as “*mad,*” Paul’s thoughtful response proved not only a sober reply to Festus, but an unanswerable challenge to Agrippa, until Agrippa, evidently deeply stirred, finally acknowledged to Paul: “*Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian*” (Acts 26:28). Paul’s response to this was nothing less than thrilling. To Agrippa, and to all present in this well-packed courtroom, the apostle said:

“...I would to God, that not only thou, but also all that hear me this day, were both almost and altogether such as I am, except these bonds” (Acts 26:29).

With the doctrine of “eternal judgement”¹⁷ already so strong a foundation, both in Judaism *and* in Christianity, why should they wish to lay it *again*? Should they not rather consider it a well-proven fact and go on to Christian maturity?

Here we must digress briefly to explain Paul’s statement, “*And this will we do, if God permit*” (Ver. 3).

Paul had urged these Hebrews to make a clean break with Judaism, not re-laying foundations already laid, but to “*go on unto maturity.*” What does he mean now by saying, “This will we do,¹⁸ if God permit”? Was he placing himself in a category with them? Had *he* been occupied with the elementary things? Had *he* not made a clean break with Judaism? Was *he* occupied with Christ after the flesh? In no wise. Barnes states it beautifully: “This will we do, by my teaching and your learning!” This is undoubtedly the sense of the passage.

No. 9. “*once enlightened.*” Here the apostle begins dealing with those things which would make it *impossible* for these Hebrews, or any of them, to be renewed again to “repentance.”¹⁹

Repentance, be it noted, is a change of mind, or attitude, and man being what he is, finds it increasingly difficult to change from one course to another the longer he remains in the former.

Of the factors to be taken into account in this case was the fact that they *had been* “*enlightened.*” First they had been enlightened when, as unregenerate Hebrews, they had come to see the truths of “the gospel of the kingdom.” This must have been a thrilling experience, for nothing is so precious to the sincere soul as one ray of light from God.

But they had become further enlightened as they came to see the validity of the truths revealed by the glorified Lord to Paul, with their setting aside of the Law with its rituals and demands.

Ah, but the longer they delayed their growth in grace, while looking back with envying eyes at Judaistic customs and practices, the more difficult it would become to make a clean break, “*going forth to Christ, without the camp*” and “*bearing His reproach*” (Heb. 13:13). Indeed, if they hesitated too long, this would become “*impossible.*”

No. 10. “*taste of the heavenly gift*”: This is not another element in the list of blessings which, if repudiated, will cause a believer to be lost again.

Rom. 8:35-39 states clearly that neither any person nor any thing shall *ever* separate the believer from “the love of Christ,” and *Heb. 6 does not contradict this.*

¹⁷ Not that God will judge eternally, but that the consequences will be eternal.

¹⁸ “do” in the sense of accomplishing.

¹⁹ Note: “repentance,” not “salvation,” so that Charles F. Baker’s statement, quoted above, remains completely valid.

The “heavenly gift,” here, refers specifically to the Holy Spirit, for those who experienced it were those Hebrews who had “*tasted...the powers of the world [age] to come*” (Ver. 5).

The word “gift” here is the Greek *doreas*, used always of a spiritual or supernatural gift and this same word is used in Acts 2:38, where we find Peter saying to the “men of Israel”:

“Repent and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift [Gr., *dorean*] of the Holy Spirit.”

It is evident that all of those whom the apostle addresses did not “receive” the Holy Spirit,²⁰ but they *did* all “*taste* of the heavenly gift.” There were nominal believers among them just as there are nominal believers among us. But *all* had *tasted* of the heavenly gift, and the longer they remained enamored of Judaism and its ceremonies the more difficult it would become to make a clean break from Judaism and a firm, open stand for *Christ*, “*without the camp, bearing His reproach.*”

One thing is certain: the writer of Hebrews sought to lead his readers from the “*primary things of the doctrine of Christ*,” urging them to “go on unto perfection [maturity].” Was he urging them to embrace *true* Judaism or to be true “little flockers”? In no wise! Rather he urges them to “go forth therefore unto *Him* [Jesus Christ] *without the camp, bearing His reproach*,” i.e., from Judaism to the *Christ*-ianity that he [Paul] proclaimed (Rom. 16:25, 26).

No. 11. “*Partakers of the Holy Ghost*” It seems strange at first to find that these Hebrews were “*partakers* of the Holy Ghost,” after having just read that they had merely “*tasted* of the heavenly gift.”

But the Greek *metochos*, rendered “partakers” here, is variously rendered “partners,” “fellows,” and “partakers” throughout the New Testament. The sense is basically “*to have part with*,” and it may well be said that those who had “tasted of the heavenly gift” also *had part with* Him in the affairs of the Pentecostal era.

No. 12. “*tasted of the good Word of God.*” When the *Ten Commandments* were first given, “*God spake all these words*” (Ex. 20:1). Later Moses reminded the people of this, saying:

“For ask now of the days that are past, which were before thee, since the day that God created man upon the earth, and ask from the one side of heaven unto the other, whether there hath been any such thing as this great thing is, or hath been heard like it?

“Did ever people hear the voice of God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as thou hast heard, and live?” (Deut. 4:32, 33).

²⁰ All did not have the faith of Jeremiah, who said: “Thy words were found and I did *eat* them; and Thy Word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of my heart...” (Jer. 15:16).

It was indeed a great honor and a great privilege that God conferred upon the people of Israel as He spoke to them by word of mouth amid the lightnings and thunders of Sinai. In Israel's case alone, "*God spake all these words*" audibly. Never before had He undertaken to address a nation personally.

Later He spoke to them again, but *through* John the Baptist, the lowly Jesus, His twelve apostles and His disciples, as "*the gospel of the kingdom*" was proclaimed.

But still later, Paul writes to these Hebrews, God spoke again, in a most wonderful way. Read the passage:

"God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,

"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by [in] His Son...who...when He had by Himself purged our sins, sat down at the right hand of the majesty on high" (Heb. 1:1-3).

Yes, it is to Israel (in this case) that the apostle declares: "GOD HATH SPOKEN"²¹; first by "*the Law*," then by "*the gospel of the kingdom*," and now by "*the gospel of the grace of God*" committed to Paul, himself the chief of sinners, saved by grace.²² How deeply obligated they were to give the keenest attention to God's latest revelation to them! Indeed, it is with regard to this, the revelation of God's grace, that the apostle writes to them:

"Therefore we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip" (Heb. 2:1).

And he follows this in Vers. 2-9 with a strong statement as to the importance of God's Word. The closing verse:

"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honour; that He by the grace of God should taste death for every man" (Heb. 2:9).

In the light of the above wonderful—and typical—passages from the Hebrews Epistle, how can anyone believe or teach that some unknown writer of this epistle, wished the Hebrews to continue in the kingdom program or anything akin to it?

No. 13. "*the powers of the world [age] to come.*" This can refer to nothing else but the mighty wonders of the Pentecost, and virtually all of these Hebrews had indeed "tasted" of these "powers of the age to come."

²¹ And His word is *good* (Ver. 5). It may be relied upon.

²² We do not here deal with the relation of all this to us today, but heartily recommend Sir Robert Anderson's masterful book, *The Silence of God*, which explains "*A Silent Heaven.*"

But any effort on their part to *prolong* Pentecost or continue its sign gifts would not demonstrate maturity, for God had since revealed further truth to and through Paul, to whom “*the secret of the gospel*” was communicated.

“But when that which is perfect is come, then that which is in part shall be done away.

“When I was a child, I spake as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child: but when I became a man, I put away childish things” (I Cor. 13:10, 11).

The mature Christian no longer walks “by sight”; he walks “by faith” (II Cor. 5:7), and the present attempt to bring the Church “back to Pentecost,” with its signs and wonders, is not an indication of maturity but of infancy. The child loves to *see* things, especially *dramatic* things, but the mature adult *thinks* them through. God help us to be mature Christians, understanding “the secret of the gospel.”

But all this having been said, it is clear that the above phrase has no relation whatever to believers today and their possible loss of salvation. It was written to Hebrews, urging them to “go on” from infancy to maturity. It was a continuation of the digression begun at Heb. 5:11.

No. 14. “*they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh*”: Unquestionably Heb. 6:4-9 is one of the most difficult passages of Scripture to understand. Arminians and Calvinists, or those who believe the saved may be lost again, and those who hold to the eternal security of believers, have battled over this passage for centuries.

Let us first, then, consider those elements of the passage which are clear:

1. *Repentance is a change of mind or attitude* (See Matt. 21:29). It is not in itself *salvation*.
2. Paul believed that these Hebrews *were saved* (Ver. 9). In 3:1 he calls them “*holy brethren*.”
3. The description in Vers. 4, 5 refers to the Pentecostal believers, not to mankind in general. The Hebrews to whom Paul wrote had been “enlightened,” had “tasted of the heavenly gift,” had been made co-workers with the Holy Ghost, had “tasted the good (i.e., dependable) Word of God and the powers of the age to come.”

As to being “renewed again to repentance,” Vers. 4-6 standing alone seem quite natural. The longer a man holds to one concept or belief, the more difficult it becomes for him to “repent,” or change his mind, until at length, man being what he is, this becomes *impossible*. These Hebrews had changed their minds once before when they had advanced from the Law of Moses and embraced “the gospel of the kingdom,” but if they now refused the further revelation committed to Paul, and kept clinging with closed minds to the kingdom program it might soon become impossible to change their minds again (“renew them again to repentance”).

This all seems (to this writer) very natural. The problem is, however, that this thought of repentance is related to salvation in Ver. 9, where the apostle says: “But, beloved, we are persuaded *better* things of you, and things which accompany *salvation*.”

Rejecting Paul’s “preaching of the cross,” with its “once for all” payment for sin, these Hebrews would be crucifying to themselves the Son of God afresh and putting Him to an open shame. “Sinning willfully,” after having received the knowledge of the truth, there remained no *other* sacrifice for their sins (Heb. 10:26). Christ had been “once offered to bear the sins of many” (Heb. 9:28), and “by His own blood” had “entered *once* into the holy place, *having obtained eternal redemption for us*” (Heb. 9:12). If they refused to move on from Legalism and/or Pentecostalism to the message of grace revealed through Paul, what hope was there for them now?

The solution which appears most acceptable to this writer is that Vers. 4-8 are *theoretical*. The apostle nowhere states that any of these Hebrews *had* “fallen away.” He does not even say that any *might* do so.

He rather offers a proposition as to what *would* happen *if* one did “fall away.”²³ It is like saying, “If this man should fall over that precipice, it would be impossible to recover his body,” although no man may ever have fallen over the precipice.

Thus the blessed doctrine of eternal security of believers remains intact, yet the seriousness of apostasy is clearly taught.

But what of those who *have* apostatized? We hold that these have been religious people who apostatized from *historical Christianity*, but were never really saved. I John 2:19 has an important word to say on this subject:

“They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us, but they went out that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us.”

The above we feel to be the sense of Heb. 6:4-8. We trust it brings light and blessing to our readers.

²³ To apostatize, i.e., to fall away *from* Christ or the truth.

APPENDIX
THE EPISTLE TO THE HEBREWS
Random Thoughts

Through fifty years as Editor and Associate Editor of the *Berean Searchlight*, this writer has often written brief comments on individual passages from the *Hebrews* epistle. Manifestly we could not include all of these in this volume, but with the help of the *Scripture Index* of the *Searchlight* so kindly compiled for us by our Brother Harold L. Collins, we have gathered a substantial number from a few of the volumes.

We trust that these will prove a blessing to our readers, inspiring them to “dig” more gems from this rich Mine.

TRAMPS AND TRAVELERS

To Cain God said:

“...a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth” (Gen. 4:12).

But regarding Abraham and his household:

“...they were *strangers and pilgrims* in the earth” (Heb. 11:13).

Striking comparison! Pilgrims (travelers) and vagabonds (tramps) are both away from home, but the traveler is on his way to a specific destination, while the tramp wanders aimlessly about, not knowing what will finally become of him, especially when he is also a fugitive from justice.

Which are you, dear reader, a tramp or a traveler, a stranger passing through or a fugitive from justice?

The Believer in Christ is by no means a tramp or a fugitive from justice, but he should never feel at home in this world, for the blessings of the Book of *Hebrews* are the portion of those who are “strangers and pilgrims on the earth,” waiting for the Lord to take them personally, physically, into “the holiest of all,” into His very presence.

PEACE AND ACCESS

“Therefore being justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ; by whom also we have access....” (Rom. 5:1, 2).

“Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus.

“...a new and living way, which He hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh” (Heb. 10:19, 20).

The comparison blessing to “peace with God” is free access into His presence; a blessing far too little appreciated, and so beautifully described for us in the Book of *Hebrews*.

Some years ago the writer was approached by a man who, then running for governor of his state, was being widely discussed as a possible candidate for presidency of the United States. He went out of his way to make conversation and show his interest in us.

Let us imagine that this man has by now become the President of the United States. Recalling our pleasant contact with him some time previous, I write him a letter, informing him that I am to be in Washington on June 23rd and will stop by to renew acquaintances. Almost certainly he will never ever see my letter. His secretary’s secretary will ask his assistant to write for the President to say how pleased he was to hear from me again and how much he would have liked for me to stop by at the White House were it not for pressing administrative appointments that would keep him occupied all day!

I write him again and express my disappointment at this “brush off.” I say in effect: “When you had your eye on the presidency *you* sought *me* out. Then you wanted my company, but now that you have become President I am evidently no longer worthy of your attention.”

Naturally! How could the President give all of the two hundred million people in this great land personal access into his presence? The President’s wife and his closest confidants doubtless have a *degree* of access into his presence, but for the reader or this writer to gain such access for even one fifteen-minute period would take some doing; and the President is but a man who will soon pass from the scene.

By contrast think of the wonder of *our free access* to God: how *He*, the Ruler of the Universe, *invites us* to come confidently before His “throne of grace...*in time of need*”—*our need!* (Heb. 4:16).

ONE OF US

“Forasmuch then, as the children [Adam’s children] are partakers of flesh and blood, He also Himself likewise took part of the same...” (Heb. 2:14).

Our Lord came into this world, not merely to be *with* us in some form with which we might communicate, but to be *one of us* (apart from sin) by His virgin birth, that he might truly *represent us* in paying the penalty for our sins,

“That through death He might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; and deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage” (Vers. 14, 15).

THE SPIRIT AND THE WORD

Some neo-evangelicals conclude that many people are lost because they believe that the Bible is scientifically untrustworthy.

But these ignore the practice and power of the Holy Spirit in *using the Word* to convict and save the unbeliever, be he scientist or street-sweeper.

“Is not my work like as a fire, saith the Lord; and like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces?” (Jer. 23:29).

“For the Word of God is living and powerful and sharper than any two-edged sword...and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart” (Heb. 4:12).

SO VERY NEAR TO GOD

“But into the second [the Most Holy Place] went the high priest alone, once every year, not without blood, which he offered for himself, and for the errors of the people:

“The Holy Ghost this signifying, *that the way into the holiest of all was not yet made manifest....*” (Heb. 9:7, 8).

Thus, while God indeed dwelt nearer to Israel than to any other people of that time, He still kept Himself at a distance from even them.

It is not so with us. There is *no barrier* whatsoever between God and His people today as far as our relationship is concerned, for in the great Pauline revelation the humblest member of the Body of Christ has been “*made accepted in the Beloved*” (Eph. 1:6), has a position before God “*complete in Him*” (Col. 2:10) and, by virtue of his baptism into Christ by the Holy Spirit, *has been “made to sit in the heavenlies at God’s right hand”* (Eph. 2:6; Col. 3:1-3) there to be “*blessed with all spiritual blessings*” (Eph. 1:3).

Thus our position is, and remains, a *heavenly* one, simply because we are “in Christ.” We may not always *occupy* this position experientially, or *appropriate* all our blessings in the heavenlies, but our *position* remains the same, and God graciously provides a way for us to *occupy* this position and appropriate these blessings.

How beautifully this is expressed in Heb. 10:19, 20:

“Having therefore, brethren, *boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus,*

“...*a new and living way, which He hath consecrated to us, through the veil, that is to say, His flesh.*”

Near, so very near to God, nearer I could not be,
For in the person of His Son I am as near as He.
Dear, so very dear to God, dearer I could not be,
For in the person of His Son, I am as near as He!
Author Unknown

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE ASSEMBLY

**“Not forsaking the assembling of yourselves together, as the manner of some is...”
(Heb. 10:25).**

“Not forsaking”! Searching phrase!

In the nature of the case novels can prove anything. In Joe Baly’s *Gospel Blimp*, it is not separated Christians, but “those worldly Griscoms” who win their cigarette-smoking, beer-drinking neighbors to Christ. But *how* do the Griscoms accomplish this? By *staying away* from church and going to the shore with them on week-ends, thus demonstrating that they are not “holy Joes”!

But if this writer may be permitted a personal word here, he can testify that he has never known a more zealous, or more effective soul-winner than his own father, Peter Stam, Sr. But when unsaved friends would send word that they were “coming over on Sunday,” he would respond in obedience to Heb. 10:25; “Come right over and go to church with us; we always go to church on Sundays.” This, we affirm, would have a far greater effect than staying home or “going out” somewhere to please them. Gaining the *respect* of the unsaved is one of the prime requisites of effective soul-winning. One does not win the lost to Christ by going along with them in their worldliness so as to get a chance to testify—except, of course in novels like Baly’s *Gospel Blimp*, where “those worldly Griscoms” win the prize as soul-winners!

God’s Word says, “*Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together*” and “*Be not conformed to this world, but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind...*” (Heb. 10:25; Rom. 12:2).

HOPE FOR THE LOST

For all unregenerate scientists, philosophers and psychologists, along with all other unsaved men, the death rate is still one each, and man’s greatest need above all is the salvation of his soul:

“For it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment” (Heb. 9:27).

But this same passage provides the needed salvation, assurance and joy as *a more complete quotation* of this passage indicates:

“And AS it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment,

“SO Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many, and unto them that look for Him shall He appear the second time without [apart from] sin unto salvation.” (Vers. 27, 28).

HE BEING DEAD YET SPEAKETH

“By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and by it he, being dead, yet speaketh” (Heb. 11:4).

The fact that Abel, unlike Cain, brought his sacrifice by faith, must mean that God has instructed the brothers as to the sacrifices they were to bring, for “faith cometh *by hearing*” (Rom. 10:17).

And as faith is the mother of obedience, so unbelief is the mother of self-will and *disobedience*.

Cain could, like Abel, have approached God in His way. Had he done so he would, like Abel, have been accepted and would have “obtained witness that he was righteous.”

It was unreasonable, therefore, though typical, that when he was *not* accepted he “was very wroth, and his countenance fell” (Ver. 5), as he, like many of the unsaved today, felt he had been mistreated. But Abel, though bludgeoned to death at the dawn of history by his angry, envious brother, still speaks to us of the joy of God-imputed righteousness, received by faith.

SALVATION IMPOSSIBLE WITHOUT FAITH

“Without faith it is impossible to please Him” (Heb. 11:6).

If we could advance proof after proof to back the unbeliever into a corner; if we could tie him up in knots with our arguments until he cried: “I give up! You are right; I am wrong!” would this save his soul or gain for him acceptance with God?

Indeed not, for God wants to be *believed* (I John 5:10) and salvation is a *gift*, to be *received by faith*. Thus Heb. 11:6 declares that “*without faith it is impossible to please Him.*”

FAITH AND PRESUMPTION

Let us beware of confusing faith with presumption. Cain presumed that God would accept his attractive sacrifice rather than the prescribed one, but God refused both him and his offering (Gen. 4:3-5). Pharaoh presumed that he could take his armies through the Red Sea as Moses had done, but he led them all to destruction for presuming upon God (Heb. 11:29). Naaman the leper, refused God's way of cleansing, saying: "*I thought...*" but the great general remained a leper until he humbled himself and took God at His Word (II Kings 5:1-14).

And you, dear reader: are you still "going about to establish your own righteousness," still trying to *make yourself* acceptable to God? Then I know something about you: You do not have the assurance or joy of salvation. How can you, for there will always be the fear that you are not doing well enough to please God, and the greater dread that in justice "*God requireth that which is past,*" and will call you to account for your past sins. Why not accept the message of Hebrews and receive a "good report" from God "through faith"?

OUR KINSMAN REDEEMER

Christ is our blessed Kinsman Redeemer, "*for verily He took not on Him the nature of angels, but He took on Him the seed of Abraham*" (Heb. 2:16), that He might redeem both Jew and Gentile, "*made [for] a little [while] lower than the angels for the suffering of death... THAT HE, BY THE GRACE OF GOD, SHOULD TASTE DEATH FOR EVERY MAN*" (Heb. 2:9).

SHAMEFUL NEGLECT

"How shall we escape if we neglect so great salvation?" (Heb. 2:3).

"Neglect" is exactly what many of the Hebrew "believers" were guilty of. More grammatically, Heb. 5:11 reads: "ye have become dull of hearing," and "dull of hearing" is rendered "slothful" in 6:12, the only other occurrence of the word. Through neglect, slothfulness, and failing to take heed to the things which they had heard they had *become* spiritually sluggish.

The words "*hard to be uttered,*" in Heb. 5:11, do not mean that the apostle was not able to speak the words, but rather that he could not "put it across" to them in their present condition. The *Berkeley Version* renders this verse: "It is difficult to explain, since you *have grown* [spiritually] hard of hearing." *Fenton* translates it, "since you *have become* sluggish...."

Neglect of spiritual things by men today produces the same results, and merits God's warning: "*How shall [ye] escape?*"

HEROES OF FAITH

Have you ever noticed that God does not generally hold the great men of Scripture up to us because of their virtue or merit? Almost invariably their records are marred by failure and sin, but God bids us observe their *faith* and what their faith accomplished for them. This is certainly so in Hebrews 11.

This chapter is properly called “the faith chapter,” and its heroes, “heroes of faith.” It tells us how Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and scores of others “obtained a good report.”

God overlooks their faltering, failing ways and declares in Ver. 39: “*These all...obtained a good report through faith.*”

This is why Rom. 4:9-12 states that God’s blessing is bestowed upon those who “walk in the steps of that faith” which Abraham exhibited, just as it was bestowed upon Abraham himself.

This truth is driven home in Vers. 3-5 of the same passage in Romans:

“For what saith the Scripture? Abraham *believed* God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

“Now to him that worketh is the reward not reckoned of grace, but of debt,

“But to him that worketh *not*, but *believeth* on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness.”

FAITH MUST COME FIRST

Even in I Cor. 13:13, where love is said to be the “greatest” member of the “abiding trinity,” *faith* is still the *first*. It is faith, not love, that is of *primary* importance, for “*without faith it is impossible to please God*” (Heb. 11:6).

THE SECRET OF THE GOSPEL

God proclaimed *gospel*, or *good news*, to men all down through the ages. But what was the *secret* of all this good news? How could a just and holy God prepare *good things* or proclaim *good news* to sinners?

When God told Abel he could offer a blood sacrifice for his sins, that was *gospel*; it was *good news*. But wherein lay the *secret* of this good news? Did it lie in the quality of the sacrifice itself? No, for “*it is not possible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins*” (Heb. 10:4). The secret of this good news was bound up in *Calvary*, the antitype of Jewish sacrifices, though this was not yet revealed to Abel.

What was the *secret* of all God’s good news to Adam, Noah, Abraham, David, Daniel *et al*? It was the *finished work of Christ, later to be revealed to Paul* and proclaimed by him in his “*preaching of the cross.*” There never could have been one syllable of good news to any son of Adam apart from what Christ was to accomplish at Calvary. *This* is the “mystery,” or secret “of the gospel” concerning which the Apostle Paul has so much to say, and it explains what he means when he declares that the righteousness of Christ is *now declared* “*for the remission of sins that are past*” (Rom. 3:25) and His death “*for the redemption of the transgressions that were under the first testament [covenant]*” (Heb. 9:15).

WATER BAPTISM

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

“Which stood only in meats and drinks, and *divers washings* [Gr. *baptismos*], *imposed on them until the time of reformation*” (Heb. 9:9, 10).

“Therefore *leaving* the principles [elementary teachings] of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God.

“Of the doctrine of baptisms [Gr. *baptismos*], and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment” (Heb. 6:1, 2).

Twice in *Hebrews* baptism, or baptisms, are shown to be *temporary* in character. In 9:9, 10 the various baptisms of Judaism are said to have been “*imposed on them until the time of reformation,*” while in 6:1, 2 these Hebrew believers are instructed to “*leave*” the foundational teachings about Christ and *go on to maturity*, “*not laying again*” (among other things) “*the doctrine of baptisms.*”

It is important, therefore, to understand clearly where baptism “fits in” in Scripture: when it was valid.

There can be no question, for example, that John the Baptist was *sent* to baptize, for in John 1:33 we find him using the phrase: “*He that sent me to baptize with water.*”²⁴ Indeed water baptism was an integral part of his message, for Peter refers, in Acts 10:37, to “*the baptism which John preached.*” As to our Lord’s disciples, we learn from John 4:1, 2 that together they “made and baptized more disciples than John.”

Was there any departure from this program at, or soon after, the cross? No, for in the “Great Commission” we find the eleven again “*sent to baptize*” (Matt. 28:19; Mark 16:15, 16).

The departure from water baptism, in Scripture, begins with Paul, who was *not* sent to baptize (I Cor. 1:17, 18). True, he baptized some during his early ministry, but this was the program under which he was saved, and *from which* he gradually emerged. He also spoke with tongues, wrought miracles and circumcised Timothy, but these things, like water baptism, were clearly *not* included in his special commission. The baptism of the “Great Commission” was one of the “divers baptisms” *imposed...until the time of reformation,*” when the Apostle Paul was used of God to lead those long in religious bondage into “*the liberty wherewith Christ hath made us free.*”

SALVATION NOW AND IN AGES PAST

Hebrews 11 contains one *constant* but many variables. The constant, of course, is *faith*: *By faith....By faith....By faith.*” From Abel through to the end, “*these all...obtained a good report through faith.*”

It must not be assumed, however, that faith *in a coming Christ* is referred to, for the facts are otherwise. Abel brought the God-appointed offering. Noah built an ark, Abraham “went out not knowing whither he went,” and these acts all demonstrated their faith in God, who was to provide for their salvation. But *nowhere* do we read that the Old Testament saints looked forward in faith to Christ and Calvary to be saved.

All Christian believers agree that salvation has ever been received essentially by grace through faith alone, that is, that works in themselves never did save but rather, when in order, were God-appointed *expressions of faith*. But salvation *apart from works* was not proclaimed until “the dispensation of the grace of God” through Paul, and this blessed dispensation is based upon Paul’s “preaching of the cross,” his proclamation of the glorious all-sufficiency of our Lord’s redemptive work at Calvary.

²⁴ The teaching that water baptism signifies *burial* is not only unscriptural; it is foolish. Neither in Bible times, nor now, are the dead buried *in water*. Ananias said to Paul: “Arise and *be baptized* and *wash away thy sins*” (Acts 22:16).

Who can deny that “by faith” Abel “obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his *gifts*,” not of his faith in Christ, and that Cain was rejected because, in unbelief and self-will, he brought *the wrong offering*? (See Gen. 4:4, 5; Heb. 11:4). Who can deny that blood sacrifices were also *required* for salvation under the Law of Moses? (See Lev. 17:11). Clearly, the blood of bulls and goats *as such* could not take away sins (Heb. 10:4), but blood sacrifices were nevertheless *required* for salvation, and those who wished to be saved could express their faith *only* by approaching God in *His* way and bringing the required offering. This is why Heb. 9:22, referring to the Mosaic Law, says: “*and without shedding of blood is no remission.*”

Likewise water baptism was *required* “for the remission of sins” from John the Baptist (Mark 1:4) through Pentecost (Acts 2:38), and those who refused to be baptized demonstrated their *unbelief* and were therefore lost. “Thus referring to our Lord’s ministry,” Luke 7:29, 30 says:

“And all the people that heard him and the publicans, justified God *being baptized with the baptism of John.*

“But the Pharisees and lawyers rejected the counsel of God against themselves, *being not baptized of him.*”

Today, by contrast, God *requires* that those who would be saved *do not* offer character, or good works or anything that human beings might offer (Eph. 2:8, 9). All is *grace*, to be received in *faith*. Indeed, He actually *forbids* human works for salvation:

“But to him that worketh *not*, but believeth on Him that justifieth the ungodly, his faith is counted for righteousness” (Rom. 4:5).

HOW SINNERS BECOME SAINTS

In salvation God today is making saints out of sinners. Sinners are not made saints several hundred years after death, by some papal pronouncement. Rather, this takes place in an instant, in this life, through faith in Christ and His finished work.

Has it ever occurred to the reader that the word “sanctify” in the *King James Version* is simply old English for *saintify*? With this fact in view we will quote several passages from Scripture, using the root “saint” rather than “sanct” or “saynct,” as one Old English version has it.

“Wherefore, Jesus, that He might *saintify* the people with His own blood, suffered without the gate” (Heb. 13:12).

“By the which will we are *saintified* by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ, once for all....for by one offering He hath perfected forever them that are *saintified*” (Heb. 10:10-14).

Every true believer has been “*saintified*” by God, therefore every believer is a *saint*. Oh, for the day “*when He shall come to be glorified in His saints*”! (II Thes. 1:10).

I WILL SHOW THEE

“Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will show thee” (Gen. 12:1).

“...and he went out, not knowing whither he went” (Heb. 11:8).

These two Scripture passages concerning Abraham, “the Father of believers,” came to mind one day in 1968 when a friend asked some of us some searching questions with regard to the *Berean Bible Fellowship*, the newly-informed organization of Grace believers standing not only *for* the unadulterated message of grace, but *against* the new evangelicalism, which has caused such spiritual harm all about us.

The conversation went something like this: “How many people will join you in your stand?” Our answer: “We don’t know.” “How many pastors will stand with you?” “We don’t know.” “How many churches or organizations do you think you can count on?” “We don’t know.” “Is there any prospect of your group founding a school in the near future?” “We don’t know.” “Who, do you think, might head up such a school?” “We don’t know.” “What about financial arrangements to help needy pastors and churches taking this stand?” “We don’t know.”

But even as we talked Abraham’s case came to mind. He would have to leave the Ur of the Chaldees before God would lead him into the riches of the land of Canaan. He was called upon to separate himself from his idolatrous country and kindred, even from his father’s house, with no more assurance for the future than God’s Word: “*I will show thee.*” But this assurance was enough for Abraham. “By faith” he “obeyed” and “*went out, not knowing whither he went.*” But he did not need to wander about aimlessly.

The rest of the story is well known: How the “*show thee*” was changed to “*give thee,*” and later:

“Lift up now thine eyes and look from the place where thou art, northward and southward, and eastward, and westward....”

“Arise, walk through the land, in the length and the breadth of it; for I will give it unto thee” (Gen. 13:14-17).

May God give us such faith so that we may be rewarded by *His faithfulness*.

BUT IF NOT

Many of God's children have suffered temporary loss for standing true to their convictions. Hebrews 11 lists among the heroes of faith some who were "tortured, not accepting deliverance," and others who suffered "trial and cruel mockings and scourgings... bonds and imprisonment. They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented"; and he adds the comment, "*of whom the world was not worthy.*"

Note the phrase: "*not accepting deliverance.*" This reminds us of the attitude of the three "Hebrew worthies." When threatened with death in a fiery furnace if they refused to worship the golden god which Nebuchadnezzar had set up, they replied:

"Our God whom we serve is able to deliver us...but if not, be it known unto thee, O king, that we will not serve thy gods, nor worship the golden image which thou has set up" (Dan. 3:17, 18).

Today we are indeed living in "perilous times," fast-changing times. Who knows when, or how soon, *we* may be called upon to suffer for our blessed Lord? In that case may God give *us* the same grace to "*withstand in the evil day,*" fully persuaded that God is able, abundantly able, to deliver us, yet understanding fully if He does not see fit to do so, and determined in any case to stand true to Him.