

Heb. 7:1-3

¹For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him; ²and to him Abraham apportioned a tenth part of everything. He is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness, and then he is also king of Salem, that is, king of peace. ³He is without father or mother or genealogy, and has neither beginning of days nor end of life, but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest for ever.

326. – In Chapter 5 the Apostle proved that Christ is a priest, but in Chapter 6 he interposed certain considerations to prepare the minds of his hearers. Now he returns to his main theme: for he intends to prove the excellence of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical priesthood. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the excellence of Christ's priesthood as compared to the priesthood of the Old Testament; secondly, he shows that believers should subject themselves reverently to the priesthood of Christ (c. 10). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the prerogative of Christ's priesthood over the Levitical on the part of the person of the priest; secondly, on the part of the minister (c. 8). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he proves the existence of Christ's priesthood by reason of a divine promise; secondly, the need for this priesthood (v. 26).

But he shows this promise from the words of Ps. 109 (v. 4): 'The Lord has sworn and he will not repent: You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.' Hence, he shows three things to prove his thesis: first, the phrase, 'according to the order of Melchizedek'; secondly, the statement 'He swore' (v. 20); thirdly, the statement, 'You are a priest forever' (v. 23). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the likeness of Christ to Melchizedek; secondly, on the basis of this likeness he chooses the priesthood of Christ over the Levitical (v. 4). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes Melchizedek's qualities; secondly, he shows how they fit Christ (v. 2b).

327. – He describes Melchizedek, first of all, by his name when he says, **For this Melchizedek**. For so the Scripture names him in Genesis (14:18), where his history, which the Apostle supposes here, is recorded. According to a Gloss the Hebrews say that was Shem, the first-born of Noah, and when Abraham obtained the victory, he was 390 or 309 years old, and met Abraham, his nephew.

328. – Secondly, he describes him from his dignity, for he was king and a priest. In regard to the first he says, **king of Salem**. Some say that Salem is called Jerusalem. But Jerome denies this in a letter, because, as he says, he could not run into him from Jerusalem, which he proves from its location. Others say that Salem is the place where John baptized (Jn. 3:23), and the walls of that place still existed in Jerome's time. In regard to the second he says, **priest of the Most High God**. For in olden times the elder brother was a priest. But it is true that in Abraham's time the worship of idols was on the increase. Therefore, lest

anyone suppose that he was a priest of idols, he adds, **of the Most High God**, namely, God by essence not by participation or name. For God is the Creator of all who are gods either by participation or erroneously: ‘The Lord is a great king above all gods’ (Ps. 94:3); ‘You shall be called priests of the Lord: to you it shall be said: You ministers of our God’ (Is. 61:6).

329. – Thirdly, he describes him from his office: **who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him**. For a priest is midway between God and the people. Therefore, he should confer something on the people, namely, spiritual things, and receive something from them, namely, temporal things: ‘If we then have sown unto you spiritual things, is it a great matter, if we reap your carnal things?’ (1 Cor. 9:11). First, therefore, he should show strength by good advice; hence it says in Genesis (14) that the four kings are the four principal vices opposed to the four cardinal virtues which hold the emotions, the nephew of reason, captive after the five bodily senses are overcome. For a person who overcomes and frees the emotions deserves to be comforted by a priest: ‘Meeting the thirsty, bring him water’ (Is. 21:14); ‘Strengthen the feeble hands, and confirm the weak knees’ (Is. 35:3). Secondly, a priest should give strength by administering the sacraments with a blessing; hence, **he blessed him**: ‘We have blessed you in the name of the Lord’ (Ps. 117:26). But this is done by conferring the sacraments, by which a man is strengthened in grace: ‘They shall invoke my name upon the children of Israel and I will bless them’ (Num. 6:27), for God blesses by His authority, but the priest by his ministry. **To him Abraham apportioned**, i.e., distributed properly, **a tenth part of everything** [tithes] for his sustenance.

330. – But it seems from Numbers (18:21) that the giving of tithes dated from the Law; therefore, there was none before the Law. I answer that the ceremonial precepts of the Old Testament are amplifications of the precepts of the natural law and of the moral precepts; therefore, in regard to what they had from the natural law, they were observed before the Law without any precept. For the fact that something is offered to God in recognition of His creation and dominion is natural; but that He should be offered goats and heifers is a ceremonial precept. Similarly, it is according to natural law that ministers serving God be sustained by the people, for it is clear from Genesis (47:22) that this was observed among the Gentiles. Hence, priests, because they were fed from the public storehouses, were not compelled to sell their possessions. Therefore, there were tithes before the Law, but the determination of this amount was fixed by the law: ‘All tithes are the Lord’s’ (Lev. 27:30). A sign of this was the fact that Jacob before the Law vowed that he would give tithes in the place where the temple was later built. And this was done particularly because the main reason for rendering worship to God is to signify that whatever a man has, he received from God and that he depends on Him for his entire perfection. For the number ‘ten’ is perfect, since it is the sum of its several parts, because the sum of one plus two plus three plus four is ten. Furthermore, one counts as far as ten and all other numbers are repetitions or additions to ten. Therefore,

all numbers are imperfect until ten is reached. Likewise, all perfection is from God. Therefore, in order to signify that the fulfillment of all perfection is from God, he gave tithes.

331. – Then (v. 2b) he shows the likeness to Melchizedek. In regard to this he does two things: first, he suggests the likeness in regard to the condition of the person; secondly, in regard to the priesthood (v. 3b). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states a likeness in regard to things commemorated in Scripture; secondly, in regard to things not mentioned in Scripture (v. 3).

332. – In Scripture two things are said of him: first, his name, namely, Melchizedek, **who is first, by translation of his name, king of righteousness**, and signifies Christ, Who was a king: ‘And a king shall reign, and shall be wise: and shall execute judgement and justice in the earth’ (Jer. 23:5). He is not only called righteous, but king of righteousness, because He was made wisdom and righteousness for us (1 Cor. 1:30). Another thing said of him is his status; hence, **he is called king of Salem, that is, king of peace**. But this suits Christ: ‘For he is our peace’ (Eph. 2:14); ‘In his days shall justice spring up and abundance of peace’ (Ps. 71:7). And in this the Apostle teaches us to use the interpretation of names in preaching. He does well to join justice and peace, because no one can make peace who does not observe justice: ‘The work of justice shall be peace’ (Is. 32:17). In this world they are governed in justice, but in the world to come in peace: ‘My people shall sit in the beauty of peace’ (Is. 32:18).

333. – Then when he says, **without father or mother or genealogy**, he presents a likeness in regard to the things not mentioned about him, because in Scripture no mention is made of his father or mother or genealogy. Hence, some of the ancients made this matter of their error, saying that since God alone is without beginning and without end, Melchizedek was the Son of God. But this has been condemned as heretical. Hence, it should be noted that the Old Testament, whenever mention is made of some important person, his father is named along with the time of his birth and death, as in the case of Isaac and many others. But here Melchizedek is suddenly introduced with no mention at all made of his birth or anything pertaining to it. This was not done without reason. For inasmuch as it is said, **without father**, the birth of Christ from the Virgin is signified, for it occurred without a father: ‘That which is born in her is of the Holy Spirit’ (Mt. 1:20). Now that which is proper to God should not be attributed to a creature; but it is proper to God the Father to be the Father of Christ. Therefore, in the birth of the one who prefigured Him, no mention should be made of a carnal father. Also in regard to His eternal birth he says, **without mother**, lest anyone suppose that birth to be material, as the mother gives the matter to her begotten; but it is spiritual, as brightness from the sun: ‘Who being the brightness of his glory and figure of his substance’ (Heb. 1:3). Also, when generation proceeds from a father and a mother, it is not all from the father, but the matter is ministered by the mother. Therefore, to exclude all imperfection from Christ and to designate that all he has from the Father, no mention is made of a mother; hence, the verse: ‘He is God without a mother; He is flesh without a father.’ ‘From the womb before the day star I begot you,’ i.e., I alone (Ps. 109:3).

Without genealogy: now there are two reasons why his genealogy is not given in the Scripture: one is because the generation of Christ is ineffable: ‘Who shall declare his generation’ (Is. 53:8); the other is because Christ, Who is introduced as a priest, does not pertain to the Levitical priesthood, nor to a genealogy of the Old Law. This is the Apostle’s intention; hence, he says, **and has neither beginning of days nor end of life**. But he says this, not because Christ was not born in time or did not die, but because of His eternal generation, in which He was born without the beginning of any time: ‘In the beginning was the Word’ (Jn. 1:1), i.e., no matter what time you mention, the Word was before it, as Basil explains. Also, **no end of life**: this is true in regard to His divinity, which is eternal. But in regard to His humanity, He no longer has an end of life, because ‘Christ rising again from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9); and below (13:8): ‘Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today; and the same forever.’

334. – Then when he says, **but resembling the Son of God he continues a priest forever**, he indicates a likeness in regard to the priesthood. Yet it should be noted that later things are said to be similar to earlier things, and vice versa. Consequently, lest anyone suppose that Christ’s priesthood is later than that of Melchizedek, the Apostle dispels this, because, although Christ as man was born after him and existed in time, nevertheless, as God and as the Son of God, He exists from eternity. Therefore, Melchizedek was like Christ, the Son of God, in regard to all those features: and this inasmuch as He continues a priest forever, which can be explained in two ways: one way, because no mention is made of the end of his priesthood or of his successor: ‘I have used similitudes by the ministry of the prophets’ (Hos 12:10). He also says, **a priest forever**, because that which is prefigured, namely, Christ’s priesthood, lasts forever. Hence, even in Scripture it is frequently referred to as perpetual: ‘It shall be a perpetual observance’ (Ex. 27:21): ‘By a perpetual service and rite’ (Lev. 24:3), because that which was symbolized by it is perpetual.

In this matter the Apostle connects the following with the preceding.

Heb. 7:4-10

⁴See how great he is! Abraham the patriarch gave him a tithe of the spoils. ⁵And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people, that is, from their brethren, though these also are descended from Abraham. ⁶But this man who has not their genealogy received tithes from Abraham and blessed him who had the promises. ⁷It is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior. ⁸Here tithes are received by mortal men; there, by one of whom it is testified that he lives. ⁹One might even say that Levi himself, who receives tithes, paid tithes through Abraham, ¹⁰for he was still in the loins of his ancestor when Melchizedek met him.

335. – Having showed how Melchizedek was likened to the Son of God, the Apostle now shows the pre-eminence of Melchizedek's priesthood over the Levitical. In regard to this he does two things: first, he attracts their attention; secondly, he states his thesis (v. 5).

336. – He attracts them by saying that he is about to speak of great and important matters: 'Hear, for I will speak of great things' (Pr. 8:5); hence, he says, **see how great**, i.e., of what great dignity, **he is, to whom Abraham the patriarch gave a tithe of the spoils**: 'Cursed is the deceitful man, that has in his flock a male, and making a vow, offers in sacrifice that which is feeble, to the Lord' (Mal. 1:14). Abraham is called a patriarch, i.e., the chief of fathers, not because he had no father, but because the promise of being father of the Gentiles was made to him: 'You shall be a father of many nations' (Gen. 17:4); 'Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations' (Sir. 44:20); 'I have made you a father of many nations before God whom he believed' (Rom. 4:17).

337. – Then (v. 5) he shows the pre-eminence of Melchizedek's priesthood over that of the Levitical. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his proposition; secondly, from this he concludes his thesis, namely, that Christ's priesthood is preferred to the Levitical (v. 11). The first is divided into two parts: in the first he states his proposition; in the second he rejects a certain response (v. 9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the pre-eminence in regard to that in which he used his priesthood; secondly, in regard to the state of the priesthood (v. 8). But two things pertain to the priest, namely, to receive and to bless. Therefore, he does two things: first, he shows its excellence as far as receiving tithes is concerned; secondly, in regard to blessing (v. 6b). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows who is competent to accept tithes; secondly, how Melchizedek did this in a more excellent manner (v. 8).

338. – He says, therefore: **And those descendants of Levi who receive the priestly office have a commandment in the law to take tithes from the people.** In this he shows that it belongs to priests to take tithes. But it should be noted that the members of Levi's tribe were deputed to divine worship, but among them only the descendants of Aaron were priests: 'Take unto you also Aaron, your brother, with his sons from among the children of Israel, that they may minister to me in the priest's office' (Ex. 28:1). Hence, those who belong to the tribe of Levi through Aaron took tithes.

This would seem to indicate that the priests alone took tithes, which is contrary to what it says in Numbers (18:21): 'I have given to the sons of Levi all the tithes of Israel.' I answer that the Levites received them, only because they ministered to the priests; consequently, they were given not for themselves but for the priests. Furthermore, the Levites received only one-tenth of the tithes, as it says in Numbers (18:26); therefore, only the priests received and did not pay.

339. – Secondly, he shows by what right they received them, namely, by a commandment of the Law; hence, he says, **they have commandment in the law to take tithes.** But if this is a commandment of the Law, then, since the observance of a commandment of the Law is now a sin, it seems unlawful to give or to receive tithes now. I answer that there were in the Law some precepts that were purely ceremonial, as circumcision, the immolation of the lamb, and so on. Such laws, since they were only figurative, it is no longer licit to observe, for they were a figure of something to come; hence, anyone who observes them now would be signifying that Christ is still to come. But others were purely moral, and these must be observed now. Among these was the giving of tithes, as was explained above. Hence, tithing was in vogue during the Law and under the New Testament: 'The worker is worthy of his food' (Mt. 10:10); 'The worker is worthy of his hire' (Lk. 10:7). But the determination of such a portion now is made by the Church, just as in the Old Testament it was determined by the Law. But others were partly ceremonial and partly moral, as the judicial precepts. These laws are no longer to be used in regard to what is ceremonial; but in regard to what is moral, they must be obeyed. Yet it is not necessary that they be observed in their proper form.

Another objection: If it were a commandment still in vogue, then one who does not take tithes sins, and they sin where they are not taken. I answer that some say that no one may lawfully renounce his right to take tithes, but it is lawful to renounce the practice of taking them because of scandal; and this from the example of the Apostle who took no sustenance from anyone. So they say that they are commanded not to renounce the right. But it is better to say that they are not commanded to take; but they have this command introduced for themselves, so that they can take, and the others are bound to give.

340. – Thirdly, he shows from who they received, namely, **from the people**, i.e., from their brethren, though these also are descended from the loins of Abraham. For since someone might say that just as Melchizedek received tithes from Abraham, so, too, his sons, the Levites; therefore, that priesthood is not preferred to this one. Consequently, he excludes this and says that the Levites themselves were of the seed of Abraham and, consequently were inferior to Abraham, who paid the tithes.

341. – Then when he says, **But this man who has not the genealogy received tithes of Abraham**, he shows how it was more fitting for Melchizedek to receive tithes, because he was not of the stock of Abraham; hence, he has not their genealogy, namely, of the Levites. Furthermore, according to a commandment of the Law it was lawful for him to take tithes; consequently, their priesthood was subject to the observance of the Law. But he took tithes not by reason of any law but of himself; therefore, his priesthood was a figure of Christ's priesthood, which is not subject to the Law. Likewise, they received from a lowly people, namely, their brethren, but he from the highest, namely, from Abraham.

342. – Then when he says, **and blessed him that had the promises**, he shows his excellence from the viewpoint of the blessing. His reason is this: In Genesis (14:19) it says that Melchizedek blessed Abraham; but one who blesses is greater than the one blessed, therefore, etc. Hence, he says that Melchizedek blessed Abraham, who had the promises.

But on the other hand, it says below (11:39): 'They received not the promise.' I answer that Abraham did not receive the promise, i.e., the things promised, because he did not obtain it; but he possessed it in faith and hope, and to him specifically the promises were made.

343. – Then when he says, **it is beyond dispute that the inferior is blessed by the superior**, he states the major premise of his reasoning. But here there are three objections: the first concerns the statement that the lesser is blessed by the better. On this score the Poor Men of Lyons claim that any just person is greater than a sinner; consequently, a just layman is not blessed by a wicked priest, but conversely. Hence, they would have it that every just man is a priest and no sinner is a priest. I answer that this error is most pernicious, because if a good minister is required for conferring the sacraments, in which salvation is found, it follows that no one is sure of his salvation or knows whether he was properly baptized, because he cannot know if the priest was just. For no one could be ministers, because 'no one knows whether he is worthy of hatred or love' (Ec 9:1). Therefore, it should be noted that a person can do something in two ways: either by his own authority, or by someone else's. When it is by his own authority, it is required that he be just. But a priest is only a minister; hence, he acts only in virtue of Christ: 'Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ, and the dispensers of the mysteries of God' (1 Cor. 4:1). Therefore, he does no harm whether he be good or bad, because it is Christ Who blesses in him. Hence, without any contradiction, the one who is greater, blesses.

The second objection is that since Christ is greater than any priest, how can the body of Christ be consecrated by a priest? I answer that the priest blesses the matter and not the body of Christ. Furthermore, he does not act by his own authority, but by that of Christ, Who as God is greater than His body.

The third objection is that it does not seem true that the greater always blesses the lesser, because the Pope is consecrated by a bishop, and an Archbishop by a suffragan, both of who are lesser. I answer

that a bishop does not consecrate the Pope nor the suffragan the Archbishop, but they consecrate this man to be Pope or Archbishop. Furthermore, they do this as the ministers of God, Who is greater than the Pope.

344. – Then when he says, **Here tithes are received by mortal men**, he shows the pre-eminence of the priesthood on the part of the priest by reason of his state. His reasoning is this: That the more excellent which is not corrupted. But in the Levitical priesthood mortal men, i.e., who succeed by death, receive tithes; but there, in the priesthood of Melchizedek, **by one of who it is testified from the Scripture, that he lives**, i.e., it makes no mention of his death, not because he did not die, but because he signifies a priesthood that continues forever: ‘Christ, rising again from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9); ‘I was dead, and behold I am living forever and ever’ (Rev. 1:18).

345. – Then when he says, **and one might say that even Levi who received tithes, paid tithes through Abraham**, he answers an objection. For someone might say: it is true that Melchizedek is greater than Abraham who gave him tithes; but Levi is greater than Melchizedek. So the Apostle says that this is not valid, because one might say that through Abraham, i.e., through the medium of Abraham, even Levi paid tithes to him who received them, i.e., to Melchizedek. Therefore, he is still greater than Levi.

But on the other hand, if the father of a bishop gives tithes, that is no reason why the bishop is less than the one who receives the tithes. Therefore, neither in the case at hand. I answer that the cases are not the same, because the entire dignity of the Jewish race and of its priests stemmed from Abraham; but in the case of a bishop, his entire dignity derives from Christ, not from his father.

346. – Then (v. 10) he explains what he had said; and he says that Levi **was still in the loins of his father**, Abraham, when he gave tithes to Melchizedek, who met him. Consequently, when Abraham was tithed, Levi was tithed.

But on the other hand: Christ, too, was in his loins, just as Levi: ‘The son of David, the son of Abraham’ (Mt. 1:1). Therefore, if the reason why Melchizedek is greater than Levi is that Levi was tithed, there seems to be no reason why Christ was not tithed; consequently, Melchizedek is still greater than Christ. And the same difficulty applies to original sin, because as it says in Romans (5:12): ‘In whom all have sinned,’ i.e., in Adam. Therefore, it seems that Christ, Who existed in him in the same way as we, should have contracted original sin. I answer that all this is understood in regard to those who were in Abraham or in Adam according to seminal reasons or bodily substance. For Christ was conceived in regard to His body from the most pure and holy matter of the Blessed Virgin, as it says in 3 Sent. d. 5.

Heb. 7:11-19

¹¹Now if perfection had been attainable through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron? ¹²For when there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well. ¹³For the one of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, from which no one has ever served at the altar. ¹⁴For it is evident that our Lord was descended from Judah, and in connection with that tribe Moses said nothing about priests. ¹⁵This becomes even more evident when another priest arises in the likeness of Melchizedek, ¹⁶who has become a priest, not according to a legal requirement concerning bodily descent but by the power of an indestructible life. ¹⁷For it is witnessed of him, “You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.” ¹⁸On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside because of its weakness and uselessness ¹⁹(for the law made nothing perfect); on the other hand, a better hope is introduced, through which we draw near to God.

347. – Having proved the pre-eminence of Melchizedek’s priesthood over the Levitical, the Apostle now concludes to the excellence of Christ’s priesthood over that of the Levitical. But as has been stated above from the beginning of ch. 7, the Apostle proves his proposition from three statements taken from the Psalmist: first, from the phrase, ‘according to the order of Melchizedek.’ Therefore, he proved the pre-eminence of Melchizedek over Levi. Now according to the order of Melchizedek’s priesthood, he proves Christ’s pre-eminence over the Levitical. Hence, he lays great stress on the phrase, ‘according to the order.’ And he gives two reasons: the first concludes that the priesthood of Christ is preferred to the Levitical; secondly, that it even makes it void (v. 15).

In the first reason, which is conditional, he lays down two antecedents and two consequents: **what further need would there have been for another priesthood to rise according to the order of Melchizedek?**

348. – His reasoning is this: If the Levitical priesthood had been perfect, by whose ministry the Law was administered, there would have been no need for another priest according to another order through which another Law is administered, just as the Old Law was administered by the Levitical. But another priest has risen according to another order, namely, of Melchizedek. Therefore, the other was imperfect. Therefore, just as another priesthood has risen, so it is necessary that another Law arise. In this reasoning it is manifest that there are two antecedents, namely, one pertaining to the priesthood and the other pertaining to the Law. In regard to the first antecedent he says, **if perfection was attainable by the Levitical priesthood**. But in regard to the second he says that if a law is administered by a priesthood, which he proves, because under it, i.e., by its administration, the people received the law; not that the

priesthood preceded the Law, but conversely. Hence, he states the second antecedent when he says, **for under it the people received the law**: ‘The lips of the priest shall keep knowledge; and they shall seek the law at his mouth’ (Mal. 2:7). But he makes mention of the priesthood specifically in order to pass to the Law, which was administered by the priestly office: for as a Gloss says, there can be no priest without a testament and a law and precepts. But the priesthood brought nothing to perfection, for its entire perfection was through the Law, which they administered; but as will be shown later: ‘The law brought no one to perfection,’ because it did not lead to the perfection of justice: ‘Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 5:20); likewise, it did not bring the perfection of heaven, because it did not bring one into life. A sign of this was that the lawgiver himself could not enter the promised land. But we have these two perfections through Christ: ‘The consumption abridged shall overflow with justice (Is. 10:22); ‘A short word shall the Lord make upon the earth’ (Rom. 9:28). These, therefore, are the antecedents.

349. – But he lays down the consequents when he says, **what further need would there have been for another priest to arise after the order of Melchizedek, rather than one named after the order of Aaron**, i.e., he would not have said, according to the order of Melchizedek, but ‘according to the order of Aaron.’ Therefore, because He did not, it was imperfect. This is the entire first reason, through which it is clear that Christ’s priesthood is preferred to the Levitical.

The second reason proves that He even voided it, because the perfect voids the imperfect: ‘When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away’ (1 Cor. 13:10). Therefore, the priesthood of Christ does away with the Levitical.

350. – The second consequent is that it also does away with the Law which was administered by it. He states this when he says, **When there is a change in the priesthood, there is necessarily a change in the law as well**. For the Law was under the administration of the priesthood; therefore, the priesthood being translated, it is necessary that the Law be changed; just as a person who changes his mind about traveling by water, changes his mind about finding a ship. But every Law is ordained to leading one’s life according to some rule. Hence, according to the Philosopher in the *Politics*, when the mode of life is changed, it is necessary for the law to be changed. But just as human law is ordained to human guidance, so a spiritual and divine law to divine guidance. But this guidance is regulated by a priesthood. Therefore, the priesthood being translated, it is necessary that a translation be made of the Law.

351. – But he speaks carefully, because he does not say, ‘The priest being translated’: for the law does not regard the person of the priest. Hence, when the priest dies, the law is not changed, unless perchance the entire method and order of guidance is changed. Jeremiah speaks of change when he says: ‘Behold, the days shall come, says the Lord, and I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant I made with your fathers’ (Jer. 31:31); ‘For the law of the spirit of life in Christ Jesus has delivered me from the law of sin and of death’ (Rom. 8:2). For the Old

Law is called the Law of sin and of death, because it did not confer grace *ex opere operato*, as the sacraments of the New Law do.

352. – But the Manicheans raise an objection here: If the Old Law was given by divine providence, which is immutable, the Law itself should be immutable; consequently, it should not be changed. Therefore, since it was changed, it was not given by divine providence. I answer, as Augustine says *Against Faustus*, that just as a wide dispenser by one and the same arrangement and providence gives different laws according as times and persons differ, one law for summer and another for winter, one for children and one for adults, one for perfect and another for imperfect, and yet is the same providence; so with divine providence remaining unchanged, the Law was changed to fit the times: because before the coming of Christ precepts were given to prefigure His coming, but after His coming, precepts were given to signify that He had come. Furthermore, the precepts were given to them as to children, but in the New Law as to the perfect. Hence, the Law is called a pedagogue, which is strictly for children. Therefore, if something given in the Law suggests perpetuity, this is by reason of the One prefigured.

353. – Likewise, a Gloss here states that this translation of the priesthood was prefigured in 1 Sam (2:28), when the priesthood was transferred to Samuel, who was not of the tribe of Levi. But because Samuel was not a priest, this transfer seems rather to have prefigured by the transfer of the priesthood from Abiathar to Zadok, who was also a Levite. I answer that although Samuel was not a priest, he performed some priestly functions, because he offered sacrifices and anointed kings, namely, Saul and David. In this respect the priesthood had been transferred to him. Hence, it says in Ps. 98 (v. 6): ‘Moses and Aaron among his priests: and Samuel among them that call upon his name.’

354. – Likewise, contrary to the Gloss is the fact that he was not of the tribe of Levi, because in 1 Chronicles (7:23) Elkanah, who was his father, is himself numbered among the sons of Levi. I answer that Samuel was in some sense from the tribe of Judah, namely, through his mother; but in regard to his father he was of the tribe of Levi, but not through Aaron; in regard to his place he was from Mount Ephraim. For although eleven tribes had their own provinces, the tribe of Levi did not, but he took possession among them, and so he dwelt in Mount Ephraim.

355. – Then when he says, he of whom these things are spoken belonged to another tribe, he clarifies what he had said: first, that the priesthood was transferred; secondly, he explains this (v. 14).

356. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that the priesthood was transferred, because the one to whom the prophet said, ‘You are a priest forever,’ is of another tribe, namely, of Judah and not of Levi, as is clear from Matthew (1:3), from which tribe, namely, Judah, no one has served the altar.

But on the other hand, King Uzziah entered the temple to burn incense, as it says in 2 Chronicles (26:16). I answer that no one could lawfully attend on the altar or even do so with impunity. For Uzziah was grievously punished, because he was a leper, until he died.

If you say that it is wrong to say ‘no one,’ because the Blessed Virgin was of the tribe and family of Aaron, for she was related to Elizabeth, who was one of the daughters of Aaron (Lk. 1:5), I answer that among the families the most illustrious were the priestly and royal families. Hence, they were frequently joined in marriage, as is clear in the case of the first high priest, who took to wife the daughter of Aminadab, the sister of Nahshon, who was the leader of the tribe of Judah (Ex. 6:23). Furthermore, in 2 Kg (11) Jehoiada, a priest, took to wife Jehosheba, daughter of King Joram. Hence, it is possible that on one side, Elizabeth was of the tribe of Judah.

357. – Then he explains what he had said, saying, It is evident that our Lord descended from Judah: ‘The lion of the tribe of Judah has conquered’ (Rev. 5:5). In connection with that tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests. For the Law commanded that no one be entrusted with the ministry of the tabernacle, except from the tribe of Levi only; hence, in the tribe of Judah, Moses spoke nothing concerning priests.

358. – Then when he says, **This becomes even more evident**, because above he had presented one reason to prove that Christ’s priesthood is preferred over the Levitical and does away with it; he now presents the other reason, in which he shows why it is done away with and changed. To do this he makes use of a conditional, in the first of which he lays down two antecedents, and in the second two consequents. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he lays down those antecedents; secondly, he clarifies what he has said (v. 17).

359. – His reasoning is this: If a new priest arises, this will not be according to the Law of a carnal commandment, but according to the Law of eternal and incorruptible life; the reason being that the first was according to that Law. It is proper, therefore, to say that the new one be according to another law, if a new one does actually arise. But a new one does arise. In the major premise are two statements: one pertains to the Old Testament, namely, that it is a carnal commandment, and this because it had certain carnal observances, as circumcision and purifications of the flesh, and because it promised carnal rewards and punishments: ‘If you be willing and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land’ (Is. 1:19) ‘Justices of the flesh laid on them until the time of correction’ (Heb. 9:10). He lays down that antecedent when he says, **and this becomes even more evident, if according to the likeness of Melchizedek there arises another priest**. It is clear that it pertains to the New Testament, which is not dispensed by carnal things, but consists of spiritual things: for it is founded upon a spiritual power, by which a perpetual life is produced in us; and this because perpetual goods and punishments are promised in it: ‘But Christ, being come a high priest of the good things to come’ (Heb. 9:11); ‘And these shall go into everlasting punishment; but the just into life everlasting’ (Mt. 25:26). Furthermore, it does not consist

in carnal observances but in spiritual: 'The words I have spoken to you are spirit and life' (Jn. 6:64). And this is what he says, namely, that it is **according to the power of an indestructible life**.

360. – Then when he says, **For he testifies: 'You are a priest forever, after the order of Melchizedek'**, he manifests what he had said; and he emphasizes the phrase **forever**, because if the priesthood is eternal, it is clear that it involves perpetuity.

361. – Then when he says, **On the one hand, a former commandment is set aside**, he lays down two consequents: first, in regard to the voiding of the Old Testament; secondly, the institution of the New.

362. – The first consequent is that the Old Testament came about by the law of carnal commandments, and the other is then introduced. The first, therefore, is changed: and this is what he says, namely, there is a setting aside of the former commandment.

But nothing is set aside except what is evil: 'That he may know how to refuse the evil' (Is. 7:15). But the commandment is not evil 'The law indeed is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good' (Rom. 7:12). I answer that it was not evil in itself, but inasmuch as it was unsuited to the time. For the things of the Old Testament are not to be kept in the New Testament: 'Sacrifice and oblation you did not desire: then said I: behold, I come' (Ps. 39:8). Therefore, it is said to be set aside because of its weakness and uselessness. For that is said to be weak which cannot produce its effect; but the proper effect of the Law and of the priesthood is to justify. This the Law was unable to do: 'For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh; God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and of sin has condemned sin in the flesh' (Rom. 8:3); 'How turn you again to the weak and needy elements, which you desire to serve again?' (Gal. 4:9). Likewise, it is called useless, inasmuch as it prepared one for the faith: 'All these died according to the flesh, not having received the promises' (Heb. 11:13). But he shows why it is weak and useless when he says, it made nothing perfect in regard to justice or eternal life. Hence, it was imperfect, but it was made perfect by Christ.

363. – Then when he says, **on the other hand a better hope is introduced**, he lays down the second consequent from the second antecedent, saying, **a better hope is introduced by the new priest, through which we draw near to God**. For if a new priest arises, it is according to the power of an indestructible life (this is the antecedent); and the introduction of a better hope (this is the consequent): 'He has regenerated us unto a lively hope by the resurrection of Jesus Christ' (1 Pt 1:3). Likewise, through Him we draw near to God, for through sin we are separated from Him: 'But your iniquities have divided you between you and your God, and your sins have hid his face from you that he should not hear' (Is. 59:2). He, therefore, is the one who removes this and makes us draw near to God. He is that new Priest, namely, Christ, Who takes away the sins of the world: 'Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom also we have access into this grace' (Rom. 5:1).

Heb. 7:20-28

²⁰And it was not without an oath. ²¹Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath, “The Lord has sworn and will not change his mind, ‘You are a priest for ever.’” ²²This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant. ²³The former priests were many in number, because they were prevented by death from continuing in office; ²⁴but he holds his priesthood permanently, because he continues for ever. ²⁵Consequently he is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them. ²⁶For it was fitting that we should have such a high priest, holy, blameless, unstained, separated from sinners, exalted above the heavens. ²⁷He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins and then for those of the people; he did this once for all when he offered up himself. ²⁸Indeed, the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests, but the word of the oath, which came later than the law, appoints a Son who has been made perfect for ever.

364. – Having proved by the authority of the Psalmist that the priesthood of Christ is preferred to the Levitical and does away with it, the Apostle now proves the same thing by two other authorities: first, from the fact that he says, ‘The Lord has sworn’; secondly, that he says, ‘You are a priest’ (v. 23).

365. – In regard to the first he forms the following argument: ‘That which is instituted without an oath is less valid than that which is instituted with an oath. But the priesthood of Christ was instituted with an oath, as is clear from what he says, the Lord has sworn; but not the priesthood of Aaron, as is clear from Exodus (28:1): ‘Take unto you also Aaron’, therefore, etc.

In regard to the major premise he says, **and it was not without an oath**. Those who formerly became priests took their office without an oath, but this one was addressed with an oath. All this is set down to prove that the priesthood of Christ is firmer; because, as has been stated above, every promise made in the Old Testament by an oath is a sign of God’s unchangeable plan. Therefore, because that promise about Christ was made with an oath of David and to Abraham, Christ is called their son in a special way (Mt. 1:1). But that oath designates the eternity of Christ’s power: ‘His power is an everlasting power’ Dan (7:14); ‘And of his kingdom there will be no end’ (Lk. 1:33).

366. – This makes Jesus the surety of a better covenant, because His priesthood is firmer, which is evident, because it was set up with an oath. Therefore, it is necessary that something better and firmer be obtained by it.

But it should be noted that a priest is a mediator between God and the people: ‘I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you’ (Date: 5:5). But a priest should bring God and the people to

concord. And this is done, as it were, by a pact dealing with temporal goods, in which only the affection for carnal things rested, as it says in Ps. 72 (v. 5): ‘For what have I in heaven? and besides you what do I desire upon earth?’ Consequently, it was fitting that another priest should come to be a surety, i.e., a promise, of a better testament and of a better pact, because it is concerned with spiritual and stable goods; and this is Jesus: ‘I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the convenient which I made with their fathers’ (Jer. 31:31); ‘Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand’ (Mt. 4:17).

367. – Then when he says, **the former priests were many in number**, he uses another clause stated in the authority: **You are a priest forever**. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows why this phrase **forever**, is used; secondly, from this he shows that the priesthood of Christ has greater efficacy than the priesthood of Old Testament (v. 25).

368. – He shows that he is the true priest, because the others were prevented by death from continuing, because all must die. Hence, when Aaron died, Eleazar succeeded, as is clear from Numbers (20:28) and so on. For as we notice in natural things, which are signs of spiritual things, incorruptible things are not multiplied under the same species; hence, there is but one sun: so in the spiritual things in the Old Testament, which was imperfect, the priests were multiplied. This was a sign that the priesthood was corruptible, because incorruptible things are not multiplied in the same species. But the priest who is Christ is immortal, for He remains forever as the eternal Word of the Father, from Whose eternity redounds an eternity to His body, because ‘Christ rising from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9). Therefore, because he continues forever, he holds his priesthood permanently. Therefore, Christ alone is the true priest, but others are His ministers: ‘Let a man so account of us as the ministers of Christ’ (1 Cor. 4:1).

369. – Then (v. 25) he shows His efficacy. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows His efficacy; secondly, the mode of His efficacy (v. 25b).

370. – His efficacy lies in the fact that the cause is more potent than its effect; therefore, a temporal cause cannot produce an eternal effect. But Christ’s priesthood is eternal; but not the Levitical, as has been proved. Therefore Christ **is able to save for all time**. But this could not be done, unless He had divine power: ‘Israel is saved in the Lord with an eternal salvation’ (Is. 45:17).

371. – But the mode is that He goes by Himself to God. And he describes that mode from three standpoints, namely, from the excellence of His power, of His nature, and of His piety. Of His power, indeed, because by Himself.

But on the other hand one who goes to another is distant from him. But Christ is not distant from God. I answer that in those words the Apostle shows forth the two natures: namely, the human according to which it befits Him to come to God, because in it He is distant from God (but He does not go from a state of guilt to a state of grace, but He goes by the intellect's contemplation and by love and by the attainment of glory), and the divine nature by the fact that he says that He goes to God by Himself. For if He were pure man, He could not go by Himself: 'No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draw him' (Jn. 6:44). Therefore, when the Apostle says that He comes by Himself, he is showing forth His power: 'Walking in the greatness of his strength' (Is. 63:1). Therefore, He comes as man, but by Himself as God.

372. – He shows the excellence of His nature when he says, **always living**; for otherwise His priesthood would come to an end: 'I was dead and behold I am living forever and ever' (Rev. 1:18).

373. – He shows the excellence of His piety when he says, **to make intercession for them**, because, although He is so powerful, so lofty, yet along with this He is pious, for He makes intercession for us: 'We have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ, the just' (1 Jn. 2:1). He interposes for us, first, His human nature, which He assumed for us by representing; secondly, His most holy soul's desire, which He had for our salvation and with which He intercedes for us. Another version has, 'coming by Him,' and then those whom He saves are designated, because they come to God by faith in Him: 'Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access by faith into this grace' (Rom. 5:1).

374. – Then when he says, **for it was fitting that we have such a high priest**, he shows from Christ's excellence the excellence of His priesthood. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that the perfections of the conditions required for the priesthood of the Old Law suited Him; secondly, that He has no imperfections (v. 27).

375. – So he sets down four qualities in Him that were supposed to be in the priesthood of the Law: first, that he is holy: 'They offer the burnt offerings of the Lord and the bread of their God, and therefore they shall be holy' (Lev. 21:6). But Christ had this perfectly. For holiness implies purity consecrated to God: 'Therefore, also the Holy which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God' (Lk. 1:35); 'That which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit (Mt. 1:20); 'The saint of saints will be anointed' (Dan 9:24). Secondly, he should be innocent: 'Let them keep my precepts that they may not fall into sin' (Lev. 22:9). But, properly speaking, innocence is purity toward one's neighbor: 'The innocent in hands, and clean of heart: who has not taken his soul in vain, nor sworn deceitfully to his neighbor' (Ps. 23:4). But Christ was completely innocent, being One Who did not sin 'I have walked in my innocence' (Ps. 25:11). Thirdly, that he be unstained and this in regard to himself: 'Whosoever of our seed through their

families has a blemish, he shall not offer bread to his God' (Lev. 21:17). Of Christ it is said in a figure: 'It shall be a lamb without blemish' (Ex. 12:5). Fourthly, he must be separated from sinners: 'He shall not mingle the stock of his kindred with the common people of his nation' (Lev. 21:15). But Christ was perfectly separated from sinners: 'Blessed is the man who has not walked in the counsel of the ungodly nor stood in the way of sinners' (Ps. 1:1). This is, of course, true in regard to a like life: 'His life is not like other men's' (Wis. 2:15), but not in regard to His dealings with others, because 'He conversed with men' (Bar. 3:38) and this with a view to their conversion: 'Why does your master eat with sinners?' (Mt. 9:11). And to such a degree He was separated that He was made higher than the heavens, i.e., **exalted above the heavens**: 'He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high' (Heb. 1:3). Therefore, he is a sufficiently competent priest.

376. – Then when he says, **He has no need, like those high priests, to offer sacrifices daily, first for his own sins**, he removes from Him anything that was imperfect in the priesthood of the Law. But what was imperfect was that he needed the sacrifices of atonement: 'He shall offer the calf for himself; and the goat for the people (Lev. 16:11). Therefore, he prayed for himself; and not only once but frequently. The reason for this is that the law appoints men in their weakness as high priests: 'A weak man and of a short time' (Wis. 9:5). But the word of the oath established the Son (Who had none of these imperfections, but was completely perfect), Who is after the Law, a priest to continue forever. For He did not offer for His own sins but for ours: 'He was wounded for our iniquities' (Is. 53:5). Nor did He offer for us frequently, but only once: 'Christ died for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18). For His one offering is enough to take away the sins of the entire human race.

8-1

Heb. 8:1-5

¹Now the point in what we are saying is this: we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven, ²a minister in the sanctuary and the true tent which is set up not by man but by the Lord. ³For every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices; hence it is necessary for this priest also to have something to offer. ⁴Now if he were on earth, he would not be a priest at all, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. ⁵They serve a copy and shadow of the heavenly sanctuary; for when Moses was about to erect the tent, he was instructed by God, saying, “See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain.”

377. – Having proved the excellence of Christ’s priesthood over that of the Levitical on the part of the person, the Apostle now proves the same on the part of the priesthood itself. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows in a general way that Christ’s priesthood is more excellent than that of the Old Law; secondly, in detail (chap. 9). The first is divided into two parts: first, he states his thesis; secondly, he explains it (v. 3). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states the way in which he will present his teaching; secondly, he prefaces what he means to say (v. 1b).

378. – He says, therefore: **Now the point in what we are saying is this** [recapitulation]. A recapitulation is a brief synthesis containing many things. The word comes from ‘caput’ or ‘head,’ because, just as in the head are virtually and, as it were, summarily, contained all the things which are in the body, is in a recapitulation everything that has been said.

379. – Then (v. 1b) he prefaces what he means to say: first, the dignity of this priesthood; secondly, its office (v. 2).

380. – Its dignity is **that we have such a high priest, one who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in heaven**. The throne is judicial power, which befits certain persons as ministers of God, as all kings: ‘All the kings of the earth will adore him’ (Ps. 71:11), and all prelates: ‘Let a man so account of us as of Christ’s ministers (1 Cor. 4:1). Therefore, because Christ has judicial power, He is said to sit: ‘For the Father has given all judgment to the Son’ (Jn. 5:22). But because He has this in the most excellent manner after God, He sits on the right hand of majesty in the heavens, i.e., in the more prominent goods: ‘He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high’ (Heb. 1:3).

381. – The expression, ‘is seated,’ can be referred to Christ as God, and then He is seated in that way, because He has the same authority as the Father, although distinct in person; and so ‘majesty’ is taken for

the person of the Father. Or, to Christ as man: and this is more in keeping with the Apostle's intention, because he is speaking about the high priesthood of Christ, Who is a high priest as man. So He is seated in that way, because the assumed humanity has a certain association to the godhead; and He sits at the right hand to judge: 'Your majesty has been elevated above the heavens' (Ps. 8:3); 'He gave him power to judge, because he is the Son of man' (Jn. 5:27).

382. – Then when he says, **a minister of the holies**, he shows the dignity of his office. He says, minister of the sanctuary [holies], i.e., of the holy precincts, namely, of the sanctuary. For the ministers of old received the ministry of guarding sacred things and serving the tabernacle. But Christ had this in a more excellent manner, because He is a minister, not inasmuch as He is God, for then He is the author, but inasmuch as He is man: 'And passing he will minister until them' (Lk. 12:37). For the humanity of Christ is an organ of the divinity. Therefore, He is the minister of the holies, because He administers the sacraments of grace in the present life and of glory in the future. He is also the minister of the true tent [tabernacle] that cannot be removed' (Is. 33:20); 'Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle?' (Ps. 14:1). But the man Christ is a minister because all the goods of glory are dispensed by Him. But he says, **of the true**, for two reasons: first, because of its difference from the Old, which was a figure of it: 'Now all these things happened to them in figure' (1 Cor. 10:11). The New, therefore, is the truth of the former. Therefore, it is true, i.e., containing the truth in relations to the figure. Secondly, because the former was made by a man, but the other, namely, of grace and of glory by God alone: 'The Lord will give grace and glory' (Ps. 83:12); 'The grace of God, life everlasting' (Rom. 6:23). Hence, he says, **which is set up not by man but by the Lord**: 'We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God not made with hands, eternal in heaven' (2 Cor. 5:1).

383. – Then (v. 3) he explains in detail. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that Christ is a minister of certain holy things; secondly, that they are not of the Old Law (v. 4); thirdly, that He is a minister of greater things (v. 6).

384. – He forms the following argument: **Every high priest is appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices**; and in this respect He is called a minister of the holies. But Christ is a high priest, as has been stated above. Therefore, it is necessary that He have something to offer: 'Every priest taken from among men is ordained for men in the things that appertain to God, that He may offer up gifts and sacrifices for sin' (Heb. 5:1). The sacrifice is offered with animals; the gifts with anything else: 'They offer the burnt offerings of the Lord and the bread of their God' (Lev. 21:6). But because it was necessary that Christ have something to offer, He offered Himself. But it was a clean oblation, because His flesh had no stain of sin: 'And it shall be a lamb without blemish, a male, of one year' (Ex. 12:5). Furthermore, it was suitable, because it was fitting that a man should satisfy for man: 'He offered himself unspotted unto God' (Heb. 9:14). It was also fit to be immolated, because His flesh was mortal: 'God sending his own Son, in the likeness of sinful flesh and sin' (Rom. 8:3). Also it was the same as the one to whom it was

offered: 'I and the Father are one' (Jn. 10:30). And it unites to God those for whom it is offered: 'That they may be one, as thou, Father, in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us' (Jn. 17:21).

385. – Then (v. 4) he shows that Christ is not a minister of the sacrifices of the Law. In regard to this he does three things: first, he introduces a consequence; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 4b); thirdly, he proves it by an authority (v. 4c).

386. – The consequence is this: **If he were on earth** (this is the antecedent), **he would not be a priest at all** (this is the consequent). Hence, the consequence is one conditional proposition. And it is read in a number of ways: first, according to a Gloss: for 'if that which is offered were on earth, he would not be a priest.' This can be understood in two ways: in one way so that the sense would be: If that which is offered were something earthly, Christ would not be a priest. As if to say: There would be no need for a priesthood, because there would be many to offer such things.

But was not the flesh of Christ earthly? I answer that materially speaking it was earthly: 'The earth is given into the hand of the wicked' (Jb. 9:24). But it is said not to be earthly by reason of the union: 'He that comes from heaven is above all' (Jn. 3:31), i.e., the Son of God, Who united it to Himself. Also, by reason of the active power of the Holy Spirit, Who formed it; and by reason of the fruit, because His oblation is not ordained to obtaining something earthly: 'You are of this world; I am not of this world' (Jn. 8:23). This is the first and better explanation.

The second is this: 'Even if,' i.e., although that which is offered 'is on earth,' because it is necessary that something be offered, 'He would not be a priest,' but someone worthy, because no one could be found worthy to offer it.

387. – There are three readings in which the one offering is understood: first, in general, so that the sense is this: If there were another earthly priest, who could offer heavenly things, Christ would not be a priest. Another is of Christ specifically: If Christ were an earthly priest, the right of the priesthood would not belong to Him, since there are priests who offer gifts according to the law. Still another is the following: If Christ were still on earth, in the sense that He had not yet ascended, He would not be a priest, because He would not have completed His priesthood.

388. – But according to the first explanation the reading is continued in the following way: There would be many who according to the law would offer such gifts, namely, **those who serve a copy [exemplar] and shadow of heavenly things**. The sacraments of the Old Law were figures of other things in two respects: first, in regard to knowledge; secondly, in regard to fulfillment. In regard to knowledge he says, exemplar, because in the Old Law, as in an exemplar could be read that to which our knowledge should be led.

But it seems that he is speaking in an improper sense: for an exemplar is prior to that of which it is an exemplar, namely, an example. But heavenly things are prior and were not made according to a

likeness of the Old Law, but rather conversely. I answer that something is said to be prior in two ways: in one way, absolutely, and that is the way the objection proceeds; in another way, in relation to its end, and then it is true that those are not prior.

In regard to the second he says, **a shadow**, because just as a shadow represents a body without ever becoming a body, so those things represented the New Testament: ‘For the Law, having a shadow of the good things to come, not the very image of the things’ (Heb. 10:1).

389. – Then he proves the reasonableness of the consequence when he says, **when Moses was about to erect the tabernacle, he was instructed by God saying, ‘See that you make everything according to the pattern which was shown you on the mountain’** (Ex. 25:40), because inferior things naturally tend to a likeness of superior things. For the Lord wished to lead us by sensible things to intelligible and spiritual things: ‘Do you know the order of heaven, and can you set down the reason thereof on the earth?’ (Jb. 38:33).

8-2

Heb. 8:6-10b

⁶But as it is, Christ has obtained a ministry which is as much more excellent than the old as the covenant he mediates is better, since it is enacted on better promises. ⁷For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second. ⁸For he finds fault with them when he says: “The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; ⁹not like the covenant that I made with their fathers on the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; for they did not continue in my covenant, and so I paid no heed to them, says the Lord. ¹⁰This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their minds, and write them on their hearts.”

390. – Having proved that Christ is a high priest and, consequently, a minister of holy things, but not according to the Old Law, the Apostle now shows that He is a minister of greater and better things than they had been. In regard to this he does three things: first, he prefaces his intent; secondly, he assigns its cause (v. 6b); thirdly, he proves (v. 7).

391. – He says, therefore: I say that He does not have anything earthly to offer; but now, i.e., in the time of grace, **he has obtained**, i.e., received by lot, **a better ministry**, i.e., a worthier priesthood. The priesthood of Christ is called a ministry, because it does not belong to Him except in the sense that He was a minister as a man: ‘I say that Christ Jesus was minister of the circumcision for the truth of God’ (Rom. 15:8). But he says, **he has obtained**, i.e., received by lot, because what is obtained by lot is awaited from the Lord: ‘My lots are in your hands’ (Ps. 30:16). Therefore, all things that happen according to the dispensation of divine decree are said to be given by lot; and such are the effects of grace: ‘In whom we also are called by lot’ (Eph. 1:11), i.e., by divine election, because when human judgment fails, men consult God’s choice and arrangement by casting lots, as happened in the choice of Matthias (Ac. 1:26). Hence it says in Proverbs (16:33): ‘Lots are cast into the lap, but they are disposed of by the Lord.’ Christ, indeed, obtained that ministry by lot, i.e., by divine dispensation.

392. – Then when he says, **which is as much more excellent than the Old as the covenant he mediates is better**, he assigns the cause why this ministry is greater. For every priest is a mediator. But He is the mediator of a better covenant, namely, of man to God, because by Him we are made partakers of the divine nature, as it says in 2 Pt. 1:4). He also offers our gifts to God; therefore, the Apostle says: ‘The mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5). In the Old Testament temporal things were promised: ‘If you be willing, and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land’ (Is. 1:19); but here heavenly things. Therefore, this one is better in regard to what it promises men. Also, in the Old

Law there were precepts pertaining to the worship of God, namely, the ceremonial precepts, and some that pertained to correct conduct, namely, the moral precepts, which continue; but the others do not. But in the New Law counsels are added to the precepts and they are given to the perfect, who are capable of spiritual things. Consequently, the precepts remain the same, but the promises are different, because there they were a figure, but here the truth expressed by the figure. Therefore, this testament is better throughout.

393. – Then when he says, **For if that first covenant had been faultless, there would have been no occasion for a second**, he proves that the testament of which Christ is mediator is better for the following reason: If the first testament were faultless, another would not be sought to correct its defects. But another is sought, therefore, etc.

But on the other hand it says in Romans (7:7): ‘Is the law sin? God forbid.’ Therefore, it is incorrect to say that it is not faultless. I answer that something can belong to the Law in two ways: either according to its end, and then it is good; or by reason of those to whom it was given, and then it is said to have a fault in two ways: first, because it did not confer the power to cleanse one’s sins: ‘It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away’ (Heb. 10:4). Secondly, because it did not give a helping grace to avoid sins, but merely to recognize them; hence, it was an occasion of sin: ‘For I had not known concupiscence, if the law did not say: Thou shalt not covet’ (Rom. 7:7). And so it is said not to have been faultless, because in it men remained in their sins.

But he says, **there would have been no occasion for a second**. For just as a body is never altogether at rest but is always changing until it reaches its due place, so, as long as something is had imperfectly, desire does not rest but always stretches beyond, until it comes to what is perfect. Therefore, the place for a second was sought by man, who desired, but much more by God, Who is said to seek because of his desire for our salvation.

394. – Then (v. 8) he proves the truth of the consequent, namely, that a place is sought for a testament; and this on the authority of Jeremiah (3:31): **The days will come, says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**. In regard to this he does two things: first, he prefaces the authority; secondly, he argues from it. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he prefaces the prophecy about giving a new testament; secondly, he describes it (v. 9). Again, the first is divided into three parts: in the first he shows that the time for giving the New Testament was favorable; secondly, the perfection of the New Testament (v. 8b); thirdly, to whom it was given (v. 8c).

395. – He says, therefore: For the Lord finds fault, not with the Law but with them who were under the Law, and says: **Behold, the days shall come and I will establish with house of Israel and with the house of Judah a new covenant**. This is the authority, which is not given in exactly those words but with a few changes. For in Jeremiah (31:31) we read: ‘Behold the days shall come, says the Lord, and I will

make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, not according to the covenant I made with their fathers, in that day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt: the covenant which they made void and I had dominion over them.' Thus, it is evident that a few words were changed.

He says in regard to the time being favorable: **the days shall come**, i.e., the time of grace, which is compared to a day and which is illuminated by the sun of justice: 'The night is passed, and the day is at hand' (Rom. 13:12).

396. – In regard to the perfection of the New Covenant he says, I will perfect a new covenant. He says, **I will perfect**, which implies perfection: 'Behold I make all things new' (Rev. 21:5). But that word, **perfect**, is not found there, but Revelation uses it to signify the perfection of the New Testament: 'The Lord shall make a consumption and an abridgement in the midst of all the land' (Is. 10:23). For the New Covenant was perfect in regard to instructing until life, and this instruction extends not only to general information about justice, but to perfect information: 'Unless your justice abound more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 5:20). Furthermore, in the Old Testament there were only figures, but in the New the truth of the figures; so the New completes and perfects the Old.

397. – In regard to the third he says, **with the house of Israel and Judah**.

But is it given to the Jews alone? No, because 'all are not Israelites that are of Israel' (Rom. 9:6); furthermore, 'not they that are the children of the flesh are the children of God, but they that are the children of the promise, are accounted for the seed' (Rom. 9:8). They, therefore, who have obtained God's grace are Israel by faith and Judah by confession: 'With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation' (Rom. 10:10). But he says, **with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah**, for three reasons: first, because Christ personally preached to the Jews but not to the Gentiles: 'I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel' (Mt. 15:24). Secondly, because the Gentiles were made partakers of the New Testament as a graft inserted in a good olive tree partakes of its fatness (Rom. 11:17). Thirdly, because in the time of Rehoboam and Jeroboam the kingdom of Judah was divided from the kingdom of the ten tribes which continued in idolatry; but the kingdom of Judah clung more to God, but not altogether. Therefore, he touched both.

398. – Then (v. 9) he describes the New Covenant: first, by its difference from the Old; secondly, by its own qualities. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the distinction between the Old and New Testaments; secondly, the infirmity of the Old (v. 9b).

399. – For someone could ask: Is the New like the Old? Therefore, as though answering this he says: No, because it is **not like the covenant I made with their fathers**. In this he shows that the Old is not to be observed along with the New: 'Stand fast, and be not held again under the yoke of bondage' (Gal. 5:1);

‘Neither do they put new wine into old bottles’ (Mt. 9:27); ‘so that we should serve in newness of spirit and not in the oldness of the letter’ (Rom 7:6). For if something is found in the Old which the Gentiles are supposed to observe, it must be referred to the spiritual meaning, as it says in Is (19:21): ‘They shall worship him with sacrifices and offerings,’ all of which is to be understood spiritually.

400. – Then (v. 9b) he shows the defect of the Old Testament: first, from the way it was delivered; secondly, from the outcome (v. 9b).

401. – For the Old Testament was delivered to servants and to the infirm: to servants, because they had at one time left their thralldom in Egypt, in regard to which he says, to lead them out of the land of Egypt: ‘The one from Mount Sinai, engendering unto bondage, which is Hagar’ (Gal. 4:24), and because it was a law of servile fear: ‘You have not received the spirit of adoption again in fear’ (Rom. 8:15). The slight difference between the Old and New Testaments is fear and love. Likewise, to the infirm, because by itself it could not help; in regard to this he says, I took them by the hand, which is proper to the infirm: ‘You have held me by my right hand’ (Ps. 72:23); ‘For what the law could not do in that it was weak’ (Rom. 8:3). But he says, with their fathers, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, with whom He made a special covenant: ‘He has remembered his covenant forever: The word which he commanded to a thousand generations, which he made to Abraham: and his oath to Isaac. And he appointed the same to Jacob for a law’ (Ps. 104:8). But he promised carnal things to those who came out of Egypt.

402. – Then when he says, **for they did not continue in my covenant**, he shows the failings of the Old Testament as far as guilt was concerned. In regard to this guilt he says, **because they did not continue in my covenant**, namely, because it was not written on their hearts. Hence, right after the Law was given, they made a golden calf: ‘They made also a calf in Horeb, and they adored the graven thing’ (Ps. 105:19). In regard to punishment he says, **so I paid no heed to them**, for a person is said not to regard something, when he permits it to perish. So he regarded them not, because He permitted them to be destroyed by the destroyer: ‘You have despised all of them that fall off from your judgments’ (Ps. 118:118).

403. – Then (v. 10) he describes the qualities of the New Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he describes the way it was announced; secondly, its effect (v. 10b).

404. – He says, therefore, **This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days**. Making implies a suitable order; hence, he says, **after those days**, i.e., after the Law was given. For a new law should have been given after the old; just as a master is given after a pedagogue, in order that man recognize his infirmity. This, therefore, shows the fitness of the time when the New Testament was given.

The manner in which it was given is twofold: in one way by externals, by proposing words suited to their understanding. This man can do; and that is the way the Old Testament was given. In another way

by acting inwardly, and this is peculiar to God: ‘the inspiration of the Almighty gives understanding’ (Jb. 32:8). This is the way the New Testament was given, because it consists in the outpouring of the Holy Spirit, Who instructs inwardly. But it is not enough to know, for one must act. Therefore, He first enlightens the intellect to understand; hence, he says, **I will put my laws into their minds**. He uses the plural, because there are various precepts and counsel. This the Holy Spirit does: ‘His unction teaches you’ (1 Jn. 2:27); ‘He will teach you all things (Jn. 14:26). Furthermore, He inclines the will to act well; hence, it is impressed on their heart. In regard to this he says, **and write them on their hearts**, i.e., I will write charity on their knowledge: ‘Above all things have charity, which is the bond of perfection’ (Col. 3:14); ‘The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us’ (Rom. 5:5). This is the epistle of which he says in 2 Cor. (3:3): ‘Not in ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tablets of stone, but in the fleshly tablets of the heart.’

8-3

Heb. 8:10b-13

^{10b} “**And I will be their God, and they shall be my people.** ¹¹**And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, ‘Know the Lord,’ for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest.** ¹²**For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more.”** ¹³**In speaking of a new covenant he treats the first as obsolete. And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.**

405. – Having mentioned the qualities of the New Testament from the way it was given, the Apostle now describes three of its effects: the first is man’s perfect union with God; the second is perfect knowledge of God (v. 11); the third is the remission of sins (v. 12).

406. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the help of God’s grace is required, if man is to be united with God, because one’s own power is not capable of this: ‘I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore, have I drawn you, taking pity on you’ (Jer. 31:3): first, therefore, he touches on that union from God’s side; secondly, from man’s side (v. 10c).

He says, therefore: **I will be their God**. Now the name ‘God’ signifies universal providence. Therefore, He is our God, when He has a care for us and draws our hearts to Himself. Therefore, from the fact that he says, **I will be their God**, the effect follows that **they shall be my people**, i.e., they will show themselves my people. For, as Augustine says in *The City of God*: A people is an assembled multitude joined together by the consent of right and common utility. Therefore, when they consent to the rights of the divine law in order to be useful to each other and tend to God, then they are God’s people: ‘And they shall be his people; and God himself with them shall be their God’ (Rev. 21:3).

407. – Then when he says, **And they shall not teach every one his fellow**, he lays down the second effect of the New Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the sign of that effect; secondly, the effect itself (v. 11b).

408. – The sign of perfect knowledge is that a person does not need to be taught, because teaching is the way to the acquisition of knowledge; therefore, teaching ceases when knowledge has been perfectly acquired.

But does not one person teach another in the New Testament? For according to the letter it seems not. Yet the Apostle styles himself the teacher of the Gentiles: ‘Some pastors and teachers’ (Eph. 4:11); ‘He that teaches, in doctrine’ (Rom. 12:7). I answer that what is stated here can be understood in two ways: in one way as referring to the present state, and then it is not verified universally of all, but only of the original founders of the New Testament, namely, the Apostles, who were instructed immediately by

God when 'he opened their understanding that they might understand the scriptures' (Lk. 24:25).

Therefore, the Apostles were made knowers perfectly and were not instructed by others, but received infused wisdom directly from Christ. In another way, as referring to the future state in heaven, to which we are brought by the New Testament but not by the Old. And so what is said here is universally true.

409. – But men in glory are equal to angels, not greater. Yet according to Dionysius one angel can teach another by enlightening him. Therefore, a man in glory can teach another one. I answer that there are two kinds of knowledge in the good angels: the one makes them beatified, namely, the knowledge of the divinity, which alone makes them beatified, as Augustine says in the *Confessions*: 'Blessed is he that knows you.' The other is the knowledge of anything distinct from God, such as God's effects, and this knowledge does not cause beatitude. Therefore, in regard to the first, one does not teach another, because one is not beatified by means of another, but by God directly: 'In your light we shall see the light' (Ps. 35:10). But in regard to the other, which is concerned with certain mysteries, one does teach another; and this will continue perhaps until the end of the world, as long as the execution of God's effects continues; hence he adds, **know the Lord**. As if to say: He does not receive God's knowledge. He says, his neighbor and brother, because even though according to Augustine all men must be loved out of charity, if you cannot benefit all, then you should benefit those who are joined to you either naturally, as blood relatives, or by some other tie, as your neighbor.

410. – **For all shall know me from the least to the greatest of them.** This is the reason why one will not teach another, because all will know the Lord: 'We shall see him as he is' (1 Jn. 3:2). But it is in this vision that beatitude consists: 'This is eternal life: That they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3); 'Let him that glories, glory in this, that he understands and knows me' (Jer. 9:24). And the blessed have this teaching not from one another but from God alone: 'All your children shall be taught of the Lord' (Is. 54:13). But the phrase, **from the least to the greatest** can be understood in two ways: in one way so that the older saints are called greater; then the greater and lesser would be taken according to the order of time. Therefore, all will know God, because each will receive his own penny (Mt. 20:10). Or he says this to show the different rewards, because although all will know, one will know more than another: 'He that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 5:19). For the reward corresponds to the merit; and this is against those who say that all punishments and all merits will be equal and, consequently, all rewards. But against this opinion 1 Corinthians (15:41) states: 'Star differs from star in glory.'

411. – Then when he says, **because I will be merciful to their iniquities**, he states the third effect, which is the remission of guilt, which the Old Testament was unable to do: It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away' (Heb. 10:4).

He says, therefore: **I will be merciful**. But iniquity differs from sin, because iniquity is opposed to justice which, strictly speaking, is always toward someone else; therefore, iniquity refers to that by which one person injures another: ‘Your wickedness may hurt a man that is like you’ (Jb. 35:8). But a sin refers to any defect in an action, because it implies a disorder; hence, iniquity is, properly speaking, against one’s neighbor, but sin against oneself. This is, strictly speaking, but in a wide sense both are the same. In regard to this he says, **I will be merciful toward their iniquities**, namely, in the present life by relaxing the punishment; **and their sins I will remember no more**, namely, in the future by punishing sins: ‘I will not remember all his iniquities which he has done’ (Ez. 18:22): ‘Forgive us our sins for your name’s sake’ (Ps. 78:9); ‘Remember not our former iniquities’ (Ps. 78:8); ‘The gifts and the call of God are without repentance’ (Rom. 11:29), i.e., God does not repent that He remitted our sins here, as though to punish them again.

412. – Then when he says, **in speaking of a new covenant**, he argues as though from an authority he cited. And he forms this argument: A new is said only in relation to an old. But whatever is called old is, as it were, close to cessation. Therefore, in speaking of a new covenant, **he treats the first as obsolete**, i.e., it gives us to understand that the former is old. **And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away**. Therefore, if it is old, it should be cast out: ‘The new coming on, you shall cast away the old’ (Lev. 26:10). Therefore, in saying, **a new**, he designates the cessation of the old. But, properly speaking, nothing is ancient except what is subject to time; and things subject to time cease in time. Therefore, it is fitting that the old should cease. But he says, **and becoming obsolete**, in regard to inanimate things; but **grows old** in regard to animate things. Yet it should be noted that where we have, **their sins**, another version has ‘sin’ and then it refers to original sin, which is common to all.

9-1

Hebrews 9:1-5

¹Now even the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. ²For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. ³Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, ⁴having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; ⁵above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

413. – Having showed in general the dignity of the New Testament as compared to the Old, the Apostle now shows the same in particular by reaching down to the individuals in each Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he compares things of the Old Testament with those of the New to show the dignity of the New; secondly, he clarifies some things he had presupposed (chap. 10). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he explains what was present in the Old Testament; secondly, he shows what it signified (v. 8); thirdly, from these facts he argues to his conclusion (v. 15). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes the qualities of the Old Testament; secondly, he explains what he had said (v. 2).

414. – In regard to the first it should be noted that both the Old and New Testaments were instituted in order that by them the soul might come to God. But two things are needed for this, namely, withdrawal from sin and union with God. The first is brought about by justification, and the second by sanctification; and in both Testaments justification and sanctification took place. Hence, he says: So we have said that the former one had grown old. But what were the qualities of that Old Testament? It was such that it **had regulations for worship**, i.e., of latreia. For in the Old there were washings, by which they were cleansed not from the stain of sin, but from certain irregularities, which hindered them from the worship of God. Thus, after touching a corpse or anything unclean, they could not enter the tabernacle, until they were purified by certain washings. Therefore, they were called the 'justifications of worship', because by them they were made fit for divine worship. This is treated in Leviticus (chap. 22). 'Justifications, i.e., washings, purified so that they could approach' (Jerome). But their sanctification was a worldly sanctuary.

415. – Now 'worldly' is sometimes taken for any duration: 'forever and ever' (Ps. 109:3); sometimes it signifies the world itself: 'Demas has left me, loving this world' (2 Tim. 4:9). Therefore, that sanctification can be called 'worldly,' because it is temporal and not perpetual. But the Greek text does not take it that way, because it says, 'mundane holy.' Hence, a difference between the New Testament

and the Old was that, although both are bodily, the former contains grace and is holy, and in it the divine power works salvation under cover of visible things. This was not so in the Old Testament, because it contained no grace in itself: 'How turn you again to the weak and needy elements?' (Gal. 4:9).

416. – Then when he says, **For a tent was prepared**, he explains what he has said: first, in regard to the disposition of the tabernacle; secondly, as to the ministry of the priests (v. 6).

417. – In regard to the first, to understand the literal meaning, it should be noted that the Lord commanded a tabernacle to be made in the desert. It was to be twenty cubits or paces long, and ten wide, with an entrance facing the east. In front of the entrance a curtain hung from four pillars. There was a small tent in which was the altar of holocausts. But all this was left unmentioned by the Apostle, because it contributed nothing to his thesis.

In the tabernacle as you faced west, before an area ten cubits long and ten wide was hung a veil, which divided one area ten cubits long from the other twenty cubits long. The area twenty cubits long is called the sanctuary and the first tabernacle, the other of ten cubits in length is called the holy of holies and the second tabernacle.

418. – This distinction can be explained in two ways: in one way, because the things of the Old Testament were a figure of the New, and the New a figure of the heavenly country. Thus, therefore, by the first tabernacle was signified the Old Testament, and by the second, the New. In another way, by the first tabernacle the present Church, and by the second, heavenly glory. Therefore, inasmuch as it signifies the Old Testament, it is a figure of a figure; but inasmuch as it signifies the present Church, which in turn signifies future glory, it is a figure of the truth in regard to each. In regard to these he does two things: first, he describes what was in the first; secondly, in the second (v. 3).

419. – In the first tabernacle were three things, namely, the golden candlestick on the south. It was made in the following way: from a long shaft proceeded six branches, as it were, six arms, namely, three from the right side and three from the left, so that at the top were seven branches, in each of which burned a lamp. Then in each arm were four things, namely, the arm which divided into three cups, namely, cups, bowls, and lilies, because two parts were joined there. At the end of each part was a cup in which two cups are joined in the manner of a nut, and two revolving bowls and two leaves of a lily. Then in the northern area was a golden table upon which twelve freshly baked loaves were placed on the Sabbath, and over each one was incense burning on a paten of gold. Those loaves, which were called the Bread of the Presence, remained there until the Sabbath, when they were removed and others put in their place. Furthermore, in the middle was a golden altar for burning sweet-smelling thyme to prevent the house from stinking from the vast quantity of blood pouring from the victims. By the candlestick, which gives light, and by the table was designated that those who serve the altar should live off the altar. Therefore, he says, **for a tabernacle**, i.e., the front part of the tabernacle, was made first, in which were the

candlesticks, which were one as to substance but many as to branches. This was to the south: and a table to the north and the presentation of the loaves, i.e., the Bread of the Presence. This part is called the Holy Place. All this is treated in detail in Exodus (chaps. 25, 26, 27).

420. – Then when he says, **Behind the veil the second tabernacle called the Holy of Holies**, he describes the things that were in the second tabernacle, namely, the ark of the covenant made of incorruptible sethim wood, covered about on every part, i.e., inside and outside, with gold. In the ark were three things: a golden urn that had manna in memory of the benefit bestowed on them; the rod of Aaron that had blossomed (Num. 17:8) in memory of Aaron's priesthood, lest a stranger should presume to approach, and the tables of the covenant in memory of the Law. Then, over the ark were two Cherubim, who touched each other with two wings and touched the two sides of the tabernacle with the other two. Between the two wings, with which they touched each other, was a golden table of the same length and width as the ark, namely, two cubits in length and a cubit and a half in width, overshadowing the mercy seat. Hence, it served as a throne from which God would listen, to be re-propitiated toward the people: 'You that sit upon the cherubim before Ephraim, Benjamin and Manasseh' (Ps. 79:2). But the ark was, as it were, a foot stool. The two cherubim facing each other looked at the mercy seat. But the Apostle adds a fourth item, namely, the golden altar of incense, concerning which some say that it was the altar between the holies, as has been said. The priests entered every day into the holies, which was outside, to perform the mysteries; but into the holy of holies the high priest once a year with blood. Then he filled that censer with thyme, so that from the smoke ascended a cloud which covered the holy of holies, so that it would not be seen by anyone outside. Those, therefore, are the things which were beyond the veil, which was the second tabernacle and called the Holy of Holies on account of its dignity, as the Blessed Mother is called the Virgin of virgins anthonomastically, having a golden censer and the ark in which was a golden urn, over which, namely, the ark (not that they had feet over it, but wings only) were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat, namely, with their wings, of which it is not necessary to speak now, i.e., pursue with words, in detail.

421. – But in 1 Kg (8:9) it says that 'in the ark there was nothing else but the two tables of stone.' I answer that this is true as regards its principal purpose, because that was what the ark was principally made for, as it says in Exodus (25:16).

422. – In regard to what they signified, it should be noted that all the ceremonies of the Law were ordained to one thing according to that state; but to something else, insofar as they were figurative, namely, inasmuch as they represented Christ. As to the first, they were all instituted to represent God's magnificence. But that was represented only in the effects. Those effects have, as it were, a twofold world: one is upper, namely, that of incorporeal substances, and that by the holy of holies; the other of the lower, sense-perceptible world, and that was represented by the Holy Place. In the upper world are three things: God, the reasons of things and the angels. But God is utterly incomprehensible; therefore, there

was a seat left unoccupied, because He cannot be comprehended by a creature except from his effects. That seat was the propitiatory or mercy seat, as has been said. But the angels were signified by the cherubim on account of their wisdom; hence, even the philosophers call angels intellectual substances. There were two, to designate that they were not set there to be adored, because it had been said in Deuteronomy (6:4): ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord.’ The fact that they looked at the mercy seat shows that they do not cease contemplating God: ‘Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father in heaven’ (Mt. 18:10). The reasons of things are signified by the ark. But the ones in this world pertain to wisdom, which is signified by the tablets, or to power, which is signified by the rod; or to goodness, which is signified by the manna, which is sweet, because whatever sweetness is found in the creature is from God’s goodness. But because the reasons of things, which exist intelligibly in God, exist in a sense-perceptible manner in bodily creatures, therefore, just as there was an intellectual light in the tablets, so in the holies there was a corporeal light. There the manna, here the loaves; there the rod, here the altar, which pertains to the priest’s office.

423. – But inasmuch as Christ was prefigured by them, they are all found in Him: first, as to the holies, for He is a candlestick of light: ‘I am the light of the world’ (Jn. 8:12). In it are six orders: three on the left, namely, the perfect of the Old Testament; and three on the right, namely, of the New Testament. They are designated in Ezekiel (chap. 14): By Noah, prelates; by Daniel, contemplatives; by Job, the actives. Those branches receive light and impart it: ‘As every man has received grace, ministering the same one to another’ (1 Pt 4:10). The cups furnish the drink of wisdom; the bowls for ready obedience; the lilies for the end of eternal life; the seven lamps are the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit. Again, Christ is a table of refreshment. The twelve loaves are the doctrine of the Apostles and their successors; they are put out on the Sabbath of hope to the Sabbath of hope; and if in the meantime one is removed by death, another is substituted. But on the great Sabbath all will be removed. In the interior was the propitiatory, and Christ is the propitiation of our sins’ (1 Jn. 2:2). The two angels are the two testaments looking peacefully at Christ; or all the angels serving Christ in concord and unity of spirit: ‘Angels came and ministered to him’ (Mt. 4:11); ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to him’ (Dan 7:10); ‘All are ministering spirits’ (Heb. 1:14). They desire to look on Christ and they overshadow the propitiatory, i.e., guard Christ’s Church. Or because by their ministry occurred visions and apparitions in which Christ was prefigured overshadowingly. The ark made of sethim wood is Christ’s pure and most precious flesh, which is called a gold urn because of His wisdom full of the sweetness of the godhead. The tablets are His wisdom. The rod is His eternal priesthood, or it is Christ’s power; and the manna the sweetness of grace given by the priesthood of Christ or by obedience to His commandments, as a man obeys the power. But because no one has grace without having sinned, except Christ and His mother, it is necessary to have a mercy seat.

9-2

Heb. 9:6-10

⁶These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; ⁷but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people. ⁸By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing ⁹(which is symbolic for the present age). According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, ¹⁰but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

424. – Having described the things which pertain to the Old Testament so far as the disposition of the tabernacle was concerned, the Apostle now continues with the office of the ministers: first, with those who look to the holies; secondly, with those who look to the holy of holies (v. 7).

425. – To understand the literal meaning of this, it should be noted that, as has been stated above, there was in the forepart of the tabernacle near the center the altar of thyme or of incense, which is the same thing, and the golden candlestick; but at the southern part opposite, the table of proposition. Every day in the morning and in the evening the priest entered the holies for two reasons: to dress the lamps and to renew the incense, in order that light and all good odor might be continually present in the holies. He says, therefore: **Now these preparations**, namely, which pertain to the appearance of the tabernacle, **having been thus made, the priests go continually into the outer tent [first tabernacle] performing their ritual duties**: not to sacrifice in the holies, because they sacrificed on the altar of holocausts in front of the door of the tabernacle under the sky; but he calls the renewal of the incense and the devotion of the offerers a sacrifice.

426. – Then (v. 7) he mentions the office of the ministers in regard to the holy of holies. Here it should be noted that, as it says in Leviticus (16:30) on the day of atonement (which occurred on the tenth day of the seventh month, namely, September, which is the seventh month after our March, which coincides with part of our April, when the Jewish year begins: ‘This month shall be to you the beginning of months: it shall be the first in the months of the year’ (Ex. 12:2), for they began their month with the full moon which always begins in March, unless prevented by an embolism), the high priest offered a calf for himself and his whole house, and a goat for the sin of the people. When these were immolated, he took some of their blood and filled the thurible with the burning coals from the altar of holocausts, which was in the court in front of the tabernacle, and with all these things entered into the holy of holies to expiate

the tabernacle with blood, sprinkling some of the blood on the veil. After he came out, he used the same blood to anoint the altar of incense. He did this once a year.

427. – Hence, he says, **but in the second tabernacle**, which is called the holy of holies, **only the high priest goes, and he but once a year**. A Gloss says that he could enter oftener without blood, but only once with blood. But this is recorded as happening only when the camp site was changed, because when Aaron and his sons entered to wrap the sanctuary and to appoint the burdens every man was to carry, as is clear from Num. 4:16. Nevertheless, once a year the high priest entered and not without taking blood, which he offered for himself and the people's errors, i.e., sins: 'They err that work evil' (Prov 14:22). For every wicked person is ignorant, as it says in the *Ethics*. But this is treated in Leviticus (chap. 16), where the rite of atonement is described.

Mystically, by the first tabernacle is designed the present Church, in which the faithful should sacrifice themselves: 'Present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, pleasing unto God' (Rom. 12:1) 'A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit' (Ps. 50:19). They should also sacrifice their property in alms: 'By such sacrifices God's favor is obtained' (Heb. 13:16). But the high priest alone, i.e., Christ in soul and body, entered into the holy of holies, i.e., into the heavenly country.

Yet according to the letter the intention of the Apostle is that the Old Law is signified by the holy, and by the holy of holies the state of the New Testament and heaven, because one enters heaven by the New Law.

428. – Hence, he continues: **the Holy Spirit signifying this**, where he explains what is signified by this: first, in regard to the Old Testament; secondly, in regard to the New (v. 11). In the first part he does two things: first, he describes the office of the ministers in regard to the first; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 9).

429. – It should be noted that the priests entered into the holies every day; but into the second, which was beyond the veil the high priest alone once a year. Hence, in regard to those ministers there were two things there: one that entered everyday in the first; the other that there was a veil in front of the second. Hence, the interposition of the veil signifies that heavenly things were veiled from them. Furthermore, the fact that they did not enter signifies that the Old Testament is not the way to enter heaven before Christ's coming. He says, therefore: I say that this was thus accomplished, the Holy Spirit indicating this: 'Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pt 1:21). This is against the heretics who say that the Old Testament was not from the Holy Spirit, but from an evil god. By indicating what? That **the way into the holies was not yet made opened, as long as the former tabernacle**, i.e., the Old Testament signified by the first tabernacle, **was still standing**. For as long as the Old Testament endured, the way into the holies, namely, Christ, Who says: 'I am the way' (Jn. 14:6) had not yet come; for He is the door by which one enters into the holies: 'I am the door' (Jn. 10:9). But He was not yet made manifest, because He was still hiding under the shadows of the

figures of the letter: 'For the law having a shadow of the good things to come' (Heb. 10:1), **which is symbolic for the present age**, or leading us to the things which occur at the present time.

430. – Then (v. 9b) he states the reason why the entrance into the holy of holies was closed during the state of the Old Law. For no one enters into it, unless he is perfect: 'It shall be called the holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it' (Is. 35:8). Hence, where there was no cleansing and no perfection, there was no entrance into it. But the Old Testament was unable to make perfect those who served it, because the sacrifice had not yet been offered that would satisfy for the sin of the whole human race; hence, he says. According to this, namely, parable or figure, gifts and sacrifices are offered, which refers to the clause, accomplishing the offices of sacrifice, because gifts of all things and offerings of animals were not offered in the holy of holies, but in the holies or in the court of the tabernacle. But they were unable to cleanse, because they **cannot perfect the conscience of the worshipper** that serves with the service of latria, which pertains to divine worship. I say, perfect the conscience. For cleansing is of two kinds: one from the stain of sin and debt of punishment as to the conscience. The Law cannot do this: 'It is impossible that with the blood of the oxen and goats sin should be taken away' (Heb. 10:4); 'Offer sacrifices no more in vain' (Is. 1:13); 'May the Lord be appeased with thousands of rams, or with many thousands of fat he-goats' (Mic 6:7). The other cleansing was in regard to divine service, in order that one might lawfully minister at such sacrifices; and thus it cleansed.

431. – But were many perfect in the Old Law? It seems so; for it was said to Abraham: 'Walk before me and be perfect' (Gen. 17:1). Furthermore, Moses and many others were very saintly and perfect. I answer that although there were many holy and perfect persons then, it was not from the works of the Law: 'The law brought nothing to perfection' (Heb. 7:19); but this was by faith in Christ: 'Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice' (Gen. 15:6). Therefore, this was not in virtue of the ceremonies and practices of the law: hence, it is frequently stated there: 'And the priest will pray for him' (Lev. 5:10) and in many other places. Therefore, that it cleansed was due to faith. But in the New Testament it says in Mk (16:16): 'He that believes and is baptized shall be saved.' But there is no salvation without the sacraments of the New Law: 'Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven' (Jn. 3:5).

432. – But why did they not cleanse the conscience? Because they consisted only in food and drink. But that which is altogether corporeal does not cleanse the soul, because it does not act on the soul. He says, therefore, **in food and drink**, i.e., in distinguishing meats and drinks that were forbidden in the Old Law, because abstaining from these does not cleanse the conscience; or else this refers to the use of the sacrifices, because the priests ate what was offered for sins. For they did not cleanse the conscience: 'Shall the holy flesh take away from your crimes?' (Jer. 11:15).

433. – And **in various ablutions**, because as it says in Mk (7:4), the Jews observed the washing of cups and of pots, and when they returned from the market, they did not eat until they were washed. Against this the Lord says (Mt. 23:25): ‘Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees: because you make clean the outside of the cup and dish, but within you are full of rapine and uncleanness.’ Yet the Apostle is not speaking here about the superstitions of the Pharisees. Therefore, we must go to the other washings commanded in the Law, such as the water in which the priests washed, and the water of purification in the cleansing of leprosy or defilement.

434. – Hence, they are **regulations for the body**. He adds this universally of all. He calls those ceremonies **regulations for the body**, i.e., fleshly, because they pertained only to bodily cleanness, and there was no spiritual power in them. And in order that no one ask: Why were they instituted, if they could not bring perfection; because it would then seem that God instituted them to no purpose, he rejects this when he says, **until the time of correction**. As if to say: It is true that they were instituted uselessly, if they were to continue forever. But as it is necessary first to give a child a pedagogue, and when he reaches perfect age, he is given a mode of behavior based on the judgment of the ruler of the republic; so in the Old Law were instituted things that look to imperfection. But when the perfect time came, the things which lead to perfection should have been introduced. Hence, he says, **until the time of correction**, i.e., in which they could be corrected, not as evil but as imperfect: ‘For the law is good’ (Rom. 7:12); ‘Mildness is come upon us, and we shall be corrected’ (Ps. 89:10).

9-3

Heb. 9:11-14

¹¹But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) ¹²he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. ¹³For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of a heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, ¹⁴how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

435. – Having shown the signification of things pertaining to the Old Testament and the first tabernacle, the Apostle now describes the condition of things pertaining to the second tabernacle, which represented the New Testament. Here he does two things: first, he sets forth that signification; secondly, he proves something he had presupposed (v. 13).

436. – It should be noted that if the things already said are considered, five things have already been said of the second tabernacle, namely, who entered it, because it was the high priest; secondly, the dignity and the condition of the place he entered, because it was called the holy of holies; thirdly, how he entered, because he entered with blood; fourthly, when he entered, because once a year; fifthly, why he entered, because it was to expiate for sins. But here the Apostle explains all this, first of all, who enters, namely, Christ. For the high priest is the prince among the priests. But Christ was such: ‘And when the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory’ (1 Pt 5:4); ‘Having therefore a great high priest that has passed into the heavens’ (Heb. 4:14). But every high priest is a dispenser of a testament. However, there are two things to be considered in every testament: namely, the end promised in that testament, and the things handed down in it. But the goods promised in the Old Testament were temporal goods: ‘If you be willing and will hearken to me, you shall eat the good things of the land’ (Is. 1:19). Therefore, the other was a high priest of temporal goods; But Christ is the high priest of heavenly goods: ‘Rejoice and be glad, because your reward is great in heaven’ (Mt. 5:12). Therefore, **He is a high priest of the good things to come**, because by His high priesthood we are brought to goods to come: ‘We shall be filled with the good things of your house’ (Ps. 64:6). Furthermore, figurative things were dispensed in the Old Testament, but Christ dispenses the spiritual things they prefigured: ‘Your Father from heaven will give the good spirit to them that ask him’ (Lk. 11:13). Thus, therefore, by the good things to come can be understood either heavenly goods, and this in regard to the New Testament, or spiritual things, in regard to the Old, which was their figure. This high priest is not negligent, but assisting. For a high priest is a mediator between God and the people; but Christ is a mediator: ‘The mediator of God and men, the man Christ Jesus’ (1 Tim. 2:5): ‘I was the mediator and stood between the

Lord and you' (Dt. 5:5); and therefore, He assists the Father by interceding for us: 'Christ Jesus who also makes intercession for us' (Rom. 8:34). Again, He assists us with his aid: 'He is at my right hand that I be not moved' (Ps. 15:8); 'Behold, I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God' (Ac. 7:55). Thus, it is clear who entered.

437. – Secondly, he shows the dignity of the inner tabernacle when he says, **then through the greater**, and its condition when he says, **and more perfect tabernacle**, inasmuch as it is unmovable: 'Your eyes shall see Jerusalem, a rich habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be removed' (Is. 33:20). But this is the tabernacle of heavenly glory: 'Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle?' (Ps. 14:1). But it is called a tabernacle, because it is the habitation of pilgrims. For it is not due to us by reason of the condition of our nature, but only through grace: 'My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacle of confidence, and in wealthy rest' (Is. 31:18). Therefore, it is greater, because of the measureless multitude of good things, which is designated in the authority cited: 'My people shall sit in the beauty of peace (Is. 31:18); 'O, Israel, how great is the house of God' (Bar. 3:24). But there are two ways of reading the phrase, **by a greater**: in one way, so that it is one phrase as though meaning 'very great;' then the reading is this: When Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things to come, He entered into the holy of holies, which, I say, is a very large tabernacle. In another way, so that the 'per' (by) is a preposition, which is expressed better in Greek; then the construction is this: Christ entered into the holies by a greater tabernacle, i.e., more ample and perfect. It was more perfect, because all imperfection ceased there: 'When that which is perfect is come, that which is in part shall be done away' (1 Cor. 13:10). Furthermore, it is of a different condition, because the Old was made by human hands, but this by the hand of God: 'Your sanctuary, O Lord, which your hands have established' (Ex. 15:17); 'We know if your earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven' (2 Cor. 5:1); 'For he looked for a city that has foundations, whose builder and maker is God' (Heb. 11:10); hence, he says, **not made with hands**, that is, not of this creation, because it is not made with hands as the Old, nor is it of this creation, i.e., in sensible created goods, but it is in spiritual goods.

438. – Or, by the tabernacle can be understood Christ's body, in which He fought against the devil: 'He has set his tabernacle in the sun' (Ps. 18:6), which is very large, because 'in him dwells all the fullness of the godhead corporeally' (Col. 2:0), and more perfect, 'Because we have seen his glory, the glory as it were of the only begotten of the Father, full of trace and truth' (Jn. 1:14); and **not made with hands**, because not of human seed: 'A stone was cut out of a mountain without hands' (Dan 2:34).

439. – Thirdly, he shows how he entered, because not without blood; but he with the blood of calves and goats, as it says in Leviticus (chap. 16); but Christ not so, i.e., not with another's blood: **taking not the blood of goats or of calves but his own blood**, which He offered on the cross for our salvation: 'This is my blood of the New Testament, which shall be shed for you and for many unto the remission of sins'

(Mt. 26:28). But he uses the plural, of goats and of calves, not that more than one was offered at one time, but because he entered many times in various years. But Christ is signified by the goat because of the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3); by the calf because of courage and because He uses the two testaments as two horns: 'Horns are in his hands' (Hab. 3:4).

440. – Fourthly, when he entered, because once a year. But Christ throughout all of time, which is as a year, entered **once for all into the holies** and poured out His blood once: 'Christ died once for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18); 'for in that he died for sin, he died once' (Rom. 6:10). Furthermore, He entered once; for from the fact that He entered heaven, He is there always. Hence, he says, **he entered once for all into the holies**.

441. – Fifthly, he shows why He entered, namely, to make an offering for the ignorance of the people, not for His own, because He had none. For the blood of Christ is more powerful, because by it he secured an eternal redemption. As if to say: we are redeemed by that blood; and this forever, because His power is infinite: 'By one oblation he has perfected forever them that are sanctified' (Heb. 10:14). The fact that he says, **secured**, can refer to things, namely, the desire God had for our salvation: 'I have found wherein I may be merciful to him' (Jb. 33:24); 'I desire not the death of him that dies' (Ez. 18:32); or to the desire of the fathers to be redeemed. For no one found a way so suitable as Christ, therefore, he says quite significantly, **secured**.

442. – Then (v. 13) he proves one of the things he had supposed, namely, the statement, **having obtained eternal redemption**. As if to say: I have said that He wrought eternal redemption by His own blood, in which His greatest efficacy appears. That it is so, I prove by arguing from what is less; because if the blood of brute animals accomplished less, the blood of Christ can accomplish what is greater. Hence in regard to this he does two things: first, he lays down the antecedent; secondly, the consequent (v. 14).

443. – In regard to the first it should be noted that there were two cleansings in the Old Law: one took place on the day of atonement, as already stated, and seemed to be directly ordained to cleansing from sin. The other was against legal irregularity, as mentioned in Numbers (19:2), where the Lord commanded Eleazar to take from Moses a red cow without blemish, of full age and which has not carried the yoke, and bring her forth without the camp and immolate her in the sight of all. Then dipping his finger in her blood, he should sprinkle it over against the door of the tabernacle seven times; and then burn her flesh entirely, i.e., her flesh, hide and even her dung. Then the priest was to take cedar wood and hyssop and scarlet twice dyed. After this was done, a man that was clean was to gather up the ashes of the cow and pour them forth in a clean place outside the camp. Some of these ashes were to be put in water with which an unclean person, who touched the corpse of a man, was to be sprinkled on the third day, and on the seventh with hyssop. In this way and in no other way could he be cleansed. That is the opinion of the Apostle. Therefore in regard to the first he says, **If the blood of goats and oxen**; but as to the second he

says, **and the ashes of a heifer** being sprinkled sanctify such as are defiled, not by conferring grace, but to the cleansing of the flesh, i.e., from an irregularity carnally hindering them, as though unclean, from divine worship. But they did not take away sins, because, as Augustine says, sometimes by virtue of that sprinkling they were cleansed from bodily leprosy; hence, he says, to the cleansing of the flesh.

444. – Then when he says, **how much more the blood of Christ . . . cleanses our conscience**, he lays down the consequent. As if to say: If blood and ashes can do this, what could Christ's blood do? Certainly much more. Then the Apostle mentions three things, which show the efficacy of Christ's blood: first, he shows whose blood it is, namely, it is Christ's. From this it is evident that His blood cleanses: 'For he will save his people from their sins' (Mt. 1:21). Secondly, the reason why Christ shed His blood, because this was done by the Holy Spirit, through Whose movement and instinct, namely, by the love of God and neighbor He did this: 'When he shall come as a violent stream which the spirit of the Lord drives on' (Is. 59:10). But the Spirit cleanses: 'If the Lord shall wash away the filth of the daughters of Sion, and shall wash away the blood of Jerusalem out of the midst thereof, by the spirit of judgment and by the spirit of burning' (Is. 4:4). Therefore, he says, **who by the Holy Spirit offered himself**: 'Christ has loved us and has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness' (Eph. 5:2). Thirdly, he describes His condition, because He is **without blemish**: 'It shall be a lamb without blemish, a male, of one year' (Ex. 12:5); 'What can be made clean by the unclean?' (Sir. 34:4).

445. – But can an unclean priest cleanse? I answer: No, if he acted in his own power, but he acts by the power of Christ's blood, which is as a first cause. Therefore, He would not have acted, unless he were clean.

446. – Yet it should be noted that the blood of those animals merely cleansed from outward stain, namely, from contact with the dead; but the blood of Christ cleanses the conscience inwardly, which is accomplished by faith: 'Purifying their hearts by faith' (Ac. 15:9), inasmuch as it makes one believe that all who adhere to Christ are cleansed by His blood. Therefore, He cleanses the conscience. It also cleanses them from contact with a corpse; but He **from dead works**, namely, sins, which take God from the soul, whose life consists in union by charity. It also cleansed them in order that they might come to the figurative ministry; but the blood of Christ to the spiritual service of God: 'The man that walked in the perfect way, he served me' (Ps. 100:6). Therefore, he says, **to serve the living God**. Furthermore, God is life: 'I am the life' (Jn. 14:6); 'I live forever' (Dt. 43:40). Therefore, it is fitting that one who serves Him be alive: hence, he says, **living God**: 'For as the judge of the people is himself, so also are his ministers' (Sir. 10:2). Therefore, he that would serve God worthily, should be living, as He is.

Heb. 9:15-22

¹⁵Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. ¹⁶For where a will is involved, the death of the one who made it must be established. ¹⁷For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. ¹⁸Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. ¹⁹For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, ²⁰saying, “This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you.” ²¹And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. ²²Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

447. – Having explained things done in the Old Testament and disclosed their mystical explanation, the Apostle now uses these facts to prove his thesis, namely that the New Testament is preferred to the Old, because it can do what the Old could not. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states the intended conclusion; secondly, he proves something he had presupposed. The first is divided into two parts: in the first he concludes from the foregoing that Christ is a mediator; secondly, that the Old Testament could not do this (v. 15b).

448. – He says: **Therefore**, i.e., because Christ entered into the holies, having obtained eternal redemption, i.e., leads us to eternal things, which the Old could not do; it was fitting that this testament be distinct from that, as the new from the old: ‘I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah’ (Jer. 31:31); ‘Behold, I make all things new’ (Rev. 21:5). Therefore, **he is the mediator of a new covenant** between God and man: ‘The mediator of God and men, the man Jesus Christ’ (1 Tim. 2:5). But in every testament there is something promised and something by which that testament is confirmed. But in the New Testament heavenly and spiritual things are promised. Furthermore, that promise was confirmed by the death of Christ. And so, Christ is the mediator of the New Testament, **so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance**. He says, **called**, because this reward is not for our works but from God’s call: ‘Whom he predestinated, them he also called’ (Rom. 8:30); ‘We testified to everyone of you that you could walk worthy of God who has called you unto his kingdom and glory’ (1 Th. 2:12); hence, he says, of the **eternal inheritance**, i.e., of eternal glory, which is our inheritance: ‘He has regenerated us unto a lively hope, by the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, unto an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled, and that cannot fade, reserved in heaven for you’ (1 Pt 1:3); Behold the inheritance of the Lord’ (Ps. 126:3); ‘The Lord is the portion of

my inheritance' (Ps. 15:5). But we have that inheritance through the death of Christ; hence, he says, **since a death has occurred**: 'Unto this you are called, that you may inherit a blessing' (1 Pt 3:9). The effect of this death is redemption **from the transgressions under the first covenant**: 'You were not redeemed with corruptible things as gold or silver, but with the precious blood of an unspotted lamb' (1 Pt 1:18).

449. – But could that redemption from sins have been accomplished in the Old Testament? He answers, No; because those prevarications were under the first covenant. As if to say: because they could not be removed by the power of the sacraments of the former covenant: 'Because we have charged both Jews and Greeks that they are all under sin' (Rom. 3:19).

But is it not a fact that David and many other saints obtained remission of their sins? I answer that so far as entering heaven is concerned, they did not, because the door to life was opened by the death of Christ: for no one entered before Christ's death: 'You also by the blood of your testament have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit, wherein is not water' (Zech 9:11). But so far as the stain of sin was concerned, they obtained it, not in virtue of the sacraments of the Old Law, but by faith in Christ. Thus, therefore, the New Testament is more excellent than the Old, because it has been confirmed by the death of Christ, by which sins are remitted, and because He shows forth the promise.

450. – Then (v. 16) he proves what he had supposed, namely, that the New Testament was confirmed by the death of Christ: first, he proves this on the authority of human law; secondly, on the authority of divine law (v. 18).

451. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that the New Testament was confirmed by the intervening death of Christ, because in order that a will [testament] be in force, the death of the testator must be established. Therefore, the New Testament would have no strength, unless the death of Christ had come in: 'It is expedient for you that one man should die for the people' (Jn. 11:50). But the death of the testator is necessary for two reasons: first, that the testament might be valid, because, since it expresses the last will, it can always be changed before death; hence, he says, **a testament takes effect only at death**, i.e., after death. That is the way the New Testament has been confirmed by the death of Christ: 'this is my blood of the new Testament,' namely, its confirmer and dedicator (Mt. 26:28). Secondly, the death of the testator is necessary, in order that the testament be in force and be efficacious; hence, he says, otherwise it is yet not in force, because no one can seek anything, nor an heir his inheritance by reason of the testament, till after the death of the testator. Therefore, Christ willed to interpose his death for our sake.

452. – Then (v. 18) he proves the same thing on the authority of divine law, by something in the Old Testament: In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the agreement between the two testaments; secondly, their difference (v. 23). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he made the statement; secondly, he proves (v. 19).

453. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that in order for a testament to have force, the death of the testator must of necessity come in. This should not seem strange, because neither was the first testament ratified, i.e., confirmed, without blood. But that blood prefigured the blood of Christ: ‘All these things happened to them in figure’ (1 Cor. 10:11).

454. – Then (v. 19) he proves his statement, namely, that that testament was not confirmed without blood. He proves this in regard to three things in which blood was used: first, in the setting forth of the Law; secondly, in the consecration of the tabernacle (v. 21); thirdly, in the expiation of the vessels (v. 22).

455. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the Apostle alludes here to history, which is recorded in Exodus (chap. 24) that after Moses had read God’s commandments to the people and they had answered: ‘All things that the Lord has spoken we will do, we will be obedient’ (Ex. 24:7), he took the blood which he had ordered them to save of the twelve calves, and sprinkled the book of the Law and the people, as though in confirmation of the covenant. Hence, he says, **For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people:** for it was necessary that they be read, for that reading was the promulgation of the Law: **He took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people.**

456. – Two objections arise here: one, because Exodus (chap. 24) makes no mention of a goat, but only of twelve calves; secondly, because no mention is made there of water and scarlet and hyssop. There are two answers to these two objections: one is that the Apostle had been brought up in the Law; hence, he knew what the usages were in cleansing according to the Law, namely, that the sprinkling involved the blood of goats and calves, and water mixed with hyssop, and scarlet wool as the sprinkler. Therefore, even though all are not mentioned in Exodus, the Apostle was familiar with the custom of the legal rites. Or it can be said that that was the first consecration and that it virtually contained the other sanctifications to come, among which the most important was the one which took place on the day of atonement, as described in Exodus (chap. 16) and the other about the red cow in Numbers (chap. 19). In the first of these the blood of a goat and of a calf was used; but in the second, water and purple wool and hyssop. Therefore, because that first one contained those two, the Apostle related all to it.

457. – He says, therefore: **He took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying: This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you,** i.e., God confirmed the testament: ‘Moses commanded a law in the precepts of justice’ (Sir. 24:33). For that blood was a figure of Christ’s blood, By Whom the New Testament was confirmed; therefore, Christ used the words in Matthew (26:28): This is the blood of a goat because of its likeness to sinful flesh, and of a calf because of courage. But it is mixed with water, because baptism derives its efficacy from the blood of Christ. It is sprinkled with hyssop, which cleanses

the breast, by which faith is signified: 'By faith purifying their hearts' (Ac. 15:9); and with purple wool, which is red to signify charity: 'My beloved is white and ruddy' (S of S 5:10), because the people are cleansed by faith and the love of Christ. The book of the Law is sprinkled, because the passion of Christ fulfilled the Law: 'It is consummated' (Jn. 19:30); 'I have not come to destroy the law, but to fulfill it' (Mt. 5:17).

458. – Then when he says, **the tabernacle also and all the vessels used in worship, in the same way he sprinkled with blood**, he describes the consecration of the tabernacle. But because the tabernacle had not yet been constructed, the command to consecrate the tabernacle was not given until Exodus (chap. 25). I answer that, although the people were not sprinkled with the same blood as the tabernacle, nevertheless, the tabernacle was sprinkled with blood. Hence, it can be taken to mean that he used blood, even when he sanctified the tabernacle.

459. – But it says in Exodus (chap. 7) and Leviticus (chap. 8) that he anointed the tabernacle with oil. I answer that he is not speaking of the consecration, in which the tabernacle and its vessels were first consecrated, but of the one which occurred on the day of atonement. Or it might be better to say that even in the first one he used blood, because it says there that he anointed it with oil and later sprinkled it with blood. And these two things are necessary for sanctification, namely, the power of Christ's blood and the oil of mercy, by which the tabernacle, i.e., the Church, and the vessels, i.e., the saints, are sanctified.

460. – Then (v. 22) he continues with other cleansings in the Law. But cleansings were of two kinds: one from bodily stain, as leprosy, the other from spiritual, namely sin. The first could pertain to inanimate things, as the leprosy of houses: and the cleansing from that uncleanness was done with the blood of an immolated animal, or with the water of expiation, which was mixed with blood of a red calf. Hence, he says, **almost all things**, and not absolutely all. Or, **almost all**, so that **all** modifies **are cleansed**, i.e., 'are almost cleansed,' because they were not completely cleansed: for this was done only by a sacrament of the New Law. Or, it can modify **all things**, because not all things were cleansed with blood, for it says in Numbers (chap. 31) whatever can endure fire is purged by fire, whatever cannot, is purged by the water of expiation. But for the cleansing from the stain of sin the shedding of blood is necessary, because it was required for the sacrifice; hence he says, **without shedding of blood there is not forgiveness of sins**. This showed that the forgiveness of sin was to be accomplished by the blood of Christ. Hence, in the Old Law, sins were forgiven not by virtue of a sacrament, but by virtue of faith in Christ. Hence, it is frequently stated there: 'The priest shall pray for him and for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him' (Lev. 5:10).

Heb. 9:23-28

²³Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. ²⁴For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. ²⁵Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; ²⁶for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. ²⁷And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, ²⁸so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

461. – Having shown what is common to the Old and New Testaments, the Apostle now shows the difference between the two. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that there is a better cleansing in the New; secondly, that it is more complete (v. 25). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that both as to what is cleansed and as to that by which the cleansing is effected, there is a better cleansing in the New; secondly, he clarifies what he has said (v. 24).

462. – He says, therefore, **Thus it was necessary for the patterns of heavenly things**, namely, the tabernacle itself, which, so far as we are concerned, is a pattern, although, absolutely speaking, it is the thing exemplified and its figure, and, therefore, of less value, because the thing exemplified is superior to the figure, as the body is superior to its shadow: **to be purified with these rites**, i.e., with the sacrifices. **But the heavenly things themselves**, namely, the New Testament, **with better sacrifices than these**: better, because the others were cleansings with the blood of animals, but in the New Testament the cleansing is accomplished with the blood of Christ. Now better things are always cleansed with better things. But they were the figures of heavenly things be cleansed with better blood.

463. – But on the other hand, there is no uncleanness in heaven. I answer that according to a Gloss, by heavenly things are understood things which pertain to the state of the present Church, which are called heavenly. Furthermore, believing men bear the image of heavenly things, inasmuch as they mentally dwell in heaven. Or, in another way and better: by heavenly things is understood the heavenly home. And the Apostle is speaking here in the way that the tabernacle was said to be cleansed in the Old Testament; not that it had any uncleanness in itself, but because certain irregularities were washed away, by which they were hindered from coming to the sanctuary. And heavenly things are said to be cleansed inasmuch as a sacrament of the New Law cleanses sins, which hinder one from entering heaven.

464. – But he says, **sacrifices**, in the plural. Yet there is but one sacrifice of Christ: ‘By one oblation he has perfected forever them that are sanctified’ (Heb. 10:4). I answer that although it is one in itself, it was prefigured by several sacrifices of the Old Law. This text also shows that the sacrifices of the Old Law were good, for something is called better in relation to something good.

465. – Then (v. 24) he shows that heavenly things are cleansed by better sacrifices. For the high priest expiated the sanctuary which was made with hands, but Christ has entered into the Holies **not made with hands**, for they were not, so far as they were concerned, the patterns of the true one, but **into heaven itself**, which He expiated not in itself but in regard to us, as has been said. But He did not expiate it with fleshly sacrifices, because Christ did not come to offer such things: ‘Burnt offerings and sin offerings you did not require’ (Ps. 39:8); ‘With burnt offerings you will not be delighted’ (Ps. 50:18); ‘For it is evident that the Lord sprung out of Judah; in which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priests’ (Heb. 7:14). But he entered into heaven itself: ‘And the Lord Jesus was taken up to heaven’ (Mk 16:19); ‘This Jesus who is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come’ (Ac. 1:11).

466. – But Why? In order **now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf**. Here the Apostle alludes to a rite of the Old Law according to which the high priest, who entered the holy of holies, stood before the mercy seat to pray for the people. Similarly, Christ entered into heaven to stand before God for our salvation. But not in the same way, because the high priest could not see the holy of holies or any face on account of the smoke ascending from the censer; but Christ appears before the face of God: not that a bodily face is there, or a cloud, but clear vision.

467. – But when Christ was on earth, could He not appear before the face of God, since God sees all things? I answer that, as Augustine speaking of God says: ‘You were with me, but I was not with You,’ namely, because God is in all things by His essence, power and presence; but the wicked are not with God through grace. Thus, Christ is said to have entered to appear before the face of God, for although He always saw Him clearly as one perfectly happy, yet the state of pilgrims, as such, does not confer this, but only the heavenly state. Therefore, when He ascended perfectly happy, He entered, body and soul, to appear in the presence of God, i.e., He entered the place where God is seen clearly; and this for us. For He entered heaven to prepare the way for us: ‘I go to prepare a place for you. But I will come again and will take you to myself’ (Jn. 14:3); ‘He shall go up that shall open the way before them’ (Mic 2:13). For the body should follow the head: ‘where the body is, there the eagles shall be gathered’ (Mt. 24:28).

468. – Then (v. 25) he shows that the cleansing effected by the New Testament is more complete than that of the Old. But he shows this in two ways: first, by the fact that the former were repeated every day, but this only once. Likewise, as to its effects, because the former could not remove sin, but this one can. In regard to this he does two things: first, he describes the first; secondly, the second (chap. 10).

But it should be noted that above, the Apostle had said three things about Christ: first, that He is a high priest; secondly, the dignity of the place He entered; thirdly, how He entered, namely, with blood. But since He has already explained these three things, he now explains how He entered, because, as the high priest entered once a year, so Christ entered only once. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows what was accomplished in the Old Testament; secondly, that it would not be fitting for the same to be accomplished in the New Testament (v. 26); thirdly, he shows what is accomplished in the New Testament (v. 28).

469. – For in the Old Testament, although the high priest could not enter lawfully but once a year, yet according to the Law he had to enter it every year with the blood of others, as it says in Leviticus (chap. 16). But Christ has not entered into the place made with hands, **nor was it to offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holies every year with the blood of others.**

470. – Then when he says, **For then he ought to have suffered repeatedly since the foundation of the world**, he proves that it would have been unbecoming to do the same thing in the New Testament, because the greatest impropriety would follow, because since Christ entered with his blood, it would follow that He would have to have suffered frequently from the foundation of the world. For this is not the case in the sacrifices of the Old Testament, because they were offered for the sins of the children of Israel. But that people began when the Law was given; therefore, it was not fitting that it be offered from the beginning of the world. But Christ offered Himself for the sins of the whole world, because He was made the propitiation for our sins and for those of the whole world (1 Jn. 2:2). Therefore, if He were offered frequently, it would have been necessary for Him to have been born and to suffer from the beginning of the world; but this would have been most unbecoming.

471. – Then (v. 26b) he shows what is done in the New. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows why the sacrifice is not repeated in the New Testament; secondly, he explains them (v. 27).

472. – He says, therefore: **now at the end of the age, Christ has appeared**: ‘We are the ones upon whom the ends of the ages are come’ (1 Cor. 10:11). And he says this on account of the number of years, because already more than a thousand years had passed since he said this. For the ages of the world are taken according to the ages of men, which are chiefly distinguished according to the state of progress and not according to the number of years. The first age was before the deluge, in which there was no written law or punishment, as in infancy. Another was from Noah to Abraham; and so on for the ages, so that the final age is the present one, after which there is no other state of salvation, just as there is no other age after old age. But just as in the other ages of men there is a definite number of years, but not in old age, which begins at sixty, and some live for 120 years, so it has not been determined how long this state of the world will continue. Yet it is the end of the ages, because no other age remains for salvation. But Christ appeared once during that age, and He gives two reasons why He was offered only once: the first is

because in the Old Testament sins were not taken away, but this was accomplished by the offering of Christ. The second is because the high priest of the Law did not offer his own blood as Christ did. Hence, he says, **he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself**. Therefore, the former are repeated, but not this one: ‘Christ died once for our sins’ (1 Pt 3:8).

473. – Then (v. 27) he explains the two reasons: first, the second one; secondly, the first one (chap. 10). He explains the second by reason of a likeness to other men; hence, he does two things: first, he shows what has happened to other men; secondly, what happened to Christ (v. 28).

474. – In every man we find two things, namely, the need to die; secondly, that he should rise, not to be cleansed but to be judged according to his deeds. He touches on the first when he says, **and just as it is appointed for men once to die**.

475. – But on the other hand, it seems that this is not appointed, but that man brought this about by sinning, for it says in Wisdom (1:13): ‘God made not death, neither has he pleasure in the destruction of the living;’ and shortly after: ‘But the wicked with works and words have called it to them.’ I answer that there are three things to consider in death: first of all, the material cause, and in this respect it has been appointed for men once to die by reason of the condition of his nature; secondly, the gift which was bestowed, and in this respect there was given to men the gift of original justice, by which the soul contained the body, so that it would not die; thirdly, the obligation of dying, and then by sinning, man deserved to lose that gift and became subject to death. Hence, he says that the wicked called death to themselves by touching the forbidden fruit. Therefore, man is the cause of death by default, but God as the judge: ‘The wages of sin is death’ (Rom. 6:23).

476. –

477. – Then (v. 28) he shows how three things fit Christ. In regard to the first he says, and **so Christ having been offered once**, in which He agrees with the others. But He differed in two respects: first, since Christ had not descended from Adam by way of human seed, but merely as to bodily substance, He did not contract original sin; consequently, He was not obliged by that statute: ‘For in what day soever you shall eat of it, you shall die the death’ (Gen. 2:17), but He underwent death by His own will: ‘No man takes it away from me: but I lay it down of myself’ (Jn. 10:18). Therefore, he says, that he was offered: ‘He was offered because it was His own will’ (Is. 53:7); ‘Christ has died once for our sins’ (1 Pt 3:18). He differs, secondly, because our death is the effect of sin: The wages of sin is death’ (Rom. 6:23). But Christ’s death destroys sin; therefore, he says, **to bear the sins of many**, i.e., to remove them. He does not say ‘of all,’ because Christ’s death, even though it was enough for all, has no efficacy except in regard to those who are to be saved: for not all are subject to Him by faith and good works.

478. – In regard to the second he says, **he shall appear a second time not to deal with sin**. He says two things about the second coming: first, how it differs from the first, because the second will be without sin. For even though He had no sin in the first coming, He came in the likeness of sinful flesh (Rom. 8:3). In the first coming He was also made a victim for sin: ‘Him who knew no sin, he has made sin for us’ (2 Cor. 5:21). But those things are not to be found in the second coming; hence, he says that he shall appear without sin. Secondly, he states what will be peculiar to the second coming, because He will appear not to be judged, but to judge and to reward according to merits; hence, he says that he will appear. And although He will appear to all in the flesh, even to those who wounded Him, He will appear according to His divinity to the elect that eagerly wait for him by faith to save them: ‘Blessed are all they that wait for him’ (Is. 30:18); ‘We look for the Savior, Our Lord Jesus Christ, who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory’ (Phil 3:20).

Heb. 10:1-18

¹For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. ²Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. ³But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. ⁴For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins. ⁵Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, “Sacrifices and offerings you have not desired, but a body have you prepared for me; ⁶in burnt offerings and sin offerings you have taken no pleasure. ⁷Then I said, ‘Lo, I have come to do your will, O God,’ as it is written of me in the roll of the book.” ⁸When he said above, “You have neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings” (these are offered according to the law), ⁹then he added, “Lo, I have come to do your will.” He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. ¹⁰And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all. ¹¹And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. ¹²But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, ¹³then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. ¹⁴For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. ¹⁵And the Holy Spirit also bears witness to us; for after saying, ¹⁶“This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds,” ¹⁷then he adds, “I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more.” ¹⁸Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin.

479. – Having considered the things done in both testaments to show the superiority of the New Testament over the Old, the Apostle now proves something he had presupposed, namely, that the Old was not able to cleanse sins. This is the last of the five things he had prefaced about Christ. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the failure of the Old Testament in regard to abolishing guilt; secondly, on this point he compares the priest of the New Testament with the priest of the Old Testament (v. 11). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states his intention; secondly, he proves it on the authority of Scripture (v. 5). In regard to the first he does two things: First, he sets forth what he intends; secondly, he proves (v. 2).

480. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the Apostle concludes to this failing from the condition and rite of the Old Law. But sin deprived man of future goods; hence, as though that sin pertained to future goods, i.e., heavenly, the Old Law is related to those goods as a shadow to a body, but the New

Law as an image. Now a shadow and an image agree in the fact that each represents something: but a shadow represents in general, and as to the nature of the species; an image, however, does so in particular and as to the nature of the individual, and specifically. So, too, the New Law, as far as future goods are concerned, represents more explicitly than the Old: first, because express mention and a promise of good things to come are found in the words of the New Testament, but not in the Old, which mentions only carnal goods; secondly, because the power of the New Testament consists in charity, which is the fulfillment of the Law. And although this charity is imperfect by reason of the faith in which it inheres, it is, nevertheless, similar to the charity of heaven. Hence, the New Law is called the law of love. Hence, it is called an image, because it has an expressed likeness to the goods to come. But the Old Law represented it by carnal things; hence it is called a shadow: ‘Which are a shadow of things to come’ (Col. 2:17). This therefore is the condition of the Old Testament, that it was **but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities**. Its rite consisted in offering the same sacrifice every year on the day of atonement, namely, the blood of goats and bulls, for sin, as is clear from Leviticus (chap. 25). From these two facts he draws his conclusion, namely, **the law has but a shadow of the good things to come, instead of the true form of these realities; it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered every year made perfect those who draw near**, i.e., the high priests: ‘The law brought nothing to perfection’ (Heb. 7:19). But that perfection is reserved for the New Law and consists in charity, which is the bond of perfection’ (Col. 3:14). Therefore, it says in Matthew (5:48): ‘Be you, therefore, perfect.’

481. – Then when he says, **otherwise would they not have ceased to be offered?** He proves his conclusion from two facts: first, from the rite; secondly, from the condition of the offerings (v. 4).

482. – To prove that the Law did not cleanse perfectly, he uses two facts: first, that there was frequent repetition of the same sacrifices in it. This is his reasoning: **If the worshippers had once been cleansed by the same sacrifice, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin**, so they would cease offering, because, as has been said, they offered the same sacrifices every year. Therefore, since they did not cease offering, it is a sign that they were not cleansed: ‘They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill’ (Mt. 9:12).

But on the other hand, it could be said that that reasoning is not conclusive. For one could say that that offering cleansed from past sins, but not those to come. Therefore, because they sinned often, the offerings had to be repeated frequently. I answer that the way the Apostle speaks excludes this: for since sin is something spiritual, which is opposed to what is heavenly, it was necessary that whatever cleansed from sin should be spiritual and heavenly and, consequently, that it have everlasting power; hence, above (9:12), when he spoke about the power of Christ’s sacrifice, he attributed an everlasting power to it, saying, ‘having obtained eternal redemption.’ But the fact that it has eternal power is enough for sins already committed and sins still to be committed; therefore, it was not necessary to repeat it any more. Hence ‘Christ by one oblation perfected forever them that are sanctified’ (Heb. 10:14).

But the fact that we offer the sacrifice every day seems to contradict the statement that it is not repeated. I answer that we do not offer something different from what Christ offered for us, namely, His blood; hence, it is not a distinct oblation, but a commemoration of that sacrifice which Christ offered: ‘Do this in commemoration of me’ (Lk. 22:19).

The second thing he prefaced is that in the Old Testament a commemoration was made of his own sins and those of the people every year. Therefore, they were abolished. Hence, he says, **in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year**. This is true, for mention was made of sins in general, namely, that he was conscious of sin; but special mention is made in the New: ‘Confess, therefore, your sins one to another’ (Jas. 5:16).

483. – Then when he says, **For it is impossible that the blood of oxen and goats should take away sins**, he proves the same thing by reason of the condition of the things offered. For the offering of oxen and goats, which took place on the day of atonement, was the most solemn of their offerings. And since it was an obscure and imperfect representation of heavenly things, as a shadow, it was impossible that sin be taken away by their blood. This is true, so far as their own power was concerned. But if any sins were remitted, it was due to the power of Christ’s blood: ‘Shall the holy flesh take away from you your crimes in which you have boasted?’ (Jer. 11:15). As if to say: No.

484. – Then (v. 5) he cites an authority from Scripture. In regard to this he does two things: first, he cites it; secondly, he explains it (v. 8). This authority can be divided into two parts according to a Gloss: first, it deals with Christ’s incarnation prefigured in the Law, secondly, with his passion (v. 7). Yet according to the Apostle’s intention it can be said differently that: first, he touches on what pertains to the rejection of the Old Testament; secondly, what pertains to the acceptance of the New Testament (v. 7b).

485. – This authority fits Christ, in so far as His coming into the world is concerned. He says, therefore: Because it would not remove sin, the Son of God **coming into the world said**.

But on the other hand, it says in Jn (1:10): ‘He was in the world.’ I answer that it is true that He was in the world as ruling the whole world, inasmuch as He is said to be in all things by His essence, presence and power; but He is outside the world, because He is not comprehended by the world, but has a goodness separated from the entire world, by which the goodness of the universe is caused. Yet, because He assumed a human nature for us, He is said to enter into the world, as was stated above: ‘And again when he brings in the first begotten into the world’ (Heb. 1:6).

486. – **Coming, therefore, into the world he said**. But what did He say? **Sacrifice and offering you did not desire**. But he mentions four things that were in the Old Testament: because the sacrifice was either of inanimate things, such as bread or incense, and then it was called an offering; or of animate things, and then it was offered either to placate God, and was called a holocaust, which was most fitting, because it was completely burned and gave honor to God, or it was offered for cleansing from sin, and was called a

sacrifice for sin. But this latter had two parts: for one part was burned on the altar and the other was granted to the ministers for their own use; or it was for God's benefits and was less fitting, because only one third was burned, one third given to the ministers, and one third to the ones who made the offering: and this was called a holocaust of peace. Now the offering of Christ's body in the New Testament corresponds to all of these, because God was placated by the body of Christ, i.e., in offering Himself on the cross: 'When we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son' (Rom. 5:10). Furthermore, sin was removed by it: 'Christ has died once for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18). Then by it we are introduced to eternal goods, and merit God's benefits.

487. – Hence, he says, **sacrifice and offerings you did not desire**, and then adds: **but a body you have prepared for me**, i.e., fit for immolation; and this for two reasons. First, because it was most pure, to wipe away all sin: 'It shall be a lamb without blemish' (Ex. 12:5); secondly, because it would suffer and be immolated: 'God sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom 8:3). But that body is a true sacrifice and a true oblation: 'He has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God for an odor of sweetness' (Eph. 5:2). **In burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure**. It is a greater thing to please than to will, because those things please which something causes us to will; but sometimes we will certain things not for their own sake but for something else. Therefore, because holocausts were more fitting, but he says that they were not pleasing, then much less the others.

488. – But on the other hand it says in Leviticus (1:9): 'The priest shall burn them upon the altar for a holocaust and a sweet savor to the Lord.' Further, if He did not want them, why did He command them to be offered? I answer that the statement that the Lord did not want them can be understood in two ways: In one way, so that He does not want them at the time when, the truth coming, the shadow could cease; hence, a person would sin by offering them now. In another way, so that He does not want them for the sins of those who offer them: 'Your hands are full of blood' (Is. 1:15).

The third answer toward which the Apostle is tending is that they were never pleasing to God of themselves, nor were they accepted. But they are said to be accepted for two reasons: first, because they were a figure of Christ Whose passion was accepted by God, for He was not pleased with the killing of animals but in faith in His passion: 'For all things happened to them in figure' (1 Cor. 10:11). Secondly, to restrain them from idolatry by means of those sacrifices; hence, the first time the Law was given, no mention was made of sacrifices, but only after they made the golden calf. Hence Jeremiah (7:22): 'I spoke not of your fathers, and I commanded them not in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning the matter of burnt offerings and sacrifices.'

489. – Then when he says, **then said I: Lo, I come**, he continues to approve the New Testament. According to a Gloss it is read in the following way: Then, namely, when you did prepare a body for me, i.e., in the conception, I said: **Lo, I come**, i.e., I propose to come, namely, to the passion: 'This is he that came by water and blood, Jesus Christ' (1 Jn. 5:6). Or it is better referred to His coming into the world,

thus: Then, namely, when holocausts were not pleasing to you, I said: I come by the Incarnation: ‘I came forth from the Father and am come into the world’ (Jn. 16:28), and this in order to offer myself in the passion; therefore, he says, **Lo**.

490. – But was that sacrifice accepted? It certainly was, because **in the roll [head] of the book it was written of me**. This book is Christ according to His human nature, and in it were written all the things necessary for man’s salvation: ‘Take you a great book’ (Is. 8:1); ‘And the head of Christ is God’ (1 Cor. 11:3). In the head of the book, i.e., in the plans of God, Who is the head of Christ, Who is the book, it is written that the Son of God is to be incarnated and die. Or, the book, i.e., the Psalter, whose first psalm concerns Christ. Or better, the book of life, which is nothing else than the knowledge God has about the predestination of the saints, who are saved by Christ. Therefore, **in that book it is written of me**, because the saints are predestined by me: ‘He chose us in him before the foundation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4); ‘Whom he foreknew, he also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of his Son’ (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, if predestination is called a book, it is obvious that Christ is the head of the book: ‘They that are written in the book of life of the Lamb’ (Rev. 21:27). Therefore, **in the head of the book**, i.e., in me, according to my divine nature, **it is written of me**, according to my human nature, **I have come to do your will**, i.e., this was foreordained that by Your grace I should do Your will, by offering Myself for the redemption of the human race.

491. – Then when he says, **when he said above**, he explains the authority he quoted. In regard to this he does two things: first, by assigning the order in which he shall speak, he states the difference between the Old and New Testaments; secondly, he explains in detail something presupposed by the authority (v. 10).

492. – We have said that two things were touched upon in the authority cited: one pertains to the rejection of the Old Testament; the other to the approval of the New. But the Old Testament was rejected in two ways: first, because God does not want its sacrifices; secondly, because they do not please Him. Hence, David the prophet is saying above, i.e., in the beginning. What does he say? Sacrifices and offerings and burnt for sin you desired not: ‘I desire not holocausts of rams, and fat of fatlings, and blood of calves and lambs and buck goats’ (Is. 1:11); neither are they pleasing to you (these are offered according to the law), i.e., You are not delighted with them: ‘With burnt offerings you will not be delighted’ (Ps. 50:18), unless it be because they are figures or inasmuch as they kept them from idolatry. Therefore, after saying this he continues: Then said I, namely, when You fitted to me a body for my passion, or when they did not please you, **Lo, I have come**, either to the incarnation or to the passion. To what end? To do you will, O God: ‘I came down from heaven to do the will of him that sent me’ (Jn. 6:38); ‘My meat is to do the will of him that sent me’ (Jn. 4:34). Therefore, the prophet in saying this, abolishes the first, in order to establish the second. With these words he shows the difference between the Old and New Testaments, because in speaking of the Old he says that God does not want them and that they do not please Him, i.e., of themselves; therefore, they are taken away. But when he speaks of the New he says that He wants it,

because I have come to do your will. Therefore, the New is established and confirmed as being in accord with God's will: 'The new coming on, you shall cast out the old' (Lev. 26:10).

493. – Then (v. 10) he explains what he had said about God's will, for the fulfillment of which Christ came, namely, what that will is. But this will is described in 1 Thessalonians (4:5): 'This is the will of God, your sanctification.' Hence, he says, **by that will we are sanctified**, and **this by the offering of the body of Jesus Christ**: 'He has delivered himself for us, an oblation and a sacrifice to God; (Eph. 5:2); once for all: 'Jesus Christ died once for our sins' (1 Pt 3:18).

494. – Then (v. 11) he compares the priest of the new and Old Testaments. Here it should be noted that there were two solemn sacrifices in the Law: one on the day of atonement offered by the high priest alone; the other was the continual sacrifice, where one lamb was offered in the morning and another in the evening (Num. 28). This is the one the Apostle intends to discuss here, and in regard to it he does three things: first, he lays down what pertains to the priest of the Old Testament; secondly, what pertains to the priest of the New (v. 12); thirdly, he supports all this with authority (v. 15).

495. – He says, therefore; **every priest stands daily at his service**. He says, **every**, to distinguish this sacrifice from the one of atonement offered by the high priest alone. But in the former, **every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices**, because they always offered a lamb: which daily sacrifices can never take away sins, because they were repeated: 'Shall the holy fleshy take away from you your crimes in which you have boasted?' (Jer. 11:15). But that continual sacrifice prefigured Christ and the eternity of Him Who is the lamb without blemish.

496. – Then (v. 12) he shows what pertains to the priesthood of Christ. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his intent; secondly, the reason (v. 14).

497. – He says, therefore: **but when this man**, namely, Christ, **offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins**. But the Old Law offered many sacrifices without expiating for sins. This man, therefore, offered one sacrifice, because He offered Himself once for our sins, and **sat down at the right hand of God**, not as a minister always standing, as the priests of the Old Law, but as the Lord: 'The Lord said to my Lord: Sit at my right hand' (Ps. 109:1); 'He sits on the right hand of God' (Mk 16:19); at the right hand of God the Father with equal power in the divine nature, but with the more important goods in the human nature: 'He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high' (Heb. 1:3); and this forever, for He will not die again, because 'Christ rising from the dead, dies now no more' (Rom. 6:9); 'His power is an everlasting power' (Dan 7:14).

498. – From henceforth waiting [expecting] **until his enemies be made a stool for his feet**. This expecting does not imply any anxiety in Christ, as it does in men, because 'hope that is deferred afflicts

the soul' (Pr. 13:12), but it designates His will to have mercy: 'The Lord waits that he may have mercy only' (Is. 30:18). Therefore, those who are willing are subjected under His feet, i.e., to His humanity; and in this their salvation consists, namely, in doing His will: 'How long do you refuse to submit to me?' (Ex. 10:3). But the wicked, who are unwilling submit to it because even though they do not accomplish His will *per se*, yet it is fulfilled in their regard as a work of justice. Consequently, all things are subject in one of those ways: 'You have subjected all things under his feet' (Ps. 8:8).

499. – Then (v. 14) he gives the reason why He sits as Lord and not as a minister similar to the priests of the Old Testament, who could not take away sin by one sacrifice and, consequently, had to offer many others frequently: 'Every high priest is appointed to offer up gifts and sacrifices' (Heb. 5:1); but the sacrifice which Christ offered takes away all sins: 'Christ was offered once to exhaust the sins of many' (Heb. 9:28). Hence, he says that **by one offering he has perfected for all time**. This He did by reconciling us and uniting us to God as to our principle; **those who are sanctified**, because Christ's sacrifice, since He is God and man, has power to sanctify for every: 'Jesus, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate (Heb. 13:12). For by Him we are sanctified and united to God: 'By whom we have access to God' (Rom. 5:12).

500. – Then when he says, **and the Holy Spirit also bears witness to this**, he confirms what he had said by citing and authority taken from Jeremiah (31:33). Since this text has been explained above in chap. 8, we pass over it at present. Yet it can be divided into two parts: first, he cites the authority; secondly, he argues from it (v. 18).

He forms the following reason: Sins are remitted in the New Testament by Christ's sacrifice, because the blood of Christ was shed for the remission of sins; therefore, in the New Testament, in which sins and iniquities are forgiven, as the authority indicates, there is no offering to be repeated for sins: 'They that are in health need not a physician, but they that are ill' (Mt. 9:12). Therefore, where there is forgiveness of sins, there is no longer any offering for sin. For this would be to demean Christ's sacrifice.

10-2

Heb. 10:19-25

¹⁹Therefore, brethren, since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary by the blood of Jesus, ²⁰by the new and living way which he opened for us through the curtain, that is, through his flesh, ²¹and since we have a great priest over the house of God, ²²let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, with our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water. ²³Let us hold fast the confession of our hope without wavering, for he who promised is faithful; ²⁴and let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works, ²⁵not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near.

501. – After showing the many ways in which Christ's priesthood is superior to that of the Old Law, the Apostle, in keeping with his practice, comes to a conclusion and exhorts us to adhere faithfully to that priesthood. For above, after recommending something the Apostle always gave an admonition, because he took the trouble to commend Christ's grace, in order to incline them to obey Christ and desist from the ceremonies of the Law. Therefore, in regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the admonition; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 26).

In regard to the first it should be noted that he had said two things about the priesthood of Christ, namely, the power of its rite, because by his own blood, and its dignity, because he is a high priest forever. Therefore, in the admonition he recalls these two things, so that in urging faithful obedience to Christ he first mentions those two things; secondly, he gives the admonition (v. 22). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he recalls the rite of the priesthood; secondly, its dignity (v. 21).

502. – He says, therefore: **Therefore, brethren** by mutual charity, **since we have confidence to enter the sanctuary [holies] by the blood of Christ**: 'In whom we have boldness and access with confidence by the faith of him' (Eph. 3:12); 'You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance, in your most firm habitation' (Ex. 15:17); 'I rejoiced at the things that were said to me: We shall go into the house of the Lord' (Ps. 121:1). And this in the blood of Christ, because 'This is the blood of the new testament' (Mt. 26:28), i.e., of the new promise about heavenly things. But he shows how we have confidence in entering, because Christ by His blood opened **a new and living way for us**: 'He shall go up that shall open the way before them' (Mic. 2:13); 'If I shall go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself' (Jn. 14:3); 'It shall be called the holy way: the unclean shall not pass over it' (Is. 35:8). This, therefore, is the way to go to heaven. It is **new**, because before Christ no one had found it: 'No man has ascended into heaven, but he that descended from heaven' (Jn. 3:13).

Therefore, he that would ascend must inhere in Him as a member in the head: 'To him that overcomes I will give to eat of the tree of life, which is the paradise of my God' (Rev. 2:7); 'And I will write upon him

the name of the city of my God, the New Jerusalem' (Rev. 3:12), because they will be brought in anew. **Living**, i.e., always continuing. In this appears the power of the godhead, because it is always living.

But he shows what that way is when he says, **through the curtain [veil], that is, through his flesh**. For just as the priest entered into the holy of holies through the veil, so we, if we would enter the holy of glory, must enter through Christ's flesh, which was a veil of his divinity: 'Verily, you are a hidden God' (Is. 45:15). For faith in the godhead is not enough without faith in the incarnation: 'You believe in God, believe also in me' (Jn. 14:1). Or, **through the veil**, i.e., through His flesh given to us under the veil of the appearance of bread in the sacrament. He is not offered to us under His own form because of dread and to obtain the merit of faith.

503. – Then he commends the dignity of the priesthood when he says, **a great high priest**, who dedicated the way for us. As if to say: Having a confidence in entering in through the priest, namely, Jesus: 'You are a priest forever' (Ps. 109:4). He is called a great priest, because His priesthood is not merely over one people, as Aaron's was, but **over the house of God**, i.e., the entire Church Militant and Triumphant: 'That you may know how you ought to behave yourself in the house of God, which is the church' (1 Tim. 3:15). He says, **over**, because 'Moses was faithful in all my house as a servant' (Num. 12:7), but Christ over the whole house as the Son, Who is the Lord of all things: 'All power is given to me in heaven and in earth' (Mt. 28:18).

504. – Then (v. 22) he gives his admonition, namely, that because He is such a person and so great, He must be faithfully adhered to. This is done in three ways: by faith, by hope, and by charity: 'Now there remain faith, hope and charity' (1 Cor. 13:13). First, then, he urges them in regard to things of faith; secondly, the things of hope (v. 23); thirdly, the things of charity (v. 24).

505. – For the first there are two things required, namely, faith itself: 'Without faith it is impossible to please God' (Heb. 11:6), and the sacrament of faith. In regard to the first he says, **let us draw near to Him with a true, not feigned, heart**: 'Remember how I have walked before you in truth and with a perfect heart' (Is. 38:3). But this is accomplished when the deed agrees with the heart. Let us draw near **in full assurance of faith**: 'He that comes to God must believe' (Heb. 1:6). Nor is just any faith sufficient, but full faith is required. But this involves two things, namely, that all things proposed for our belief be believed, and that it be formed faith, which is accomplished by charity: 'Love is the fullness of the law' (Rom. 13:10).

506. – In regard to the sacrament of faith he says, **having our hearts sprinkled**, which is an allusion to Numbers (19:12), where is described the ceremony of the red cow, the water from which was sprinkled on an unclean person on the third; but on the seventh day his body and clothing were washed with other water. By the sprinkling with water of the red cow the passion of Christ was prefigured, because on the third day, i.e., by faith in the Trinity in baptism we are cleansed from our sins. In regard to this he says,

having our hearts, not our bodies, sprinkled clean: ‘You have come to the sprinkling of blood’ (Heb. 12:24). **Having our hearts sprinkled clean**, not from contact with a corpse, as by the water of the red cow, but **from an evil conscience**. Of the washing performed on the seventh day he says, **and our bodies washed with pure water**. For in baptism not only does the power of the passion work, but the gifts of the Holy Spirit are infused in us. Hence, on the seventh day, i.e., in the fullness of the gifts of the Holy Spirit the entire man is washed inside and out from all sin, both actual and original, which is, as it were, corporeal, because the soul contracts it by uniting with tainted flesh. The Holy Spirit is called water, because He cleanses: ‘Purifying their hearts by faith’ (Ac. 15:9); ‘I will pour upon you clean water and you shall be cleansed from all your filthiness, and I will cleanse you from all your idols’ (Ez. 36:25); ‘There shall be a fountain open to the house of David and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem: for the washing of the sinner and of the unclean woman’ (Zech 13:1); ‘By the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit’ (Tit 3:5). As a sign of this the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form upon Christ baptized.

507. – Then he mentions what pertains to hope. He does two things: first, he exhorts to certitude in hope; secondly, he gives the reason (v. 23).

508. – It should be noted that by faith in Christ is given to us the hope of eternal life and entrance into the kingdom: ‘He has regenerated us unto a lively hope’ (1 Pt 1:3). Hence, he says, **Let us hold fast**, not the hope, but **the confession of our hope**, because it is not enough to have hope in one’s heart, but it must be confessed with the mouth: ‘With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation’ (Rom. 10:10). Furthermore, it must be not only by word, but also by deeds; against those of whom it says in Titus (1:16): ‘They profess that they know God, but in their works they deny him.’ This confession is made by works, by which one tends to things hoped for: ‘Hold fast what you have, that no man take your crown’ (Rev. 3:11). **Without wavering**, i.e., not departing from that confession in prosperity or adversity: ‘But such as turn aside into bonds, the Lord will lead out with the workers of iniquity’ (Ps. 124:5); ‘This is the way, walk in it: and go not aside neither to the right hand nor to the left’ (Is. 3:21).

509. – The reason for this is because ‘he is faithful who has promised’, and He cannot lie: ‘The Lord is faithful in all his works’ (Ps. 144:13); ‘God is faithful without any iniquity’ (Dt. 32:4).

510. – Then (v. 24) he mentions what pertains to charity. He does three things: first, he does what he said; secondly, he removes the contrary of charity (v. 25); thirdly, he assigns the reason from the fittingness of the time (v. 25b).

511. – In regard to the first it should be noted that although charity principally clings to God, it is shown by love of neighbor: ‘He that does not love his neighbor, whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see?’ (1 Jn. 4:20). Therefore, it pertains to charity to love one’s neighbor; hence, he says, **let us**

consider one another, so that we will be careful to do what pertains to our neighbor: ‘And he gave to everyone of them commandment concerning his neighbor’ (Sir. 17:12). But because some consider some things that pertain to their neighbor with the zeal of envy, and some with the zeal of hatred, against whom Proverbs (24:5) says: ‘Seek not after wickedness in the house of the just,’ he says, **to stir them to charity**, i.e., that we provoke them to charity: ‘As long as I am the apostle of the Gentiles I will honor my ministry, if by any means I may provoke to emulation them who are my flesh, and may save some of them’ (Rom. 11:13). But such provocation proceeds from love, which extends to outward works: ‘Let us now love in word, nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth’ (1 Jn. 3:18). For as Gregory says: ‘The love of God is not idle: for it does great things, if it exists, but if it refuses to work, it is not love. Therefore, the proof of love is the showing forth of the work.’ Hence, he says, the good works: ‘Being fruitful in every good work’ (Col. 1:10).

512. – Then he removes the contrary of charity when he says, **not neglecting to meet together**. For since charity is love, whose function is to unite, because, as Dionysius says, love is a uniting force: ‘That they may be one, even as we are one... and the world may know that you have loved them as you have also loved me’ (Jn. 17:22); therefore, to withdraw from one another is directly opposed to charity. Hence, he says, not neglecting to meet together in the assembly, namely, of the Church, which some forsake in three ways: first, by apostasy from the faith because of persecutions. These are signified by those of whom it is said (Jn. 6:67) that ‘they went back; and walked no more with him; ‘When there arise tribulation and persecution because of the word, he is presently scandalized’ (Mt. 13:21); They believe for a while, and in time of temptation they fall away’ (Lk. 8:13). Secondly, wicked prelates who leave the sheep in danger: ‘The hireling flees, because he is a hireling’ (Jn. 10:13). But others from pride, because, since they could be useful for ruling, they separate themselves from the others on a note of pride: ‘These are they, who separate themselves, sensual men, having not the spirit’ (Jude 1:19) as though under the pretext of higher perfection. Perhaps there were such at that time also; hence, he continues, **as is the habit of some**, against whom it says in 1 Corinthians (11:16): ‘If any man seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor the church of God.’ Then he adds what they should do, saying, **but encouraging one another**; as if to say: if you observe that your companion is not behaving well, do not desert him, but console him, not as those who forsake the assembly, of whom he says, as some do.

513. – Then (v. 25b) he gives the reason for this. For someone could say: Why should we make progress in the faith? Because a natural movement, the closer it gets to its goal, the more intense it becomes, whereas the opposite is true of a forced movement. But grace inclines in the manner of nature; therefore, he says, not neglecting, as some do, but encouraging; and this **all the more as you see the day**, i.e., the end, **approaching**: ‘The night is passed, and the day is at hand’ (Rom. 13:12); ‘The path of the just, as a shining light, goes forward and increases even to perfect day’ (Pr. 4:18).

Heb. 10:26-31

²⁶For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, ²⁷but a fearful prospect of judgment, and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries. ²⁸A man who has violated the law of Moses dies without mercy at the testimony of two or three witnesses. ²⁹How much worse punishment do you think will be deserved by the man who has spurned the Son of God, and profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified, and outraged the Spirit of grace? ³⁰For we know him who said, “Vengeance is mine, I will repay.” And again, “The Lord will judge his people.” ³¹It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

514. – Having commended the superiority of Christ’s priesthood and added an admonition to adhere to His priesthood by faith and charity, the Apostle now proves his admonition by reason. He does this in two ways: first, by instilling fear; secondly, by speaking gently (v. 32). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he frightens them into observing his admonition because of the removal of the remedy; secondly, because of the judgment to come (v. 27).

515. – He says, therefore: **For if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin.** This is explained in two ways: in one way according to a Gloss, which seems to make a distinction between willing sinners and sinning voluntarily, so that the willing sinner is one who is led by passion to consent to sin, about which he did not think beforehand; but the one who sins voluntarily does so from certain malice, because his will is so prone to sin that he yields at once: ‘They are all turned to their own course, as a horse rushing to battle’ (Jer. 8:6), and does not repent afterwards: ‘They are glad when they have done evil’ (Pr. 2:14). Therefore, they **sin deliberately**, i.e., continue in the will to sin. And he continues exaggeratingly, **after receiving the knowledge of the truth:** ‘It is better for them not to have known the way of justice, than after they have known it, to turn back’ (2 Pt 2:21), ‘there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins’, i.e., the sacrifice which Christ offered for the remission of sins does not profit them, because those who repent have their sins forgiven: ‘This is the blood of the new testament, which will be shed for you’ (Mt. 25:28), i.e., efficaciously, but of the wicked it is said: ‘I have labored in vain, I have spent my strength without cause and in vain’ (Is. 41:11); ‘The founder has melted in vain, for their wicked deeds are not consumed’ (Jer. 6:29).

516. – But it is better to say, in keeping with the Apostle’s aim, that according to Augustine, free will has many states: because in the state outside of grace, before that state is repaired by grace, it is not in our power to sin and not to sin mortally: and this, because of the preconceived end and the habit inclining. This is true for a long time, but if one acts from premeditation, he can avoid this sin or that for a while.

But after man has been repaired by grace, it is entirely within his power to avoid mortal sin and even venial sin in particular, but not altogether in general; and this is due to the help of sanctifying grace. Therefore, he says, **for if we sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth**, i.e., after receiving grace, by which the knowledge of sin is possessed: because before the knowledge of sin, our sin is not imputed to us. But afterwards, **there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins**, because before the reparation, which was accomplished by Christ, that sacrifice which was awaited was left, but now His death is no longer awaited; so, too, after baptism, no further baptism is awaited.

517. – Then when he says, **but a fearful prospect of judgment**, he frightens them with the expectation of God's judgment, in regard to which he does two things: first, he frightens them; secondly, he gives a reason (v. 28).

518. – Thus, therefore, it has been stated that no further sacrifice is left. What then? That which was stated above in chap. 9, namely, that after death comes the judgment: 'Know that there is a judgment' (Jb. 19:29). The expectation of that judgment is dreadful both because of the consciousness of sins: 'We all offend in many ways' (Jas. 3:2) and because of the imperfection of our justices: 'All our justices are as the rag of a menstruous woman' (Is. 64:6); 'I am afraid of your judgments' (Ps. 118:120); 'I have heard and my bowels were troubled' (Hab. 3:16). This expectation is also distressing; hence, he says, **and a fury of fire**, i.e., the punishment by fire, which is inflicted by the jealous zeal of divine justice: 'I am the Lord, you God, mighty, jealous' (Ex. 20:5). But zeal is a spouse's love. Therefore, just as a husband does not spare a wicked wife, so neither God a sinful soul: 'The jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of judgment' (Pr. 6:34). He continues, **which will consume the adversaries**: 'A fire shall go before him and shall burn his enemies round about' (Ps. 96:3), because the fire, which will go before the face of the judge, will burn the bodies of living things and will cast the reprobate into hell and consume their bodies, not by totally consuming them but by torturing them forever.

519. – Then (v. 28) he proves what he had said about the terror of the judgment: first, by arguing from the lesser; secondly, by an authority (v. 30). He takes the first from the Law. For a person deserves a greater punishment to the degree that he scorns a more sacred thing. Therefore, since the Old Testament is not as sacred as the New, but a transgressor of the Old was punished very severely, it follows that a transgressor of the New should be punished even more severely. In regard to this argument he does two things: first, he describes what was done in the Old; secondly, what will be done in the New (v. 29).

520. – In regard to the Old he mentions the punishment and the crime: the crime, when he says, **a man violating [making void] the law of Moses**. That is said to be made void which does not attain its due end. But not only the Old Law, but every law, is given to induce men to virtue and make them abstain from vices. Therefore, a person who transgresses a law and gives himself over to vices, as far as he is concerned, makes the law void: 'You have made void the commandment of God for your tradition' (Mt.

15:6); ‘The male, whose flesh of his foreskin shall not be circumcised, that soul shall be destroyed out of his people: because he has broken my covenant’ (Gen. 17:14).

521. – Then he describes the punishment, when he says, **without mercy**. This punishment is very grievous, because it inflicts death; hence, he says, **he dies**: ‘Wizards you shall not suffer to live’ (Ex. 22:18). And because there is no amnesty, he says, **without mercy**: ‘He shall die, and you shall not pity him’ (Dt. 19:12-13).

522. – But did the Law exclude God’s mercy? It seems not: ‘I desired mercy and not sacrifice’ (Has 6:6). I answer that there is a difference among mercy, clemency and pardon: for there is mercy, when a man by reason of an emotion of the heart and mind remits a punishment; but sometimes this is against justice, which forbids it. But there is pardon, when part of the debt of punishment is remitted for the public good. There is clemency, when not only part of the punishment but also part of the guilt is judged more leniently. The last two are not forbidden; but mercy described in the first way is forbidden, because it is against justice and breeds dissoluteness.

523. – **He dies**, therefore, convicted under two or three witnesses: ‘By the mouth of two or three witnesses every word shall stand’ (Dt. 17:6). But the reason why the Law fixes the number of witnesses is, according to Augustine, to designate the unchangeableness of the truth, which is in the Holy Trinity. Furthermore, it makes no difference if two or three persons are named, because the third is always understood in the two, namely, the Holy Spirit, Who is the nexus of the other two. That, of course, is a mystical reason. But the literal reason is because in a judgment, where one affirms and another denies, one is not to be believed more than the other; but a group must be believed. But a group is completed, when there are three; therefore, it is enough, if there are two accusers; but a third witness is added in abundance.

524. – Then (v. 19) he describes something which refers to the New Testament: first, he states the punishment; secondly, the crime (v. 29b).

525. – In regard to the punishment he says, **how much worse punishment**’do you think he deserves? For since the New Testament was preached by Christ, a person who sins under it is punished more severely: ‘But I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the day of judgment, than for you’ (Mt. 11:22).

526. – But is a Christian who sins punished more than an unbeliever? If he is, it were better for all to be unbelievers. I answer that the case of those who scorn the faith is one thing, because they are scorners in the full sense; but the case of those who from ignorance do not hold to the faith not announced to them is another. For the sin of unbelief is not imputed to the latter. But those who scorn the faith announced to

them are punished more severely, because the sin of unbelief is the greatest. Therefore, if we compare a Christian with a Jew who does not scorn, and each is an adulterer, the Christian is punished more severely than the Jew, not only because he is an adulterer, but because he is more ungrateful.

527. – But is it generally true that the same specific sin is punished more severely in a greater person? I answer that there are two ways of sinning: one way is on a sudden, and so when a person dedicates himself to the things of God, if he sins all of a sudden, he is punished less: ‘The Lord who is good will show mercy to all of those who with their whole heart seek the Lord, the God of our fathers’ (2 Chr 30:18); ‘When the just man falls, he shall not be bruised’ (Ps. 36:24). But if he sins from contempt, he sins more grievously, because, since he is in a higher state, he is more scornful. It is of these that he is speaking here, because they are more ungrateful.

528. – In regard to guilt he says, **who has spurned the Son of God**. Here it should be noted that the Apostle weighs the gravity of guilt in those who sin in the New Testament from the benefits conferred on us by God in it. But God has given us something He considered most important, the precious, namely, His only begotten Son: ‘By whom he has given us most great and precious promises’ (2 Pt. 1:4). He also gave the Holy Spirit: ‘I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh’ (Jl. 2:28); ‘The charity of God is poured forth in our hearts by the Holy Spirit who is given to us’ (Rom. 5:5). But ingratitude after such favors aggravates the sin.

529. – In regard to the ingratitude after receiving the Son, who things must be considered and pondered, namely, the mystery of the incarnation, in which He was given to us (Is. 9), and the sacrament of the passion in which He offered Himself for us: ‘The blood of Christ who by the Holy Spirit offered himself unspotted unto God’ (Heb. 9:14). Therefore, in regard to the first he says, **who has spurned the Son of God** made incarnate for us, i.e., has belittled Him by believing that faith in the Son of God is not sufficient for salvation: ‘Before whose eyes Jesus Christ has been set forth’ (Gal. 3:1). Also not by obeying His commandments and not living according to His teaching: ‘They that despise me shall be despised’ (1 Sam. 2:30). In regard to the second he says, **and profaned the blood of the testament**, i.e., Christ’s blood which confirmed the New Testament: ‘This is my blood of the new testament’ (Mt. 26:28) and has profaned, i.e., has considered it unable to cleanse, as something unclean in itself does not cleanse: ‘What can be made clean by the unclean?’ (Sir. 34:4). As if to say: no one, namely, in the sense that only the blood of animals can cleanse. Furthermore, he has esteemed it unclean, who, after being washed by His power in baptism, sins by returning to his vomit: ‘He loved us and cleansed us from our sins in his blood’ (Rev. 1:5). Therefore, he says, **by which he was sanctified**: ‘But you are washed, but you are sanctified, in the name of Our Lord Jesus Christ’ (1 Cor. 6:11); ‘In every place there is offered to my name a clean oblation: for my name is great among the Gentiles’ (Mal. 1:11). Again, one who sins after the other sacraments can also be said to esteem Christ’s blood unclean.

530. – Furthermore, the sin is aggravated for scorning the Holy Spirit; hence, he says, **and outraged the Spirit of grace**, by not believing that the grace of the Holy Spirit is given through Christ, as it says in John (14:16): I will ask the Father, and he shall give you another Paraclete’, and that it is not sufficient for salvation without the solemnities of the Law, as though ascribing the remission of sins to the observances of the Law.

531. – Or he treads Christ under foot by receiving Him unworthily after being given freely by the Holy Spirit: ‘For it is the gift of God; not of works’ (Eph. 2:8), and he injures Christ by expelling Him by sin: ‘He shall not abide when iniquity comes in’ (Wis. 1:5); Grieve not the Holy Spirit of God’ (Eph. 4:30); ‘Extinguish not the spirit’ (1 Th. 5:19).

532. – Then (v. 30) he cites authorities to prove what he has said. In regard to this he does two things: first, he cites the authorities; secondly, he concludes from (v. 31).

533. – Therefore, he says: **We know him who has said: vengeance is mine** (Dt. 32:35), where another version has ‘Reserve vengeance for me’. But will He repay. Indeed, I will repay. But on the other hand: if vengeance is reserved to God alone, why do judges take vengeance? The Apostle answers in Romans (13:4) that a judge is God’s minister; hence, he does not judge on his own authority but God’s.

The second authority is this: **The Lord will judge his people**. If His own, then much more His enemies: ‘If a just man shall scarcely be saved, where shall the ungodly and the sinner appear?’ (1 Pt 4:18). Or **his people**, i.e., who do not scorn his faith, because unbelievers will be condemned and not judge in the judgment of discussion. For, according to Gregory, there are four orders in the judgment: some will not be judged, but will judge and be saved, namely, the Apostles and apostolic men; others will be judged and be saved, as the moderately good; still others will be judged and be damned, as wicked believers; finally, some will not be judged, but will be damned, as all unbelievers.

534. – Then when he says, **It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God**, he gives the conclusion: For since vengeance is reserved to God Who will judge His people, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. For the stronger and more just a judge is, the more he is to be feared: ‘God is a just judge, strong and patient’ (Ps. 7:12). Therefore, it is a fearful thing to fall into His hands: ‘It is better for me to fall into your hands without doing it, than to sin in the sight of the Lord’ (Dan. 13:23); ‘If we do not penance, we shall fall into the hands of the Lord, and not into the hands of men’ (Sir. 2:22).

535. – But on the other hand, David considered it better to fall into the hands of God (2 Sam. 24:17). I answer that a man sins by offending a man and by offending God. But it is better to fall into the hands of a man by offending him than into the hands of God by offending Him. Or one might say that it is better for a sinner, who is scornful, to fall into the hands of a man, but for the sinner who repents, into the hands

of God. This is the way David chose. Or it might be said that until the day of judgment it is not a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God, Who judges mercifully, as long as He is the Father of mercies; but after the judgment, it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of God, when as the God of vengeance, He will judge our justices. For at present, as one who has experienced infirmity, out of pity He judges mercifully.

Heb. 10:32-39

³²But recall the former days when, after you were enlightened, you endured a hard struggle with sufferings, ³³sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated. ³⁴For you had compassion on the prisoners, and you joyfully accepted the plundering of your property, since you knew that you yourselves had a better possession and an abiding one. ³⁵Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶For you have need of endurance, so that you may do the will of God and receive what is promised. ³⁷“For yet a little while, and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry; ³⁸but my righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him.” ³⁹But we are not of those who shrink back and are destroyed, but of those who have faith and keep their souls.

536. – After exhorting them by frightening reasons to cling to Christ by faith, hope and charity, the Apostle now gives pleasing reasons, as a good physician after cutting applies soothing lotions. For of all commendations for doing good, there is one which best stimulates a person to persevere in a good work already begun. For virtue praised acquires an immense drive, and glory is a strong stimulus. In regard to this he does two things: first, he recalls the good things they had done; secondly, he urges them to finish what still remains (v. 35). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he recalls in a general way the tribulations they suffered for the faith; secondly, he describes the kinds of tribulations (v. 33); thirdly, he explains these in detail (v. 34).

537. – Therefore, because past success stimulates a person to do better, just as bad fortune on the contrary leads to despair, he recalls their past good deeds, saying, **but recall**: ‘I have remembered you’ (Jer. 2:2), i.e., the good you accomplished; **the former days**, i.e., the first days of your conversion, when **after you were enlightened by faith**, which enlightens and cleanses the soul: ‘Purifying their hearts by faith’ (Ac. 15:9; ‘Arise, be enlightened, O Jerusalem’ (Is. 60:1). But this is accomplished by faith in Christ: ‘That Christ may dwell in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17); ‘To enlighten them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death’ (Lk. 1:79). For the first light of the soul is faith. **You endured a hard struggle with sufferings**, i.e., struggled against the great suffering inflicted on you by those who persecuted Christ in you: ‘Saul, Saul, why do you persecute me?’ (Ac. 9:14), me, I say, in my members, because, as Augustine says in a sermon on this text: ‘While the members were on earth, the head cried from heaven;’ ‘She gave him strong conflict, that he might overcome’ (Wis. 10:12); ‘I have fought a good fight’ (2 Tim. 4:7). For, as it is recorded in Acts (chap. 8) a great persecution arose against the Church after Stephen’s death: ‘For you, brethren, are become followers of the Churches of God which are in Judea; for you also have suffered the

same things from your own countrymen, even as they have from the Jews' (1 Th. 2:14). Therefore, if you began to endure from the beginning, it would be blameworthy to give up now.

538. – Then when he says, and on the one hand by abuse and affliction you were made a gazing stock, he shows what these afflictions were. For a person suffers in two ways: in himself by enduring affliction, and in someone else by taking pity on another's affliction. But they suffered in both ways. In regard to the first way, he says, and **on the one hand**, i.e., with respect to yourselves, you were made a gazing stock, which is very disagreeable for a wise man. For if a fool is mocked, it is not serious, even if he endures a great amount of derision from others, but to a wise man it is a burden. Furthermore, if he is troubled and mocked by his persecutor, it is very disagreeable. Therefore, he shows how great their affliction was, because they were made a gazing stock, i.e., no one took pity on them but instead rejoiced in their afflictions, i.e., in their reproaches: 'The reproaches of them that reproached you are fallen upon me' (Ps. 68:10); 'Many are the tribulations of the just' (Ps. 32:20); 'We are made a spectacle to the world,' unto derision, 'And to angels' unto congratulation, 'And to men' who use their reason 'unto imitation' (1 Cor. 4:9). In regard to the second he says, and **on the other, became partners of those who were so treated**, i.e., of those who suffered such things: and this by compassion and by administering aid: 'Communicating to the necessities of the saints' (Rom. 12:13).

539. – Then when he says, **for you had compassion on the prisoners** [them that were in bands], he explains what he had said. First to all in regard to the second, namely, how they had compassion, for among the Jews many were in bands; as it says in Acts (8:3) that Paul made havoc in the Church, committing men and women to prison: 'I was in prison and you visited me' (Mt. 25:36). In regard to the first he says, and **the plundering of your property** for helping those in bands, **you took with joy**: 'Count it all joy, when you shall fall into diverse temptations' (Jas. 1:2); 'The Apostles went from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were accounted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus' (Ac. 5:41).

540. – But with what joy? Should tribulations be loved? It certainly seems not, because Augustine says: 'You are commanded to bear them, not love them.' I answer that they are not loved for their own sake, but for something else: and that is the way they loved them; hence, he continues, **since you knew that you had a better and abiding possession**, namely, other riches more important, which are increased by the removal of those riches, by which they are called better. For temporal riches are hollow, because they consist in things that are beneath men; but spiritual riches consist in God, namely, in the enjoyment of God: 'Riches of salvation, wisdom and love; the fear of the Lord in his treasure' (Is. 33:6). Furthermore, they last, because the others fail of themselves and can be taken away; but these cannot: 'Lay not up to yourselves treasures on earth, where the rust and moth consume, and where thieves break in and steal. But lay up to yourselves treasures in heaven' (Mt. 6:19).

541. – Then (v. 35) he shows what remains for them to do, i.e., to retain the confidence obtained from their good works. In regard to this he does three things: first, he gives an admonition; secondly, how to observe the admonition (v. 36); thirdly, he proves this with an authority (v. 37).

542. – He says, therefore: Inasmuch as you have done so many good things in the first days of your conversion, it should cause you to have much confidence in God; **do not, therefore, throw away your confidence**, which you will lose, if you stop doing good: **which has a great reward**: ‘Be glad and rejoice for your reward is very great in heaven’ (Mt. 5:12); ‘I am your protector and your reward exceeding great’ (Gen. 15:1).

543. – The way to keep it is patience; hence, he says, **for you have need of patience**. For just as meekness moderates anger, so patience puts a limit to sadness, so that it will not exceed the bounds of reason. But sadness is sometimes caused by evils inflicted or by good deferred: ‘Hope that is deferred, afflicts the soul’ (Pr. 13:12). But it is properly called patience, when it is concerned with the first; but long-suffering, when it is concerned with the second. Here, however, patience stands for both: not only for enduring evil, but for long-suffering in the face of good things deferred. He says, therefore, that in regard to both, patience is necessary for us: ‘The patient man is better than the valiant’ (Pr. 16:32); ‘In your patience you shall possess your souls’ (Lk. 21:19); ‘Patience has a perfect work’ (Jas. 1:4).

544. – Why is it necessary? **That you may do the will of God and receive the promise**, i.e., fulfilling God’s will, which is done by obeying God’s commandments, which are the signs of God’s will. Hence, doing the signified will of God, which is the way God’s will is sometimes taken in the Scripture: ‘His ministers who do his will’ (Ps. 102:21). Thus, you will receive the promise, i.e., the things promised, which is given to those who work: ‘Call the workers and give them their hire’ (Mt. 20:8); ‘In your patience you shall possess your souls’ (Lk. 21:19); ‘He that perseveres unto the end, he shall be saved’ (Mt. 24:13); ‘I will suddenly speak against a nation and against a kingdom, to root out, and to pull down, and to destroy it. If that nation against which I have spoken shall repent of their evil, I also will repent of the evil I have thought to do to them. And I will suddenly speak of a nation and of a kingdom, to build up and plant it’ (Jer. 18:7).

545. – Then (v. 37) he cites an authority to prove what he had said. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states it; secondly, he applies it to his thesis (v. 39). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he suggests how near the reward is; secondly, he describes the condition of the reward (v. 38); thirdly, he mentions the danger of losing the reward (v. 38b).

546. – In regard to the first it should be noted that this authority seems to be from Habakkuk (chap. 32); nevertheless, the first words are taken from Hag (chap. 2). But he probably did this because both were speaking about the same coming. For Habakkuk (2:3) says: ‘As yet the vision is far off,’ and Hag (2:7)

‘Yet one little while.’ Therefore, he uses the words of one as though they were the words of the other. Or better, because the Apostle is speaking of his own time, namely, after the incarnation and resurrection, from which less time remains until the judgment than remained from the time of the prophet, he prefers to use Haggai’s words at the beginning. Yet the two authorities agree in the end. Or, one could say that he is speaking as though of himself, and should be delivered no less than the prophets.

547. – But there are two comings of the Lord according to the two judgments: one is general, namely, at the end of the world in the general judgment; the other is particular, after every person’s death. But in regard to both he says, **for yet a little while**, as far as the length of time is concerned. And, of course, in regard to the first, although, i.e., is much compared to the flow of time in relation to ourselves; yet it is brief compared to eternity: ‘For a thousand years in your sight are as yesterday, which is past’ (Ps. 89:4); ‘Behold, I come quickly’ (Rev. 22:12). But as to the particular, which is at death, and concerning which Jn (14:5) says: ‘I shall come again and take you to myself,’ it does not make much difference whether it is less or more, because in the judgment each one will be as he is when he dies. Therefore, we should strive to appear good at death, because where I find you, there I will judge you. Hence, he says, **a little while**, because tribulations are not of long duration: For if they are overwhelming, they are destroyed, but if they are slight, they are not quickly ended: ‘That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation works for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory’ (2 Cor. 4:17). Therefore, **the coming one shall come quickly and will not tarry**, either in death or in the judgment: ‘Behold the judge stands before the door’ (Jas. 5:9).

548. – But he indicates the ones to be rewarded when he says, **But my righteous [just] man lives by faith**. This same text is found in Romans (1:17) and Gal (3:11). But the reward is paid only to the just: ‘The salvation of the just is from the Lord’ (Ps. 36:39). But justice is of two kinds: one in regard to human judgment: ‘not knowing the justice of God, and seeking to establish their own’ (Rom. 10:3); the other in regard to divine: ‘They were both just before the Lord’ (Lk. 1:6). But God requires the latter justice; hence, he says, **my just man**, i.e., the justice which is ordained to me, i.e., who is just to me and for me. But that by which a man is justified is faith: ‘The justice of God by faith of Jesus Christ’ (Rom. 3:22). The reason for this is that a man is just, because he is ordained to God; but that by which a man is first ordained to God is faith; therefore, he says, **My just man lives by faith**: ‘He that comes to God must believe’ (Heb. 11:6). Not only is justice by faith, but the one justified lives by faith. For just as the body lives by the soul, so the soul of God. Hence, just as the body lives by that through which the soul is first united to the body, so by that through which God is first united to the soul, the soul lives. But this is faith, because it is the first thing in the spiritual life: ‘If you will not believe, you shall not continue’ (Is. 7:9), just as a house does not remain, if the foundation is destroyed: ‘And that I live now in the flesh: I live in the faith of the Son of God’ (Gal. 2:20). But faith not formed by charity is dead; therefore, it does not give life to the soul without charity: ‘We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the

brethren' (1 Jn. 3:14). Or, **my just man lives by faith**, i.e., is considered such by me, and has the life of glory without actual suffering, if the opportunity to suffer is not given.

549. – Then when he says, **but if he shrinks back, my soul has no pleasure in him**, he shows the danger hanging over a person who does not continue in the justice of faith. For since it lies within the power of the believer to destroy himself or to save himself, he says, **but if he shrinks back**, namely, from the faith and from justice, **my soul has no pleasure in him**. Our version has Habakkuk (2:4): 'His soul shall not be right in himself.' But the sense is the same. Jerome says that wherever the Hebrew differs from the Septuagint, the Apostle uses what he learned from Gamaliel, at whose feet he learned the Law. Therefore, my soul, i.e., my will, has no pleasure in him. For the will of God should be the rule of our actions. Therefore, a person who does not agree with God's will, his soul is not right.

550. – Then when he says, **but we are not of those that shrink back and are destroyed**, he applies this to his thesis. As if to say: This is the way it will be in the case of those who withdraw from the faith; but we are not the children of withdrawing unto perdition. But a person is said to be a son of anything which rules him. Thus, a person is called the son of death, when that by which he is rejected by God, rules him: 'These are they who separate themselves, sensual men, having not the Spirit' (Jude 1:19). Unto destruction of the soul: 'You have destroyed all them that are disloyal to you' (Ps. 72:26); 'And the way of the wicked shall perish' (Ps. 1:6); **but of those who have faith**, i.e., reborn in Christ, and **save their souls**. For a person who keeps God's commandments saves his soul: 'If you will enter into life, keep the commandments' (Mt. 19:17); 'We are not of the night, or of darkness' (1 Th. 5:5). Therefore, let us not fail from the faith.

11-1

Heb. 11:1

¹Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.

551. – Above, the Apostle showed Christ's superiority in many ways by preferring Him to the angels, to Moses and to Aaron, and advised the faithful to be united to Christ. Since this union consists principally in faith and begins with faith: 'That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts' (Eph. 3:17), the Apostle proceeds to recommend this faith and does three things: first he describes faith; secondly, he gives various examples of it (v. 2); thirdly, he exhorts them to the things which pertain to faith (chap. 12).

552. – He gives a definition of faith which is complete but obscure. Hence, it should be noted that in attempting to define any virtue perfectly, one must mention its proper matter with which it deals, and its end; because habits are recognized by their acts, and acts by their objects. Therefore, it is necessary to mention the act and its order to its object and end. Thus, the definition of courage must mention its proper matter with which it deals, namely, fears and aggressions, and its end, which is the good of the republic. Now, since faith is a theological virtue, its object and end are the same, namely, God. First, he mentions its order to the end; secondly, its proper matter (v. 1b).

553. – But it should be noted that the act of faith is to believe, because it is an act of the intellect narrowed to one thing by the command of the will. Hence, to believe is to cogitate with assent, as Augustine says in *The Predestination of the Saints*. Therefore, the object of faith and of the will must coincide. But the object of faith is the first truth, in which the end of the will consists, namely, happiness. But it is present one way on earth, and another way in heaven, because on earth the first truth is not possessed and, consequently, not seen: for in regard to things that are above the soul, to possess and to see are the same, as Augustine says in *Book of 83 Questions*. Hence, they are only hoped for: 'But hope that is sees in not hope. For what a man sees, why does he hope for?' (Rom. 8:24). Therefore, the first truth, not seen but hoped for, is the end of the will on earth and, consequently, is the object of faith, because its end and object are the same. But the ultimate end of faith in heaven, which we tend toward by faith, is happiness, which consists in the clear vision of God: 'This is eternal life: to know thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3). But such is the hope of believers: 'He has regenerated us unto a lively hope' (1 Pt. 1:3). The end, therefore, of faith on earth is the attainment of the thing hoped for, namely, of eternal happiness; hence, he says, **of things hoped for**.

554. – But a question arises: since faith is prior to hope, why is it defined in terms of hope? For it is customary to define the later by the previous, and not vice versa. I answer that the answer should be obvious from what has been said, namely, that the object and end of faith are the same. Therefore, since

the attainment of the things hoped for is its end, it must also be its object. For it has been stated above that a habit must be defined by the order of its act to its object. But the true and the good, even though when considered in themselves are convertible as far as their supposits are concerned, differ in conception. Hence, they are diversely related to each other, because the true is a good and a good is true. In like manner, the intellect and will, which are distinguished on the basis of the distinction between the true and the good, have a diverse relationship to each other. For inasmuch as the intellect apprehends truth and anything contained in it, the true is a good; hence, the good is under the true: but inasmuch as the will moves, the true is under the good. Therefore, in the order of knowing, the intellect is prior; but in the order of moving, the will is prior. Therefore, because the intellect is moved to the act of faith by the command of the will, in the order of moving, the will is prior. Therefore, the prior is not being defined in terms of the later, because, as has been stated, in the definition of faith, the order of the act to its object, which is the same as the end, must be mentioned. But the end and the good are the same, as it says in *Phys.* II. But in the order to the good, the will, which is the subject of hope, is prior.

555. – But why not say, ‘of things to be loved,’ rather than **of things to be hoped for**? The reason is because charity is concerned with things that are present or absent. Therefore, because the unpossessed end is the object of faith, he says, **of things to be hoped for**. Nor does it make any difference that the thing to be hoped for is also the object of hope, because it is necessary that faith be ordained to an end, which coincides with the object of those virtues by which the will is made perfect; since faith pertains to the will as moved by the intellect.

556. – But since faith is one virtue, because it is called one habit (for its object is one), why not say ‘of the thing to be hoped for,’ instead **of things to be hoped for**? I answer that happiness, which is essentially one thing in itself, because it consists in the vision of God, is the principle and root from which the many good things contained under it are derived: for example, the characteristics of the body, companionship with the saints, and many other good things. Therefore, in order to show that all these pertain to faith, he speaks in the plural.

557. – The word, **substance**, which appears in the definition, can be explained in a number of ways: in one way, causally, and then it has two senses: one which is substance, i.e., making the things hoped for be present in us. This it does in two ways: in one way, by meriting, as it were; for from the fact that a person makes his intellect captive and submissive to the things of faith, he deserves some day to see the things he hopes for: for vision is the reward of faith. In another way, as though by its property, bringing it about that what is believed really to lie in the future, be somehow already possessed, provided one believe in God. In another way, we can explain the word, substance, essentially, as if faith is the substance, i.e., the essence of things to be hoped for. Hence, in Greek it is defined as ‘the hypostasis of things to be hoped for.’ For the essence of happiness is no less than the vision of God: ‘This is eternal life: that they may

know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent' (Jn. 17:3). Hence, in the book, *On the Trinity*.

Augustine says: 'This contemplation is promised to us; the end of all actions.' Therefore, the full vision of God is the essence of happiness. We also see this in the liberal sciences, which, if a person wishes to learn them, he must first accept its principles, which he must believe when they are delivered to him by the teacher. For a learner must believe, as it is stated in 1 *Posterior Analytics*. And in those principles the entire science is somehow contained, as conclusions are contained in their principles, and an effect in its cause. Therefore, one who has the principles of a science, say geometry, has its substance. And if geometry were the substance of happiness, a person who possessed the principles of geometry would, in a sense, have the substance of happiness. But our faith consists in believing that the blessed will see and enjoy God. Therefore, if we will to reach that state, it is necessary that we believe the principles of that knowledge. And these principles are the articles of faith, which contain the summary of this knowledge, because the vision of the triune God makes us happy. And this is one article; hence we believe this. Consequently, he says, **the assurance [substance] of things to be hoped for**: 'We see now through a glass in a dark manner; but then face to face' (1 Cor. 13:12). As if to say: we shall be happy when we see face to face that which we now see in a glass and in a dark manner. In these words is shown the relationship of the act of faith to its end, because faith is ordained to things to be hoped for, being, as it were, a beginning in which the whole is, as it were, virtually contained, as conclusions in principles.

558. – Then when he says, **the conviction [evidence] of things that appear not**, he touches the act of faith in regard to its proper matter. But the act proper to faith, even though it is in relation to the will, as has been said, is nevertheless in the intellect, as in a subject, because its object is the true, which properly pertains to the intellect. But there is a difference among the acts of the intellect: for some are habits of the intellect which imply complete certitude and perfect understanding of that which is understood, as is clear in the habit of understanding, which is the habit of first principles, because one who understands that every whole is great than its part sees this and is certain. But the habit of science also does this: thus the habits of understanding and of science will produce certitude and vision. But there are others which beget neither, namely, doubt and opinion. But faith is midway between these: because, as has been stated, faith produces assent in the intellect which can be caused in two ways: in one way, because the intellect is moved to assent because of the evidence of the object which is *per se* knowable, as in the habit of principles, or known through something else, which is *per se* knowable, as in the science of astronomy. In another way, it assents to something not because of the evidence of the object, by which it is not sufficiently moved (hence it is not certain), but it either doubts, namely, when there is no more evidence for one side than for the other; or it opines, if it does have reason for one side, but without satisfying the intellect, so that there is fear in regard to the opposite side. But faith does not suggest either of these absolutely: because there is no evidence, as there is in understanding and science, nor is there doubt, as in doubt and opinion; but it fixes on one side with certainty and firm adherence by a voluntary choice. But this choice rests on God's authority, and by it the intellect is fixed, so that it clings firmly to the things of

faith and assents to them with the greatest of certainty. Therefore, to believe is to know with assent. Therefore, the proper matter of the habit of faith are things that appear not. For appearance has knowledge, but not faith, as Gregory says. But the act of faith is certain adherence, which the Apostle calls evidence, taking the cause for the effect, because evidence produces faith about a doubtful matter. For evidence is the reason for believing a doubted thing. Or if we follow the etymology of the word, evidence (argument), which means arguing the mind, then he is taking the effect for the cause, because the mind is compelled to assent because of the thing's certainty. Hence, it is called the evidence of things that appear not, i.e., a sure and certain apprehension of things it does not see.

Now, if someone were to reduce those words to their correct form, he could say that faith is a habit of the mind by which eternal life is begun in us and makes the intellect assent to things that it does not see. Therefore, it is obvious that the Apostle has defined faith completely, but not clearly. [Where we have evidence another version has conviction, because on God's authority the intellect is convinced about things it does not see].

559. – By that definition, faith is distinguished from all the other habits of the intellect. For the fact that it is called evidence, faith is distinguished from opinion, doubt and suspicion, because these three do not cause the intellect to adhere to something firmly. By the words, of things to be hoped for, it is distinguished from ordinary faith which is not ordained to happiness. For by proper definition a thing is made known and distinguished from all else, as in this case; hence, all the others are reduced to it.

560. – But it seems incorrect to say, of things that appear not, as it says in Jn (20:26): 'Thomas saw and believed.' Furthermore, we believe that there is one God, a fact which is demonstrated by philosophers.

I answer that faith is taken in two senses: in the proper sense, it is concerned with things not seen and not known, as is clear from the above. But inasmuch as there cannot be greater certainty of a conclusion than of the principle from which it is drawn, because principles are always more certain than the conclusions, it follows that since the principles of faith are not evident, neither are its conclusions. Hence, the intellect does not assent to the conclusions as to things known or seen. But taken in a general sense, it excludes all knowledge that is certain; that is the sense in which it is taken by Augustine in the *Gospel Questions*, when he says that faith is concerned with things that are seen. But the Apostle is speaking in the first sense. Furthermore, it must be said of Thomas that, as Gregory says, he saw one thing and believed something else: for he saw the humanity and believed the divinity. To the objection based on demonstration, the answer is that nothing prohibits one thing being seen by one person and believed by another, as is obvious in diverse states. For what is not seen on earth is seen by the angels. Therefore, what I believe, an angel sees. Similarly, what is seen by the prophets, for example, that God is one and incorporeal, must be believed by the illiterate; just as an illiterate person believes in an eclipse which an astronomer sees. However, in such matters faith is taken in a different sense. But there are some things which absolutely transcend the state of the present life; and in regard to these there is faith in the strict sense.

11-2

Heb. 11:2-7

²For by it the men of old received divine approval. ³By faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear. ⁴By faith Abel offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain, through which he received approval as righteous, God bearing witness by accepting his gifts; he died, but through his faith he is still speaking. ⁵By faith Enoch was taken up so that he should not see death; and he was not found, because God had taken him. Now before he was taken he was attested as having pleased God. ⁶And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him. ⁷By faith Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen, took heed and constructed an ark for the saving of his household; by this he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith.

561. – Having given a description, the Apostle now clarifies it with an example. In regard to this he does two things: first, he manifests his thesis in general; secondly, in detail (v. 2).

562. – In regard to the first he says: Thus, therefore, I describe and command the faith, and this is nothing new: **for by this**, i.e., faith, **the men of old**, i.e., the holy fathers, **obtained divine approval**, i.e., believed, and were made ready by faith: ‘Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice’ (Gen. 15:6): ‘I have believed; therefore, have I spoken’ (Ps. 115:10). But among all the fathers of the Old Testament two especially, namely, David and Abraham, have the testimony of faith.

563. – Then (v. 3) he clarifies his thesis in detail with examples of the ancients: first, as to what they believed and taught; secondly, as to what they did (v. 4); thirdly, as to what they suffered (v. 35b).

564. – Now the doctrine of the Old Testament was twofold: one was clearly given; the other was hidden behind the veil of figures and mysteries. The first concerned the unity of God and the creation of the world; the second the mystery of the incarnation and reparation. Hence, just as they observed the Sabbath in memory of the creation, so we observe Sunday in memory of the resurrection. In regard to the doctrine of the creation of the world he says, **by faith we understand that the world was created by the word of God**. This can be read in two ways: in one way so that by the word of God is in the ablative case. Then the sense is **we**, as the ancients, **by faith**, i.e., by the doctrine of faith, namely, of the Old Testament: ‘God said: Let there be light; and the light was made’ (Gen. 1:3); ‘He spoke and they were made’ (Ps. 32:9), **understand that the world was created**, i.e., arranged, **by the word of God**, i.e., by God’s command. But it pertains to faith that we understand this, because, since faith is concerned with things unseen, even the world was made of invisible things, namely, of prime matter, which, when it is bare and devoid of all

form, is invisible and lacks all form and disposition. Hence, he says, **so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear**. In the second way, so that word is in the dative case. Then the sense is: We understand thought faith, as before, that the world was framed, i.e., suited and corresponded to the word, that from invisible things visible things might be made.

Here it should be noted that the word of God is God's very concept, by which He understands Himself and other things. But God is compared to the creature as artisan to artifact. But we notice that an artisan produces what he produces outside himself in a likeness of his concept; hence, he makes a house in matter in the likeness of the house formed in his mind. But if the external house conforms to the preconceived house, it is a work properly arranged; if not, not. But because all creatures are arranged in the best way, as produced by an artisan in Whom no error or defect can occur, they all conform in the fullest way to the divine concept according to their mode. Hence Boethius in the *Consolations* says: 'The most beautiful on bringing forth in His mind a beautiful world forms it in His likeness and image.' Therefore, he says, **we understand by faith that the world**, i.e., the entire universe of creatures, was framed, i.e., fittingly corresponded, to the word, i.e., to God's concept as artifacts correspond to their art: 'And he poured her out,' i.e., His wisdom, 'upon all his works' (Sir. 1:10).

565. – He continues, that from invisible things visible things might be made. But because the common notion among the ancients was that the soul was produced from nothing (2 *Physics*), when they saw a new work, they said that it was made from invisible things. Hence, they either supposed that everything was in everything else, as Empedocles and Anaxagoras, of whom we shall say nothing at present; or thought that forms were in hiding, as Anaxagoras. Still others supposed that they were formed from ideas, as Plato; and others from a mind, as Avicenna. Hence, according to all these philosophers, visible things were made from invisible ideal reasons. But we say, according to the aforesaid manner, that visible things were produced from invisible ideal reasons in the Word of God, by Whom all things were made. These reasons, even though they are the same reality, differ in aspect by diverse relations connoted in respect to the creature. Hence, man was created by one reason, and a horse by another reason, as Augustine says in the *Book of 83 Questions*. Thus, therefore, the world was framed by the word of God, that from invisible ideal reasons in the Word of God, visible things, i.e., every creature, might be made.

566. – But all those words are expressly against the Manicheans, who say that what a man believes is not important, but what he does. But the Apostle sets faith down as the principle of every work; hence he says that it is the substance, i.e., the foundation. Therefore, without faith, works are performed in vain. Furthermore, they say that one should believe only those things for which a reason is had. Against this he says, of things that appear not. Again, they condemn the Old Testament, saying that it was formed by an evil principle, namely, the devil. Against this he says that in this faith the ancients obtained a testimony.

567. – Then (v. 4) he shows what the ancient fathers did: first, he shows this of the fathers who lived before the deluge; secondly, of those who lived before the Law (v. 8); thirdly, of those who lived under the Law (v. 24). Before the deluge there were three especially pleasing to God, namely, Abel (Gen. 4:4), Enoch (Gen. 5:22) and Noah (Gen. 6:9). First, he mentions Abel's faith; secondly, Enoch's (v. 5); thirdly, Noah's (v. 7).

568. – In regard to Abel he shows what he did by faith and what he obtained. **By faith Abel offered to God a sacrifice;** hence, as confession witnesses to the faith within, so from his external sacrifice, his faith is commended by reason of his external worship in sacrifice. His chosen faith is shown by his offering a chosen sacrifice, for it was from the firstlings of his flock, and of their fat. For the best sacrifice was a sign of his chosen and approved faith: 'Cursed is the deceitful man that has in his flock a male, and making a vow, offers in sacrifice what is feeble to the Lord' (Mal. 1:14). No mention is made of the excellence of Cain's sacrifice, but only that he offered it from the fruits of the earth. He says that Abel **offered to God a more acceptable sacrifice than Cain**, i.e., he offered a better sacrifice than Cain to God, because it was offered for the honor of God. Otherwise, it would not have been pleasing to God. A Gloss says: By an exceeding faith, but this is not found in the Greek. Unless one were to say, by an exceeding faith, i.e., by a better and more excellent one than Cain's, because, as has been said, the external sacrifice was a sign of the faith within.

569. – But two things follow upon faith: one on this earth, namely, a witness to justice; hence, he says, **through which he received approval as righteous**, namely, by faith: 'From the blood of Abel, the just' (Mt. 23:35). Yet it is not because of Christ's testimony that he says, Abel obtained approval as righteous, because he intends to introduce the authority of the Old Testament only, but because of what is said in Genesis (4:4): 'God had respect to Abel, and to his offering,' because God has respect especially to the just: 'The eyes of the Lord are upon the just' (Ps. 33:16). And this by **God bearing witness by accepting his gifts**, which perhaps happened because his gifts were kindled by a heavenly fire. And this was God's respect. Yet He had respect first to the one offering them than to his offering, because an offering which is not sacramental is accepted because of the goodness of the one offering; for the wickedness of the minister does not alter the sacramental goodness. But in regard to the one offering, goodness is required, if the sacrifice is to benefit him. The other he obtained after death; hence, he says, **he died, but through his faith he is still speaking**, for as a Gloss says: His faith is still commended after death, because it gives us material for speaking of him. Thus, we give examples of faith and patience, when we exhort others to penance. But this is not the Apostle's aim, because all the things he uses here he takes from the Scriptures. Hence, what is said in Genesis (4:10) is understood of him: 'The voice of your brother's blood cries to me from the earth;' 'Which speaks better than that of Abel' (Heb. 12:24). For he takes by it, i.e., by the merit of faith, that being dead, i.e., the blood of the dead Abel, cries to God and speaks to God.

570. – Then when he says, **by faith Enoch was taken up**, he commends Enoch: first, he states his intent; secondly, he proves it (v. 5b).

571. – The Apostle makes no mention of his works, because Scripture says little about him, but merely shows what God did to him, because by faith, i.e., by the merit of faith, he was taken up from the present life, and kept from death in another; hence, he says, **that he should not see death**: ‘He was seen no more, because God took him’ (Gen. 5:24). And it is true that he was not dead yet, but he will die some time, because the sentence, which the Lord imposed on our first parents for their sin: ‘In what day soever you shall eat of it, you shall die the death’ (Gen. 2:17), will continue on all who are born of Adam in any way, as even in the case of Christ: ‘Who is the man that shall live and not see death?’ (Ps. 88:49). But the death of two persons, namely, Enoch and Elijah, has been deferred, the reason being that the doctrine of the Old Testament is ordained to the promises of the New Testament, in which the hope of eternal life is promised to us: ‘Do penance, for the kingdom of God is at hand (Mt. 4:17). Therefore, after the sentence of death was pronounced, the Lord willed to lead men to a hope for life. He did this in the case of the fathers of all the states, namely, of nature, of the Law, and of grace. Hence, in the first state He offered the hope of evading death in the case of Enoch; in the Law in Elijah; in the time of grace in Christ, by Whom the effect of this promise is given to us. Therefore, the others will die. But Christ, rising from the dead, dies now no more. But the first two will be put to death by Antichrist. Thus, therefore, he was taken up that he should not see death, and not only that he should not feel death; and this in that generation.

572. – Then (v. 5b) he proves that he obtained this by the merit of faith: first, he proves that he was taken up; secondly, that he obtained this by the merit of faith (v. 5c).

573. – He proves the first on the authority of Genesis (5:24), which is presented in other words, because there it says that **he was seen no more, because God took him**, but here, he was not found, because God had taken him. But the sense is the same: ‘He pleased God and was beloved, and living among sinners he was taken up’ (Wis. 4:10). For just as it was fitting that man be expelled from paradise because of sin, so also that the just be brought into it. For by Seth he was the seventh and best descendant of Adam, as Lamech by Cain was the seventh and worst descendant of Adam, being the first who, contrary to nature, introduced bigamy.

574. – Then (v. 5b) he proves that he was taken up on account of the merit of faith, because the Scripture says of him before his being taken up that ‘he walked with God’ (Gen. 5:24), which is to consent to God and please Him. But God took him for this reason; for without faith it is impossible to walk with God and please Him, therefore, etc.

He gives the entire reason as to the premises: and first the major, because **before he was taken up he was attested as having pleased God**. Therefore, God translated him. ‘Enoch pleased God and was translated into paradise, that he may give repentance to the nations’ (Sir. 44:16). But the fact that he

pleased God is shown by the Scripture, which says that he walked with God: 'He walked with me in peace and in equity' (Mal. 2:6); 'The man that walked in the perfect way, he served me' (Ps. 100:6).

575. – He states the minor, saying: **And without faith it is impossible to please God**: 'Faith is agreeable to him' (Sir. 1:34); 'For we account a man to be justified by faith' (Rom. 3:28). He proves the minor when he says, **Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists**. But no one can please God without coming to him: 'Draw near to God and he will draw near to you' (Jas. 4:8); 'Draw nigh to him and be enlightened' (Ps. 33:5). But no one draws near to God except by faith, because faith is a light of the intellect. Therefore, no one can please God except by faith. But anyone drawing near by faith must believe the Lord. For just as we see that in every natural motion the moveable object must tend to two things in its motion that the motion not be in vain, namely, to a definite terminus and a certain cause why it is moved (but the terminus is reached before the effect of the motion is reached), so in the movement by which one draws near to God, the terminus of motion is God Himself. Hence, he says, **Whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists**. He says this because of His eternity: 'He that is, sent me' (Ex. 3:14). Secondly, that he know that God exercises providence over things. For otherwise no one would go to Him, if he had not hope of a reward from Him; hence, he says, **and rewards those who seek him**: 'Behold the Lord God shall come.... And his reward is with him' (Is. 40:10). But a reward is what a man seeks for his labor: 'Call the workers and give them their hire' (Mt. 20:8). This reward is no less than God Himself, because a man should seek nothing outside of Him: 'I am your protector and your reward exceeding great' (Gen. 15:1). For God gives nothing but Himself: 'The Lord is my portion, said my soul' (Lam 3:24). He says, therefore, **and rewards those who seek him**, which is no different from Ps. 104 (v. 4): 'Seek the Lord and be strengthened: seek his face forevermore.'

576. – But are these two sufficient for salvation? I answer that after the sin of our first parents, no one can be saved from the debt of original sin except by faith in the Mediator: but that faith varies as far as the mode of believe is concerned, for different times and states. But we to whom such a great benefit has been shown must believe more explicitly than those who existed before the time of Christ. At that time some believed more explicitly, as the greater fathers and some to whom a special revelation was made. Furthermore, those under the Law believed more explicitly than those before the Law, because they were given certain sacraments by which Christ was represented as by a figure. But for the Gentiles who were saved it was enough if they believed that God is a rewarder; and this reward is received through Christ alone. Hence, they believed implicitly in a mediator.

577. – But an objection is raised against the statement that it is necessary to believe that God exists, because it was stated above that something believed is not seen or known. But God's existence is demonstrated. I answer that knowledge about God can be had in a number of ways: in one way through Christ, inasmuch as God is the Father of an only begotten and consubstantial Son, and other things which Christ specifically taught about God the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit regarding the unity of

essence and trinity of persons. All this was believed, but in the Old Testament it was believed only by the greater fathers. In another way, that God alone is to be worshipped; this is the way the Jews believed. In a third way, that there is one God: and this was known even by the philosophers and does not fall under faith.

578. – Then (v. 7) he shows that Noah did by faith and what he obtained as a result: and was instituted heir of the justice which is by faith. He mentions five things that he did: first, that he believed God's words about the judgment to come, but which was not yet seen. Hence, he says, **By faith, Noah, being warned by God concerning events as yet unseen**, believed. Secondly, he was moved to fear by faith, because faith is the beginning of fear: 'The fear of God is the beginning of his love; and the beginning of faith is to be fast joined unto it' (Sir. 25:16). Hence, he says, moved by fear, namely, of the promised deluge, which, nevertheless, was not seen. Therefore, faith is concerned with invisible things. Thirdly, he fulfilled God's command by building the ark; hence, he says, he **constructed an ark**, i.e., he did what was suitable according to God's arrangement. Fourthly, he hoped for salvation from God, hence he says, **for the saving of his household**, i.e., his family, because they alone were saved: 'herein a few, that is eight souls, were saved by water' (1 Pt 3:20). Fifthly, since he did all the foregoing because of faith, **he condemned the world**, i.e., showed that worldly people deserve condemnation. But the revelation he received about constructing the ark was an answer to his desire and of the righteousness which is by faith.

579. – Then when he says, **and was instituted heir of the justice which is by faith**, he shows what he obtained by faith. For just as after someone's death another person succeeds in his inheritance, so too, because justice had not entirely died in the world, because the world still continued, but in the deluge almost the entire world perished, therefore, Noah was made heir, as it were, because of his faith. Or of the righteousness which is obtained by faith. Or, just as his fathers were justified by faith, so he was made the heir of justice by faith, namely, an imitator of his fathers' justice by faith.

11-3

Heb. 11:8-12

⁸By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. ⁹By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, living in tents with Isaac and Jacob, heirs with him of the same promise. ¹⁰For he looked forward to the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. ¹¹By faith Sarah herself received power to conceive, even when she was past the age, since she considered him faithful who had promised. ¹²Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born descendants as many as the stars of heaven and as the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore.

580. – Having given an example of faith from the fathers who existed before the deluge, i.e., those who were the fathers of both the Gentiles and the Jews; the Apostle now treats specifically of the fathers who existed after the deluge, namely, the fathers of the Jews. First of all, he gives the example of the faith of Abraham, who was the father of believers; hence, he was the first to receive the seal of faith before the Law. First, he shows what Abraham did; secondly, what Isaac did (v. 20); thirdly, what Jacob did (v. 21); fourthly, what Joseph did (v. 22). The first is divided into two parts: in the first he shows what he did in regard to external and human knowledge; secondly, what he did in regard to God (v. 17). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows what he did in regard to his dwelling place; secondly, what he did in regard to generation (v. 11); thirdly, what he did in regard to his own conversion (v. 13). In regard to the dwelling place he does two things: first, what he did in regard to his first change of location; secondly, in regard to his other change (v. 9).

581. – In order to show how great is the authority of his example of Abraham, he mentions the renown of his name, saying, he that is called Abraham, by God: ‘You shall be called Abraham’ (Gen. 17:5). He is also called by men: ‘Abraham was the great father of a multitude of nations’ (Sir. 44:20). Therefore, such a one called by God and preached by men is a worthy example. Secondly, he gives the example, saying, **by faith Abraham obeyed**. For by faith we are enabled to believe God concerning invisible things: ‘For obedience to the faith’ (Rom. 1:5); **When he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance**: ‘Go forth out of your country and from your kindred, and out of your father’s house, into the land which I shall show you’ (Gen. 12:1). But the Lord was to give him that land for an inheritance: ‘All the land which you see, I will give to you’ (Gen. 13:15).

582. – But did he not leave his own land along with his father, Thares? Therefore, he did not leave because of God’s command, but his father’s. I answer that he left with his father with the intention of returning again, but in response to the Lord’s command he went into Mesopotamia to Syria where he

intended to remain after his father's death. But in response to the Lord's command he went into the land of Canaan.

But was this so wonderful that he had to have faith about it and believe God? Yes, because **he went out, not knowing where he was to go**. But what is unknown is invisible. By Abraham's obedience we are instructed to go out from all carnal affection, if we would obtain our inheritance: 'Forget your people and your father's house' (Ps. 44:11); 'The eye has not seen, O God, besides you, what things you have prepared for them that wait for you' (Is. 64:4). Hence, that inheritance is unknown to us.

583. – Then (v. 9) he shows what he did by faith in regard to his dwelling place: first, what he did; secondly, the reason why (v. 10).

584. – For we sometimes notice a person leaving his native land and going elsewhere to make a lasting home. Not so Abraham, for he lived as a stranger in the land of Canaan and dwelt there as a stranger. This is obvious from the fact that he did not build a house there, but lived in huts and tents, which are transportable dwellings; hence, mention is always made of tents, when he speaks of Abraham. Therefore, he lived there as a stranger because of the Lord's command: 'And he gave him no inheritance in it; no, not the pace of a foot' (Ac. 7:5); 'He was a sojourner in the land of the Philistines many days' (Gen. 21:34). This is true as to what the Lord was to give him gratis, but not as to what he bought. Hence, he says, **by faith he sojourned in the land of promise**, as is clear from Genesis (12 to 21), **as in a foreign land**; which is obvious from his living in tents. That he had no intention of returning to his native land, even if he had lived longer, is shown by the fact that he lived with Isaac and Jacob not at the same time, but successively. These were the children of the promise, because the promise was made to them (Gen. 17 and 28). He says, **heirs with him of the same promise**, in which we are given to understand that we should live in the world as foreigners and strangers: 'And they that use this world, as though they used it not' (1 Cor. 7:31); 'For we have not here a lasting city, but we seek one that is above' (Heb. 13:14).

585. – Then when he says, **he looked forward to the city which has foundations**, he shows why he lingered there as a stranger, namely, because he did not consider himself as having anything on earth, but was seeking a heavenly city as his inheritance: 'Our feet were standing on your courts, O Jerusalem. Jerusalem, which is built as a city' (Ps. 121:2); 'your eyes which see Jerusalem, a rich habitation, a tabernacle that cannot be removed' (Is. 33:20). It is called a city, first of all, because of the unity of the citizens, which unity is true peace: 'Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem, praise your God, O Sion' (Ps. 147:12) and in v. 14: 'Who puts peace in your borders.' Your people shall sit in the beauty of peace, and in the tabernacle of confidence, and in wealthy rest' (Is. 23:18); That they may be one, as we also are one' (Jn. 17:22). Secondly, it is ordered, because it exists for justice and not for doing evil. But perpetual justice is there: 'And the name of the city from that day is, the Lord is here' (Ez. 48:35). Thirdly, it was sufficient unto itself in all things that are necessary, for whatever is necessary will be there most perfectly, because

it is a state made perfect by the assemblage of all good things: ‘Jerusalem, which is built as a city, which is compact together’ (Ps. 121:3).

586. – This city has foundations, in which stability is signified: ‘A tabernacle that cannot be removed’ (Is. 33:20). But the foundations are the first part of a building; hence, the angels are the foundations of a city: ‘The foundations therefore are in the holy mountains’ (Ps. 86:20); for men will be raised to the orders of angels.

587. – The founder of this city is God, not the wisdom of human art: ‘We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in heaven’ (2 Cor. 5:1). Now two things are required for the erection of a city: the first is the authority of the prince, by means of whom it is made firm and who is called its founder, and from whom it takes its name, as Rome from Romulus. And so God is called the founder of that city: ‘In the city of our God: God has founded it forever’ (Ps. 47:9). The second is the way it is put together, which commends the wisdom of the artisan. And so God is called its artisan, because it was put together according to the disposition and wisdom of God: ‘Great is the Lord and exceedingly to be praised in the city of God, in his holy mountain’ (Ps. 47:2). For the proper arrangement of a work commends the workman. But divine wisdom will never be so resplendent as there; and, therefore, it is exceedingly to be praised.

588. – Then when he says, **by faith Sarah herself received power to conceive**, he shows what his wife obtained by faith. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows what she obtained; secondly, what she obtained in her children (v. 12).

589. – But there were two defects in his wife that made it seem almost impossible for her to be able to conceive: one was that she was sterile: ‘And Sarah was barren’ (Gen. 11:30). The other was that due to her age she was not naturally suited to bear children: ‘It had ceased to be with Sarah after the manner of women’ (Gen. 18:11). But the Apostle touches on these two defects: first, when he says, **being barren**; secondly, when he says, **even when she was past the age**. Yet in spite of all this, she received the power to conceive by faith, namely, her own or Abraham’s, because even though it was impossible according to nature that a woman of ninety conceive of a man of ninety, nevertheless, both believed God, for Whom nothing is difficult. Hence, he says, **since she considered him faithful who had promised**.

590. – But on the contrary, it seems that Abraham did not believe, because in Genesis (17:17) he asked: ‘Shall a son, think you, be born to him that is a hundred years old? And shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bring forth?’ Again, in regard to Sarah it is stated in Genesis (18:12): ‘She laughed secretly, saying: ‘After I am old, and my lord is an old man, shall I give myself to pleasure?’ I answer that in regard to Abraham, his laughing was not due to doubt, but to wonder: ‘He staggered not by distrust; but was strengthened in faith, giving glory to God. Most fully knowing that whatsoever he has promised, he is

able also to perform' (Rom. 4:20). Hence, his laughter is not reproved by God, Who knows the hearts of all. But Sarah at first doubted in the first promise, but when the angel referred to the power of God, when he said: 'Is there anything hard to God?' (Gen. 18:14), she then believed; and this was, as it were, a second promise. Therefore, he says that he re-promised, because when He promised the first time, she did not believe, but only when He re-promised.

591. – But it should be noted that all the miraculous conceptions which took place in the Old Testament were as a figure of that greatest of miracles which occurred in the incarnation. For it was necessary that His birth from the Virgin be prefigured by certain things, to prepare souls to believe. But it could not be prefigured by something equal, because a figure necessarily falls short of what is prefigured. Therefore, the Scripture shows the Virgin birth by the birth from sterile women, namely, Sarah, Anna, and Elizabeth. But there is a difference: because Sarah received the power to conceive from God miraculously, but from human seed; but in the Blessed Virgin He even prepared that most pure matter from her blood, and along with that, the power of the Holy Spirit was there in place of seed. For the Word was made flesh not from human seed but by a mystical spiration.

592. – Then when he says, **for which cause there sprung even from one man**, he shows what she obtained in her children by God's power, namely, a multiplying of seed in the merit of faith, from one, namely, Abraham, they were sprung: 'I called him alone, and blessed him, and multiplied him' (Is. 51:2). Secondly, his condition should be considered, because he was **as good as dead**; for he was already an old man, as was stated above.

But on the other hand, because Sarah was dead, he begot sons by another wife, as it is stated in Genesis (25:2). Therefore, it is incorrect to describe him as good as dead. I answer that an old man can well produce from a young woman, but not from an old. Consequently, his power to produce was dead in regard to Sarah, but not in regard to others. Or, one might say that **from one** refers to Sarah's womb already as good as dead: 'Nor the dead womb of Sarah' (Rom. 4:19); 'Look upon Abraham, your father and to Sarah that bore you' (Is. 51:2).

Thirdly, the difference between those who come forth from Abraham should be considered. For, as it is stated in Romans (9:6): 'Just as some who are of the seed of Abraham are not Israelites, so not all who are of the seed of Abraham are sons; but those who are children of the promise are accounted for the seed.' Therefore, his offspring are divided into two branches, the good and the wicked. The good are signified by the stars, of whom he says that they have sprung **as the stars of heaven** in number: 'The stars have given light in their watches, and rejoiced' (Bar. 3:34). But the wicked are signified by the sands of the seashore, because the wicked Jews of Abraham's seed are conformed to the Gentiles. But the sand is everywhere buffeted by the waves of the sea, and the wicked by the winds of the world: 'The wicked are like the raging sea' (Is. 57:20). But the Jews were not altogether sand, but as the sand, because they shared their wickedness with the Gentiles: 'I have set the sand a bound for the sea' (Jer. 5:22). Again,

sand is sterile and fruitless; so, too, the wicked are sterile of all work of good fruit. Hence, he says, they sprung as **the innumerable grains of sand by the seashore**. The figure is hyperbole. Or it is described as innumerable, not because it cannot be counted, but because it cannot be counted easily: ‘I will multiply your seed as the stars of heaven, and as the sand that is by the sea shore’ (Gen. 22:17).

11-4

Heb. 11:13-19

¹³These all died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar, and having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. ¹⁴For people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland. ¹⁵If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had opportunity to return. ¹⁶But as it is, they desire a better country, that is, a heavenly one. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for he has prepared for them a city. ¹⁷By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, ¹⁸of whom it was said, “Through Isaac shall your descendants be named.” ¹⁹He considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead; hence, figuratively speaking, he did receive him back.

593. – Having commended Abraham’s faith in regard to his dwelling place and offspring, The Apostle now commends him on his way of life until death. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows what he did by faith; secondly, he mentions one thing that pertains to faith (v. 14); thirdly, he shows what he received by faith (v. 16).

594. – He commends the faith of Abraham and of his children on its perseverance, because they preserved in the faith until death: ‘He that shall persevere until the end, he shall be saved’ (Mt. 24:13). Therefore, he says, **These all died in faith**, except Enoch. Or, **these all**, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. And this is better, because the promise was made only to them. Furthermore, he commends them on the long delay of the promise; hence, he says, **not having received what was promised**.

595. – But on the other hand, it seems that they received the promise: ‘Abraham was one and he merited the land’ (Ez. 33:24). I answer that he possessed, i.e., was the first to receive the promise of possessing; yet he did not actually possess, as is evident from Acts (7:5). He continues, **having seen it and greeted it from afar** by faith’. As if to say: Looking on with the vision of faith. Perhaps the response in the first Sunday of Advent is taken from this passage: ‘Behold from afar off, behold I see the power of God coming, and a cloud covering the whole earth;’ ‘Behold the name of the Lord comes from afar’ (Is. 30:27). And **saluting** it, i.e., venerating. He speaks, according to Chrysostom, in the manner of sailors, who when they first see the port, break out in praise and salute the city they have reached. So the holy fathers, seeing by faith the Christ to come and the glory they were to obtain through Him, saluted, i.e., venerated Him: ‘Blessed is he that comes in the name of the Lord. He is God and has shone upon us’ (Ps. 117:26); ‘Abraham, your father, rejoiced that he might see my day: he saw it and was glad’ (Jn. 8:56).

596. – He also commends their faith for its sincere confession, because, as it says in Romans (10:10): ‘With the heart we believe until justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.’ Hence, he says, **having acknowledged that they were strangers and exiles on the earth**: for those three called themselves strangers and pilgrims, for in Genesis (23:4) Abraham says: ‘I am a stranger and a sojourner among you.’ Furthermore, the Lord says to Isaac: ‘Stay in the land that I shall tell you, and sojourn in it’ (Gen. 26:2), and Jacob himself says: ‘The days of my pilgrimage’ (Gen. 47:9). Now a pilgrim is one who is en route to some place. But a sojourner is one who lives in a foreign land with no intention of going anywhere else. But they not only confessed themselves sojourners, but pilgrims as well. So, too, a holy person does not make his home in the world, but is always busy and tending toward heaven: ‘I am a stranger with you, and a sojourner as all my fathers were’ (Ps. 38:13).

597. – Then (v. 14) he shows that this confession pertains to hope. For one is a guest and a stranger, unless he is outside his country and going to it. Therefore, since they confess themselves guests and strangers, they signify that they are heading toward their native land, i.e., the heavenly Jerusalem: ‘But that Jerusalem which is above is free’ (Gal. 4:26). And this is what he says, **for people who speak thus make it clear that they are seeking a homeland**.

598. – But because someone might say that it is true that they were pilgrims in the land of the Philistines and Canaanites, among whom they dwelt, but they intended to return to the land they had left; he rejected this when he says, **If they had been thinking of that land from which they had gone out, they would have had time to return**, because it was nearby. **But as it is, they desire a better country, i.e., heavenly**; hence in Genesis (24:6) ‘Abraham said to his servant: Beware you never bring back my sons again thither;’ ‘I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners’ (Ps. 83:11); ‘One thing I have asked of the Lord, this will I seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life’ (Ps. 26:4). Therefore, they were seeking a country, but not their father’s house, which they had left. In this is signified that those who go out from the world’s vanity, should not return to it mentally: ‘Forget your people and your father’s house’ (Ps. 44:11); ‘No man putting his hand to the plow and looking back is fit for the kingdom of God’ (Lk. 9:62); ‘forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before’ (Phil 3:13). It is also clear that these confessions of theirs by word and deed pertain to faith, because they most firmly believed until death what was promised but never shown to them. Therefore, in faith, i.e., having their faith next to them as an inseparable companion, they died: ‘Be faithful until death’ (Rev. 2:10).

599. – Then (v. 16b) he shows what they merit to receive by their faith. But this was the highest honor, when someone gets a name derived from a solemn office or from the service of a great and excellent lord or prince, as the Pope’s notary, or the king’s chancellor. But it is a greater honor, when that great lord wishes to be named after those who serve him. So it is with these three, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, whose Lord, the great King over all other gods, specifically calls Himself their God; hence, (Ex.

3:6): ‘I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob;’ hence, he says, ‘God is not ashamed to be called their God’.

600. – Three reasons can be given for this: first, because God is known by faith. But they are recorded to have first separated themselves for unbelievers by a special cult; hence, too, Abraham was the first to receive the seal of faith to become the father of many nations (Rom. 4:17). Therefore, they are proposed to us as an example, as the ones by whom God was first known, and by them God was named as an object of faith. Therefore, He willed to be named by them.

601. – Secondly, according to Augustine in a Gloss, because a mystery lies hidden in them. For in them we find a likeness to the generation by which God regenerated spiritual sons. But we observe in them a fourfold way of generating.

The first way is of free children by free women, as Abraham by Sarah begot Isaac, who begot Jacob by Rebecca, and Jacob the eight patriarchs by Leah and Rachel. The second way was of free children through bondwomen, as Jacob begot Dan and Naphtali by Bilhah and Zilpah. The third way was to servants by free women, as Isaac begot Esau by Rebecca; of him it was said, ‘The elder shall serve the younger’ (Gen. 25:23). The fourth was of servants by bondwomen, as Abraham begot Ishmael by Hagar. In this the diverse ways in which the Lord begets spiritual children is designated, because sometimes the good by the good, as Timothy by Paul; sometimes the good by the wicked, and this is the generation of free men by bondwomen; sometimes the wicked by the good, as Simon Magus by Philip, and this is the generation of servants by free women. But the generation of the wicked by the wicked is accounted in the seed; hence ‘Cast out the bondwoman and her son’ (Gal. 4:30).

602. – The third reason, which seems to be more in keeping with the Apostle’s intention, is that it is customary for a king to be called by the chief city, or from the entire country, as King of Jerusalem, King of the Romans, King of France. Therefore, the Lord is properly called the King and God of those who specifically look at that city, the heavenly Jerusalem, whose architect and founder is God. And because they showed by word and deed that they belong to that city, He is called their God; hence he says, **for he**, the founder of that city, **has prepared for them a city**.

603. – Then (v. 17) another famous example of Abraham’s faith is given, inasmuch as it regards God, namely, that supreme sacrifice of his when at the Lord’s command he willed to immolate his only begotten son (Gen. 22:1). In regard to this he does three things: first, what he did; secondly, that this pertains to faith (v. 17b); thirdly, what he received for this (v. 19b).

604. – He says, therefore: **Abraham, when he was tested**, was ready to offer Isaac by faith, as is clear from Genesis (22). But there are two questions here: first of all, to kill the innocent is against the law of nature and is, consequently, a sin, Therefore, in willing to offer him he sinned. I answer that a person who

kills at the command of a superior lawfully commanding, lawfully obeys and can lawfully carry out his duty. But God has power over life and death: 'The Lord kills and makes alive' (1 Sam 2:6). But God does no injury, when He takes the life even of the innocent. Hence, by God's decree many wicked and many innocent people die every day. Therefore, it is lawful to carry out God's commands.

There is question also about the statement, **when he was tested**. For God tests no one, since to test implies ignorance. I answer that the devil tests in order to deceive: 'Lest perhaps he that tempts should have tempted you' (1 Th. 3:5). This is clear in the temptation of Christ (Matt. 4). But a man tests in order to learn. Thus, in 1 Kg. (10:1) it is recorded that the queen of Sheba went to Solomon to try him with questions. But God does not test in that way, for He knows all things; but He tests in order that the man himself learn how strong or how weak he is: 'To afflict you and prove you, and that the things that were in your heart might be made known' (Dt. 8:2); and 2 Chr (32:31) tells of Hezekiah being tested that all things might be made known that were in his heart. Furthermore, in order that others know the one tested and take him as an example, as Abraham and Job (Sir. 44:21).

605. – Then when he says, **was ready to offer up his only son**, he shows quite subtly that that obedience pertains to faith. For, as has been stated above, Abraham in his old age believed God promising that in Isaac he would be blessed in his seed. He also believed that God could raise the dead. Therefore, when he was commanded to kill him, there was no further hope for Sarah, who was now very old, to have a child, since Isaac was already a youth. Therefore, since he believed that God's commands must be obeyed, nothing else remained but to believe that He would revive Isaac, by whom his seed would be called. Hence, he says, **his only son**, namely, of Sarah, in whom, i.e., in the only son, God was to fulfill His promise, as Genesis (18:19) indicates. Or, **the only son**, namely, among the free children: 'Take your only begotten son, Isaac' (Gen. 22:2). He who had received the promises, of whom it was said, i.e., by reason of whom; **Through Isaac shall your descendants be called, considered that God was able to raise men even from the dead**. This, therefore, was the greatest proof of his faith, because the article of the resurrection is one of the most important.

606. – Then (v. 19b) he shows what he merited by faith; because, since nothing remained but to immolate him, an angel called him, and, in place of his son, he immolated a ram sticking fast by the horns. But this was a parable, i.e., a figure of Christ to come. For the ram sticking fast by the horns among the briars is the humanity which suffered, fixed to the cross. And so it is clear that the figure was not at all equal to the one prefigured. Therefore, **he received him back**, i.e., Isaac, for a parable, i.e., for a figure of Christ to be crucified and immolated.

11-5

Heb. 11:20-26

²⁰By faith Isaac invoked future blessings on Jacob and Esau. ²¹By faith Jacob, when dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, bowing in worship over the head of his staff. ²²By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites and gave directions concerning his burial. ²³By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid for three months by his parents, because they saw that the child was beautiful; and they were not afraid of the king's edict. ²⁴By faith Moses, when he was grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, ²⁵choosing rather to share ill-treatment with the people of God than to enjoy the fleeting pleasures of sin. ²⁶He considered abuse suffered for the Christ greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he looked to the reward.

607. – Above, the Apostle gave an example of Abraham's faith; here he gives the example of the faith of Isaac, Jacob and Joseph: and first of Isaac's faith.

He says, therefore, that by faith of things to come, i.e., of things that extended into the future, Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau. Or, he blessed them for things to come; or with a blessing which extended to the future. For his words had efficacy from God's power alone. Through this blessing the younger ruled the older. But this did not pertain to their persons, but to the two peoples that sprang from them: 'over Edom I will stretch out my shoe' (Ps. 107:10). For the Edomites who sprang from Esau were subject to the people of Israel. This signified that the younger people, i.e., the Gentiles, by faith were to supplant the older people, namely, the Jews: 'Many shall come from the east and the west and shall sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven' (Mt. 8:11). But that blessing which concerned the coming faith of the Gentiles was made by faith, because it looked to something in the future.

608. – Then when he says, **by faith Jacob dying blessed each of the sons**, he continues with Jacob's faith and mentions what he did in blessing the two sons of Joseph, as is recorded in Genesis (48), where it is stated that when Joseph was informed of his father's illness, he called his two sons whom Jacob blessed, crossing his hands. With this gesture he chose Ephraim over Manasseh as to dignity, because the royal dignity came from Ephraim, namely, Jeroboam. But this blessing was by faith, because it was revealed to him that it would be thus in the future. This blessing referred to the people who came out of them and not to their persons. Likewise, by faith he adored the top of his rod. This is recorded in Genesis (49), where it is stated that he made Joseph swear that he would bury him in the tomb of his fathers; and after the oath, **he adored the top of the coffin**, as our version has, or **at the top of his rod**, as the Septuagint says, or **at the top**, as is had in the Greek. And all this can stand, because he was old and carried a rod; or he took Joseph's scepter until he vowed, and after returning it he adored not the rod nor

Joseph, as some wickedly thought, but God Himself. This he did, leaning on the top of his rod. He did this, moved by the consideration of Christ's power, which Joseph's power prefigured. For being the prefect in Egypt, he carried a scepter as a sign of his power: 'You that rule them with a rod of iron' (Ps. 2:9). Or if he adored the top, the sense is the same, because he adored Christ signified by that rod, just as we adore the Crucified and the Cross by reason of Christ, Who suffered on it. Hence, properly speaking, we do not adore the Cross, but Christ crucified on it.

609. – Then (v. 22) he continues with the example of Joseph's faith and mentions two things which are stated in the last chapter of Genesis, where he said to his brothers (v. 24): 'God will visit you,' and commanded them to carry his bones out of that place. Hence, his faith bore on two things: first, because he believed that the promise He made would be fulfilled by the return of the children of Israel to the promised land; secondly, because he believed that Christ would be born and would rise from the dead in it, and many with him. Hence, he desired to have a part in that resurrection. He says, therefore, **By faith Joseph, at the end of his life, made mention of the exodus of the Israelites**; and this in regard to the first: **and gave commandment regarding his bones**, as to the second.

610. – But why did he not cause himself to be carried at once like his father. I answer that he was not able, because he did not then have the power he had at his father's death. Secondly, because he knew that the children of Israel were to suffer many afflictions after his death. Therefore, to assure them of their deliverance and return to the promised land, he willed his body to remain with them as a consolation. Hence, Moses took it with him, just as each tribe took the body of its father, as Jerome says.

611. – Then when he says, **By faith Moses, when he was born, was hid three months by his parents**, he continues with the fathers that were under the Law. For this period begins with Moses: 'Moses commanded a law in the precepts of justice' (Sir. 24:33); 'The law was given by Moses' (Jn. 1:33). But that period is divided into three parts, namely, before the departure from Egypt, during the departure, and after the departure. Therefore, he does three things: first, he shows what happened before the departure; secondly, during the departure (v. 27); thirdly, what happened in the promised land (v. 32). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows what occurred at Moses' birth; secondly, what he did (v. 24).

612. – Here he touches on the history given in Exodus (chap. 1), namely, that the Pharaoh commanded the male children to be killed, lest they be multiplied. Secondly, it is recorded that Moses' parents, seeing that he was a comely child, hid him for three months: which the Apostle attributes to their faith. For they believed that someone would be born to free them from their slavery. Hence, from the child's comeliness they believed that some power of God was in him. For they were rude country people, who sweated, working with clay and bricks: 'A man is known by his look' (Sir. 19:26). From this we see that although faith is about invisible things, yet through certain visible signs we can rest in it. 'Confirming the word

with signs that followed' (Mk 16:20). But the fact that they did this from faith and not from carnal affection is evident, because **they were not afraid of the king's edict**. Hence, they exposed themselves to danger, which they would not have done, unless they had believed that something great was in store for the child: 'Do not fear them that kill the body' (Mt. 10:28).

613. – But on the other hand, they later exposed him; therefore, it was not by faith that they preserved him. I answer that they exposed him, not to destroy him but to keep him from being stolen; hence, they placed him in a small basket, committing him to divine providence. For they believed that he would probably be killed, if he were found among them.

614. – Then (v. 24) he shows what Moses did by faith; first what he did; secondly, that what he did pertained to faith (v. 26b).

615. – Here he touches on the history recorded in Exodus (2), where it is stated that Pharaoh's daughter had him nursed by his mother and adopted him as a son. But he denied himself to be her son, not in word, but in deed; because against Pharaoh's will he killed an Egyptian who had harmed a Hebrew. Therefore, he says, **by faith, when he was grown up, he denied himself to be the son of Pharaoh's daughter**. With what feelings he did this he shows when he says, **rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God, than to have the pleasure of sin for a time**. This indicates his marvelous virtue. For there are two things which men desire most, namely, pleasure and delight in external things; and they flee most from their opposites, namely, pain and affliction, which are opposed to the first, and poverty and abjection, which are opposed to the second. But Moses chose those two, because he preferred pain and affliction to temporal sin's pleasure, which is always associated with sin. He also chose poverty because of Christ: 'It is better to be humbled with the meek, than to divide spoils with the proud' (Pr. 16:19); 'I have chosen to be an abject in the house of my God, rather than to dwell in the tabernacles of sinners' (Ps. 83:11). As to the first he says, **rather choosing to be afflicted with the people of God**, whom Pharaoh afflicted, **than to have the pleasure of sin for a time**; which he would have had, if he had afflicted the children of Israel with the Egyptians. As to the second, namely, that he chose poverty, he says: **esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches**, i.e., for the faith of Christ, for which he endured a reproach from his brothers, as is stated in Exodus (2:14): 'Will you kill me, as you did yesterday kill the Egyptian?' This reproach was a figure that Christ would have to endure reproaches from the Jews: 'My heart has expected reproach and misery' (Ps. 68:21). But he esteemed those two things **greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians**: 'The riches of salvation, wisdom and knowledge' (Is. 33:6).

616. – Then when he says, **for he looked unto the reward**, he shows that those actions of Moses pertained to faith in Christ. But it should be noted that some things are good and delightful to themselves, and other things sad and evil. But no one may prefer evil things for their own sake, but for an end, as a

sick person chooses a bitter potion, and sad things to delightful things by reason of some greater good which he can obtain by them. And so the saints, by hope of the ultimate end of eternal happiness, chose affliction and poverty over riches and pleasures, because by them they would have been hindered from attaining the end they hoped: 'Blessed are you when they shall revile you, and persecute you, and speak all that is evil against you,' and he continues: 'Be glad and rejoice, for your reward is very great in heaven' (Mt. 5:11); I am your protector and your reward exceedingly great' (Gen. 15:1). Therefore, he says that he did this because he looked with the eyes of faith to the reward, which he hoped therefrom. Hence, 'faith is the substance of things to be hoped for; the evidence of things that appear not', as was stated above.

11-6

Heb. 11:27-31

²⁷By faith he left Egypt, not being afraid of the anger of the king; for he endured as seeing him who is invisible. ²⁸By faith he kept the Passover and sprinkled the blood, so that the Destroyer of the first-born might not touch them. ²⁹By faith the people crossed the Red Sea as if on dry land; but the Egyptians, when they attempted to do the same, were drowned. ³⁰By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they had been encircled for seven days. ³¹By faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient, because she had given friendly welcome to the spies.

617. – After describing Moses' faith in regard to what he did in Egypt, the Apostle now shows what he did in regard to what he did during the departure from Egypt. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows what he did during the departure from Egypt; secondly, the manner of their departure (v. 28); thirdly, what was done by faith with the unbelieving people (v. 31).

618. – He says, therefore, that **by faith Moses left Egypt**. But, as recorded in Exodus (chap. 2), he first left Egypt after killing an Egyptian; but he left it a second time, when he led all the sons of Israel out of Egypt. But a Gloss explains about the second departure, because he continues, **not fearing the anger**, i.e., the indignation, **of the king**. For at his first departure it is recorded in Exodus (chap. 2) that he feared him: 'He that is good for nothing shall feel the king's anger' (Pr. 14:35). But at the second he did not fear him: 'The just, bold as a lion, shall be without dread' (Pr. 28:1). But it can be referred to the first.

619. – But didn't he fear then? I answer that there are two things to be considered in fear: one is that it can be blameworthy, namely, when through fear a person does what should not be done, or neglects to do what should be done. This is not the way Moses feared, because fear did not cause him to neglect helping his brothers. The other can be praiseworthy, namely, when keeping the faith a person flees from danger because of a present fear: 'When they shall persecute you in one city, flee to another' (Mt. 10:23). For if a person, while preserving his honor could avoid danger and does not, he would be foolish and tempting God which is diabolical. This is the way Jesus hid from those who would stone Him, and refused the devil's suggestion to cast Himself down. So, too, Moses, trusting in God's help, fled for a time, because he feared the king.

He proves that he did this by faith, because faith is about invisible things. **And he endured**, i.e., awaited, the invisible God and his Help as seeing him: Let your heart take courage and wait for the Lord' (Ps. 26:14). For Moses awaited God's help at both departures; hence, at the first one he said: 'The God of my father is my helper' (Ex. 2:22); and at the second: 'The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace' (Ex. 14:14).

620. – Then (v. 28) he shows what he did as to the way he departed: first, he states what was done in preparing for the departure; secondly, as to the departure itself (v. 29); thirdly, as to what was done by faith in entering the promised land (v. 30).

621. – In regard to the first, he alludes to the history recorded in Exodus (12), where the Lord commanded them before the departure of the children of Israel, namely, that same night, to immolate a lamb and put its blood on both the side posts and on the upper door posts of the houses: then they were to eat the flesh roasted at the fire, and unleavened bread with wild lettuce, and to do many other things that were to be observed. And this is called the Pasch, i.e., the eating of the lamb and the shedding of blood, these two things occurring at that passage which they were to accomplish the next day. It is called the Pasch from ‘paschin’ in Greek, and ‘passic’ in Latin, or from the word ‘phrase,’ which in Hebrew is the same as ‘passage.’ But this prefigured that Christ would pass out of this world by His passion: ‘That he would pass out of this world’ (Jn. 13:1). It also instructs us that by the merit of His death we have passed from earthly things to heavenly, and from hell to heaven: ‘Come over to me, all ye that desire me’ (Sir. 24:26). This, of course, is accomplished in virtue of Christ’s blood: ‘Having, therefore, a confidence in the entering into of the holies by the blood of Christ’ (supra 10:19). But two passings occurred during that Pasch: one, in which the Lord passed, striking the Egyptians; the other in which the people passed. So, too, with the blood of Christ, Who is the lamb without blemish, the posts of the faithful should be besmeared, namely, their intellect and affections. He says, **by faith he celebrated the Pasch**, i.e., the eating of the lamb, and the shedding of the blood to be smeared upon the posts of their house.

Why did they do this? That he who destroyed the first born of the Egyptians might not touch them: ‘He killed all the firstborn in the land of Egypt’ (Ps. 77:51).

622. – But by whose ministry was this done? Was it done by good angels or the wicked? For it seems to have been the wicked angels: ‘Which he sent by evil angels’ (Ps. 77:49). I answer that it could have been both. Hence, it should be noted that the infliction of punishments is sometimes performed by good angels. For as Dionysius says in *The Divine Names* (ch. 4), to punish the evil is not evil, but to do evil is evil. For punishment is a work of justice, as is shown by the angel who struck the camp of the Assyrians, because he is believed to have been a good angel (Is. 57). Hence, such punishment is visited indifferently by the good and by the bad; but by the good in a manner different from the bad, because the good does not punish save by exercising divine justice upon the evil (and in Scripture such a work of the devil or of a good angel is attributed to God). But the evil angel, even though he obeys divine justice, does not do this from a love of justice; rather from the perversity of his will he afflicts the good and the bad, and preferably the good, if he is permitted, as in the case of Job. Therefore, the angel who said to Moses (Ex. 12:23): ‘The Lord will pass through, striking the Egyptians’ was a good angel, since he sometimes speaks in his own person. But sometimes evil spirits serve a good angel; hence, he used the services of their evil and perverse wills in the slaughter. Therefore, he says: ‘Indignation and wrath and trouble, which he sent

by evil angels' (Ps. 77:49). Therefore, the evil angel did not touch those who were sealed with blood, being restrained by terror and fear of God; but the good were deterred, wondering at God's power.

623. – Then (v. 29) he shows what he did in the very passing: first, he shows this; secondly, he shows that his pertained to faith (v. 30b). He says, therefore, **by faith they passed through the Red Sea, as by dry land**. Two things were done there by faith: one was what the men did, namely, they committed themselves to cross over; and this was done only by faith. The other was on God's part, namely, that the waters acted as a wall for them. But this was by faith, for the working of miracles is attributed to faith: 'If you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, Remove from hence, thither, and it shall remove' (Mt. 17:19). Then he shows that this pertains to faith, because the Egyptians attempting this, i.e., willing to try it, were swallowed up, because they did not have faith: 'You stretch forth your hand, and the earth swallowed them' (Ex. 15:12).

624. – Then when he says, **By faith the walls of Jericho fell down, by the going round them seven days**, he describes what happened when they entered the promised land. This is mentioned in Jos. (6), where it is stated that at God's command the priests for seven days should go around the first city beyond the Jordan, namely, Jericho, with the ark of the covenant, and on the seventh day the walls fell down. Here was something on the part of men, namely, that at the Lord's command they went round, believing that God's command would be fulfilled, and something on God's part, namely, the walls fell down by their going round.

625. – Morally, Jericho is interpreted moon or defect, and signifies this world. Its walls are the obstacles by which some are held fast in the world. By the trumpets, which the Levites and priests sounded, the voice of preachers is signified. By the going round for seven days is designated the course of the present time, which is completed in seven days. By this we are given to understand that all the obstacles of the world fall at the continuous sound of preaching: 'The weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto pulling down of fortifications, destroying counsels and every height that exalts itself against the knowledge of God' (2 Cor. 10:4).

626. – Then when he says, **by faith Rahab the harlot perished not with the unbelievers**, he shows what was done by faith by one of the unbelievers, namely, by Rahab, as recorded in Joshua (chaps, 2 & 6). For when Joshua had sent spies to explore Jericho, they escaped with the aid of that woman who is called a harlot, i.e., an idolater. Or she was literally a harlot, with whom they stayed, not to sin but to hide. For the houses of such persons are visible especially at night. But they had come at night. Furthermore, her house was adjacent to the wall. But harlots take everyone without exception; therefore, it was easier for them to hide with her. Therefore, she was freed by faith, hence, he says, **by faith Rahab the harlot did not perish with those who were disobedient [unbelievers], because she had given friendly welcome to the spies**. She did not perish with the unbelievers, who perished corporally, because the spies had sworn

to free her and everyone of her father's house; which they did. But why had they turned to her? Possibly because she would be less guilty, receiving all indiscriminately. Furthermore, it was not fitting that their safety be the occasion of death for the one harboring them. But by the fact that she was freed by receiving them is designated that those who receives the preachers of the gospel are delivered from eternal death: 'He that receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive the reward of a prophet' (Mt. 10:11).

Heb. 11:32-35a

³²And what more shall I say? For time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, of David and Samuel and the prophets-- ³³who through faith conquered kingdoms, enforced justice, received promises, stopped the mouths of lions, ³⁴quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness, became mighty in war, put foreign armies to flight. ³⁵Women received their dead by resurrection.

627. – Having described the things done through faith by the fathers before and during the very entry into the promised land, the Apostle now begins to give examples of those who were in the promised land. But because there were so many, he recites their deeds in a general way and, after giving the names of the fathers, he tells why he must be brief. In regard to this he does three things: first, he gives the names of the fathers and the reason why he passes over their deeds quickly; secondly, he shows what they did by faith (v. 34); thirdly, what they received by faith (v. 33b).

628. – He says, therefore: And what more shall I say? As if to say: I have come to the time they entered the promised land, regarding which a few things remain to be said. For so many things remain to be said that they cannot be explained: For time would fail me to tell of them, i.e., if I wanted to tell of them, there would be insufficient time to do so in a letter, which should be brief. Hence, Jerome writes to Paulinus: ‘The space of an epistle does not allow me to say more.’ Or it can mean the time of life. This is the way John speaks (19.25): ‘But there are also many other signs which Jesus did; which if they were written every one, the world itself, I think, would not be able to contain the books that should be written.’ Where a Gloss says that he is using hyperbole. This is not false, but a figure of speech. In Ps. 39 (v. 6) where we have: ‘I have declared and I have spoken; they are multiplied above number,’ Jerome’s letter says: If I wanted to describe them, there are more than can be described.’

629. – Yet it should be noted that some of them did some good things, and some evil things. Hence, they are listed here only as to the good things they did or received. Yet it is probable that all of them finally were saints. For this reason the Apostle lists them in the catalogue of saints. First, therefore, he mentions Gideon, whose story appears in Judges (chaps. 6-8). He is mentioned first, both because he did nothing evil and because he did something very important; and probably because he received the greatest sign of the incarnation in the fleece and dew, concerning which it says in Ps. 71 (v. 6): ‘He shall come down like rain upon the fleece.’ Secondly, he mentions Barak in Judges (chaps. 4-5), who was not as famous as Gideon, to whom that victory was not credited, but to the woman. Perhaps this is why he passes him by. Thirdly, he mentions Samson Jg (chaps. 13-16), who particularly deserves not to be mentioned here, because he sinned by killing himself. But Augustine in *The City of God* excuses this, because it is

believed that he did this at God's command. The sign of this is that he could not have destroyed such a house by his own power, but by God's power, which does not cooperate with evil. Fourthly, he mentions Jephthah in Judges (chaps. 11-12), whom he lists after Samson, because he did not do the great things the latter did.

630. – But there is a question about Jephthah, whether he sinned by immolating his daughter as he vowed. For it seems not, because Judges (11:29) says: 'The spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah' and then mentions the vow and the victory. But Jerome says the contrary, namely, that he was indiscreet in vowing and guilty in paying. I answer that something from the Holy Spirit was there, namely, an impulse to vow in general that he would immolate whatever he came upon that could be immolated; but there was also something from his own spirit, namely, that he immolated what he should not. In this he sinned, but later he repented.

Similarly, Gideon sinned by making an ephod and tempting God, when he asked for a sign on the fleece. But he also repented later, as did David, whom he mentions next, saying, David and Samuel, who are discussed in the Books of Samuel, and the prophets, concerning whom time would fail me, if I wished to discuss them.

631. – But the next question is whether all the ones listed were prophets. I answer that the Holy Spirit can move to three things: namely, to know, to speak and to do; and to each of them in two ways. Sometimes He moves to know by making him understand what is seen, as in the case of Isaiah and the other prophets; hence, they are called seers: 'He that is now called a prophet, in time past was called a seer' (1 Sam 9:9); but sometimes without an understanding of what is seen, as in Pharaoh's dream and in Belshazzar's vision. He also moves one to speak in two ways: sometimes to know what he says, as David, sometimes without knowing, as Caiaphas and perhaps Balaam. Similarly, He sometimes moves one to do something and to know what he is doing, as Jeremiah, who hid his girdle by the Euphrates (Jer. 13:5); and sometimes without knowing, as Augustine *On John* says of the soldiers who divided Christ's garments among themselves without knowing the mystery to which that division was ordained. Therefore, it pertains to the notion of a prophet that he know what he sees or says or does. This is the way John says that Caiaphas prophesied, because he had something characteristic of prophecy. But the movement of the Holy Spirit is called an instinct by Augustine.

632. – Then (v. 33) he shows what the saints mentioned did: first, he shows this in general; secondly, by getting down to details (v. 33c). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions the merits of their deeds; secondly, the reward (v. 33b).

633. – In regard to the first it should be noted that of all the outward acts of the moral virtues, the acts of courage and justice seem the most important, because they pertain most to the common good. For the republic is defended against its enemies by courage, and is preserved by justice. Hence, the Apostle

commends the holy fathers on both: on courage, when he says, **by faith they conquered kingdoms**, i.e., kings, or even their kingdoms, as David and Joshua. Nevertheless, the saints spiritually overcame kingdoms, namely the kingdom of the devil, of whom Job (41:25) says: ‘He is king over all the children of pride,’ and the kingdom of the flesh: ‘Let not sin reign in your mortal body’ (Rom. 6:12); also the kingdom of the world: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (Jn. 18:36). But they conquered by faith: ‘This is the victory which overcomes the world, our faith’ (1 Jn. 5:4). For no one can despise present things except for the sake of goods to come, because it is mainly by contempt that the world is overcome, therefore, because faith shows us the invisible things for which the world is despised, our faith overcomes the world.

634. – He comes then to the acts of justice when he says, **wrought justice**. For justice is sometimes a general virtue, namely, when it obeys the divine law: ‘The Lord is just and has loved justice’ (Ps. 10:8); ‘It is just to be subject to God’ (2 Macc 9:12); ‘He that does justice is just’ (1 Jn. 3:7). But sometimes it is a special virtue and consists in human actions and exchanges, namely, when a person renders to everyone his due. But the saints had both: ‘This is the inheritance of the servants of the Lord, and their justice with me, says the Lord’ (Is. 54:17); ‘If you desire wisdom, keep justice’ (Sir. 1:33), namely, by obeying the commandments, and also by exercising it toward the people: ‘I have done justice and judgment’ (Ps. 118:121).

635. – Then when he says, **they received**, he shows what they obtained, because **they received the promises**. For God’s promise is efficacious, because God never fails to keep His promise: ‘Whatever he has promised he is able to perform’ (Rom. 4:21); ‘The Lord is faithful in all his words’ (Ps. 144:13).

But on the contrary he says above (11:13): ‘These died according to faith, not having received the promises.’ I answer that what is said here can be understood in three ways: in one way, that God’s promise is the special one by which He promises the saints eternal life, which no one received before the coming of Christ: ‘To confirm the promises made to the fathers’ (Rom. 15:8); secondly, for the promise to inherit the promised land. This the earlier fathers, namely, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, did not receive, but the later ones did, as Joshua and the other saints. Thirdly, for a particular promise made to individuals, as to David a kingdom and to Hezekiah health; and these are the promises they obtained.

636. – Then (v. 33b) he mentions particular benefits conferred on them: first, those which pertain to the removal of evil; secondly, to the performing of good (v. 34b). But the evils harmful to man are of two kinds: one is external and the other internal. He mentions the second when he says, **they won strength out of weakness**. But external evils are of two kinds, because they are caused either by an irrational creature or a rational. The second of these is mentioned when he says, **they escaped the edge of the sword**. From irrational sources in two ways: living or non-living. He touches on harm inflicted by

inanimate things when he says, **quenched raging fire**; by animate when he says, **they stopped the mouths of lions**.

637. – He speaks in the plural, although there was only, namely, Daniel, as it is also said in Matthew (2:20): ‘They are dead that sought the life of the child,’ for Herod was the only one who sought to kill the Child. The reason he does this is that he is speaking of all the saints generally, as of one college of saints; therefore, what one does he imputes to others and even to all, because it was done by the power of the Holy Spirit, which is common to all. Hence, even in that text he speaks as though of all. But it can also be said that this was completed in David who, as he says in 1 Sam (17:34). By the lion is spiritually understood the devil: ‘Your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, goes about seeking whom he may devour’ (1 Pt 5:8). Therefore, one who represses his attacks stops the mouths of lions: ‘I broke the jaws of the wicked man; and out of his mouth I took away the prey’ (Jb. 29:17).

638. – He mentions removal of harm from inanimate things when he says, **they quenched raging fire**, as in the case of the three boys in Dan (chap. 3). Likewise, at the prayer of Moses and Aaron the fire was extinguished which had been sent by the Lord to devour the murmurers, as it says in Numbers (chap. 16). That fire is the internal impulse to concupiscence and anger. Therefore, one who restrains this impulse quenches the violence of fire: ‘Fire has fallen on them and they shall not see the sun’ (Ps. 57:9).

639. – The removal of evil from a rational creature is touched when he says, **they escaped the edge of the sword**, i.e., the attack of the enemy with sharp swords. But this happened to them very frequently, as is clear in the cases of Joshua, Gideon and David. But by the sword is understood an evil persuasion: ‘Their tongues a sharp sword’ (Ps. 56:7). One escapes those swords, when he puts an evil tongue to silenced: ‘Hedge in your ears with thorns, hear not a wicked tongue’ (Sir. 28:28); ‘The north wind drives away rain, as does a sad countenance a backbiting tongue’ (Pr. 25:23).

640. – Internal harm is infirmity, concerning whose removal he says, **they won strength out of weakness**, as appears particular in Hezekiah (2 Kg. 20:17). But that infirmity is sin: ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak’ (Ps. 6:3). Therefore, one who rises has recovered.

641. – Then when he says, **they became valiant**, he mentions the benefits as to the attainment of good; and he mentions three. The first pertains to the fact that acted valiantly; hence, he says, **they became valiant in battle**, as Joshua: ‘Valiant in war was Jesus, the son of Nun, who was successor of Moses’ (Sir. 46:1). The same is true of many others. The second pertains to the effect of that courage; hence, he says, **they put foreign armies to flight**, as in the cases of David and of the Maccabees: ‘If armies in camp should stand together against me, my heart shall not fear’ (Ps. 26:3). But the third pertains to the effect of divine courage; hence, he says, **Women received their dead raised to life again**, i.e., by the

resurrection. Some who misunderstood this, explained their dead, i.e., their husbands, and argued that death does not dissolve the bond of marriage. This is false even if they should rise again. It is also against the Apostle in Romans (7:3): 'If her husband be dead, she is delivered from the law of the husband.'

Hence, it should be noted that even in the effects of the sacraments there is a difference. For some sacraments imprint a character, as baptism, confirmation and Orders. And because a character remains in the soul forever, a baptized or confirmed or ordained person should not repeat any of those sacraments, if he rises again. But the other sacraments do not imprint a character, as penance, extreme unction, and the others. Therefore, because they cure something repeatable, they can be repeated: and among these is matrimony.

Therefore, he does not say, 'husbands,' but **their dead**, because through the resurrection mothers received their dead sons, whose resurrection was a presage of the coming resurrection begun by Christ.

642. – An account of their resurrection or rather of their revival is found in 1 Kg. (chap. 17) and 2 Kg. (chap. 4). Yet thus revived, they died again: 'But Christ rising from the dead dies now no more' (Rom. 6:0); 'Christ is risen from the dead the first fruits of them that sleep' (1 Cor. 15:20). But just as those temporal benefits were given to them as to sick persons for sustenance by the merit of their faith, so they were the figures of coming good things, which will be given to us by the merit of faith: 'And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues. They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt him: they shall lay their hands upon the sick, and they shall recover' (Mk 16:17). All of these Gregory explains of spiritual goods.

11-8

Heb. 11:35b - 40

^{35b} Some were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might rise again to a better life.

³⁶Others suffered mocking and scourging, and even chains and imprisonment. ³⁷They were stoned, they were sawn in two, they were killed with the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, afflicted, ill-treated-- ³⁸of whom the world was not worthy-- wandering over deserts and mountains, and in dens and caves of the earth. ³⁹And all these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, ⁴⁰since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect.

643. – Having given examples of the holy fathers of old who did many great things for the faith, the Apostle now gives examples of those who suffered for the faith. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows how they suffered for the faith; secondly, he shows how the promises made to them were deferred (v. 39). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions the evils inflicted on them by others; secondly, evils voluntarily assumed (v. 37b).

Evils were inflicted upon them by others in two ways, namely, sometimes during life, and sometimes in death; these he mentions when he says, **they were stoned**. During life, evils were inflicted upon them in three ways: some by bodily affliction; some by mockery; and some by imprisonment.

644. – As to the first he says, **others were racked**. As if to say: So we have said that some have received many good things because of the faith, either by having evils removed, or in the performing of temporal good. In these was prefigured the Old Testament, which conferred temporal goods. But others suffered many things for the faith: of these some were racked by horses as in 1 Maccabees (chap. 2); and in 2 Maccabees (chap. 6) the case of the two children suspended from their mothers' necks, and in 2 Maccabees (chap. 7) the case of the seven brothers. In those saints, first of all, the New Testament was prefigured; hence, he says, **refusing to accept release**. For a person subject to punishment is somehow a slave to punishment; therefore, to be delivered from punishment is called a redemption: 'He redeemed them from the hand of him that afflicted' (Ps. 77:42).

645. – But he shows why they refused release. It was not because God exercised no providence over them, but that they might obtain eternal life, which is better than release from any present punishment or any resurrection of the present life; hence, he says, **that they might rise again to a better life**: 'I will rise again on the last day' (Jb. 19:25); 'Your dead men shall live, my slain shall rise again' (Is. 26:19). Or he says, **better**, because, by the fact that they suffered greater things for Christ, they earned a greater reward:

‘Star differs from star in glory; so also is the resurrection of the dead’ (1 Cor. 15:41); for those with greater merit shall receive a greater reward; but the merits of martyrs are very great: ‘Greater love than this no man has, that a man lay down his life for his friends’ (Jn. 15:15). However, not every martyr is greater than every confessor, but some martyr can be greater than some confessor; and conversely, some confessor than some martyr, although not universally. For one can be compared to another as to the type of work or as to the degree of charity. But no art of itself is as meritorious as dying for Christ, because a man is giving what is most dear, namely, his own life: ‘Blessed are they that suffer persecution for justices’ sake’ (Mt. 5:10). But if considers the root of all merit, which is charity (1 Cor. 13), then a work proceeding from greater charity is more meritorious. Consequently, one simple confessor could have greater merit before God. But the Apostle is speaking of the type of work, saying, **that they might rise again to a better**, i.e., a greater and more glorious, **life**. Hence, better implies a comparison between the state of the present life and the future resurrection, or a comparison between the glory of the resurrection of one person and the glory of another.

646. – Then (v. 36) he mentions the evils inflicted on them in regard to derision by words, saying, **others suffered mocking**, as Samson in Judges (chap. 16), Tobias, Job and Isaiah: ‘I have turned away my face from them that rebuked me and spit upon me’ (Is. 50:6); and Jeremiah (20:8) says: ‘The word of the Lord is made a reproach to me, and a derision all the day.’ In regard to deeds he says, and scourging, as Micah, of whom it is written in 1 Kg. (22:24) that Zedekiah struck him on the cheek. In all of this the sufferings of the New Testament are prefigured: ‘We have been made a spectacle to the world, and to angels and to men’ (1 Cor. 4:9).

647. – Then when he says, **and even chains**, he mentions the evils inflicted on the saints by imprisonment, as Jeremiah, of whom it is written in 20 (v. 2) that he was put in the stocks. But not only chains, but **imprisonment**, as Jeremiah (chaps. 37 & 38) and Micah (1 Kg 22:27).

648. – Then he shows the evil they endured unto death when he says, **they were stoned**. This was a type of death then in vogue among all Jews: ‘Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone them that are sent unto you’ (Mt. 23:37). Thus Naboth was stoned (1 Kg. 21:13) and Jeremiah, of whom we read that the Jews stoned him in Egypt with stones they had concealed under the brick wall of Pharaoh’s house. And although Epiphanius says that he was drawn, it was generally said that he was stoned. Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada, was also stoned (2 Chr. 24:21). He mentions an unusually cruel death when he says, **they were sawn in two**. This is because of Isaiah, whom Manasseh caused to be cut with a saw. He speaks in the plural according to the custom of the Scriptures, even though there was only one case. He mentions the third type when he says, **they were tempted** to consent. He says this because of Mattathias and his sons in 1 Macc. (chap. 2) and Eleazar in 2 Maccabees (chap. 6) and the story of the

seven brothers in 2 Maccabees (chap. 7), and yet they were killed: 'It was better with them that were slain by the sword, than with those that died of hunger' (Lam. 4:9). In particular Uriah was killed by David (2 Sam. 11:15) and so was Josiah (2 Kg. 23:29).

649. – Then (v. 37b) he mentions the evils voluntarily undertaken. These are reduced to three, namely, external apparel; the state of the person; and dwelling place.

650. – In regard to external apparel he says, **they went about in skins of sheep and goats**. The former, 'melota' in Latin, is a garment made of camel hair, as some say. A goatskin, in addition to being hairy, is vile. These are said of Elijah (2 Kg 1:8), namely, that he was a hairy man with a girdle of leather about his loins. Augustine, in the book, *The Lord's Words*, says that such clothing can be worn with an evil intention, as when they are worn from vainglory; but good, if they are worn out of contempt for the world and to chastise the flesh. But especially those who profess a state of repentance should show the signs of their profession; hence, it is lawful for them to use such clothing, as the prophets did: but not for display.

651. – As to the state of the person he says, **destitute**, because they lacked riches. This prefigured the state of the New Testament, of which it says in Matthew (19:21): 'If you would be perfect, go sell what you have.' And this was especially true of Elijah, because he was fed by a raven and by a widow woman (1 Kg. 17); 'I am poor and in labors from my youth' (Ps. 87:16); 'I am needy and poor' (Ps. 69:6). **Afflicted**, as Elijah, who fled from the face of Jezebel (1 Kg. 19), and David, who fled from Absalom (2 Sam. 15); and **ill-treated** with bodily labor, as Elijah who was weary and slept under a juniper tree. He adds, **of whom the world was not worthy**. As Dionysius says in an epistle to John the Evangelist: wicked men by what they sometimes do, show the indications of their damnation; hence, he says that when wicked men separated the blessed John from them, God was showing that they were unworthy of being associated with him. Therefore, the Apostle says, **the world was not worthy of them**. As if to say: Worldly men were not worthy to associate with the just: 'I have chosen you out of the world; therefore, the world hates you' (Jn. 15:19).

652. – Then when he says, **wandering over deserts**, he shows this in regard to their place, because they had no dwelling of their own, but roamed about in deserts, in **mountains and in dens and caves of the earth**, which are places suited to contemplation and penance. It is called a den, if it is made by art; but a cave, if it is from nature or by some accident, as water corrosion. These are plain in the case of David (1 Kg. 22:1) and Elijah (1 Kg. 19:9).

653. – Then when he says, and all these being approved by the testimony of faith, received not the promise. But that no one might believe that this was due to lack of merit, he gives the reason for that delay: **Since God had foreseen something better for us**.

654. – He says, therefore: that **all these, though well attested by their faith**, i.e., by faith they have testimony that they were approved by God: ‘For not he that commends himself is approved, but he whom God commends’ (2 Cor. 10:18); ‘As gold in the furnace he has proved them’ (Wis. 3:6). And yet **they did not receive what was promised**, i.e., of glory, or the promised land, until Christ: ‘You have been angry with your anointed’ (Ps. 88:39). For they received temporal things, but not spiritual: ‘They died, not having received the promises’ (Heb. 11:13).

655. – Then when he says, **Since God has foreseen something better for us**, he shows the reason for the postponement. But some took the cause or occasion of their error from this and said that no one will enter paradise until the final consummation at the final resurrection. But this is contrary to the Apostle: ‘We know, if our earthly house of this habitation be dissolved, that we have a building of God, eternal in heaven’ (2 Cor. 5:1). Therefore, the consummation of which the Apostle speaks can refer to the essential reward, namely, to happiness, which is obtained through Christ: ‘For he shall go up that shall open the way before them’ (Mic 2:13), which the saints will not be given generally until after the general resurrection, although some perhaps already have it by a special privilege. Therefore, they are not consummated without us, but are perfected with a double stole, so that, as a Gloss says, the joy of each will become greater in the common joy of all. Hence, God provides for us in this matter. Therefore, he says, **Since God has foreseen something better for us**: ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity’ (Ps. 132:1). For man rejoices with many rejoicing: ‘If they kept the faith who waited so long, much more should we who receive right away’ (Gloss); ‘This day you shall be with me in paradise: (Lk. 23:43).

12-1

Heb. 12:1-4

¹Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with perseverance the race that is set before us, ²looking to Jesus the pioneer and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

³Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. ⁴In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood.

656. – Having commended in a number of ways the faith by which the members are joined to Christ, the head, the Apostle now gives a moral admonition to keep the faith in their hearts and show it in their works, as James also urges in his epistle (c. 2). First, he teaches how they should behave in regard to evil; secondly, in regard to good (c. 13). But there are two kinds of evil, namely, of chastisement and guilt: first, therefore, he teaches how they should behave in regard to tolerating evils of chastisement; secondly, in regard to avoiding the evils of guilt (v. 12). In regard to enduring the evils of chastisement: first, he gives the examples of the ancients; secondly, the example of Christ (v. 2); thirdly, the authority of Scripture (v. 5).

657. – In regard to the first, therefore, he says: **Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses.** As if to say: Thus we have said that the saints, although approved by the testimony of faith, did not obtain the promises; nevertheless, their hope did not fail. **Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses,** because in word and deed God is glorified by them: ‘So let your light shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven’ (Mt. 5:16); ‘You are my witnesses, says the Lord’ (Is. 43:10). The saints are called clouds, first, on account of their sublime manner of life: ‘Who are these that fly like clouds?’ (Is. 60:8). Secondly, on account of their fecund doctrine: ‘He lifts up the drops of rain, and pours out showers like floods’ (Jb. 36:27); ‘He binds up the waters in his clouds, so that they break not out and fall down together’ (Jb. 26:8). Thirdly, on account of the usefulness of spiritual consolation, for as clouds bring refreshment, so also the examples of the saints: ‘As a cloud of dew in the day of harvest’ (Is. 18:4).

658. – We have this cloud of witnesses over our head, because the lives of the saints impose on us the need of imitating them: ‘Take, my brethren, for an example of suffering evil, of labor and of patience, the prophets’ (Jas. 5:10); ‘As the Holy Spirit speaks in the scriptures, so also in the deeds of the saints, which are for us a pattern and precept of life’ (Augustine). This, therefore, is the example of the saints which he proposes.

659. – But because men are sometimes prevented from conforming to a pattern because of some obstacle, he removes the most formidable one, which is the weight of sin. But tribulation is, as it were, a challenge: ‘Everyone that strives for the mastery, refrains himself from all things’ (1 Cor. 9:25). Therefore, everyone who desires to run to God successfully in spite of tribulation must put aside all obstacles.

660. – This the Apostle calls a **weight and sin which surrounds us**. By a weight can be understood past sin, which is called a weight, because it bends the soul down to what is below and inclines it to commit other sins: ‘As a heavy burden my iniquities are become heavy upon me’ (Ps. 37:5): ‘If a sin is not dissolved by penance, its weight soon leads to another’ (Gregory). By sin which surrounds us can be understood the occasion of sin which is present, i.e., everything that surrounds us, namely, in the world, the flesh, our neighbor and the devil. **Laying aside every weight**, i.e., past sin, which is called a weight, and sin which surrounds us, namely, the occasion of sin: ‘Laying away all malice and all guile’ (1 Pt 2:1). Or weight is earthly affection, and sin which surrounds us, carnal affection, which is caused by the flesh surrounding us. As if to say: Put aside your love of temporal and carnal things, if you want to run freely.

661. – Hence, he adds the advice, **let us run with perseverance [patience] the race that is set before us**, not only what is imposed on us to endure patiently, but we should run willingly: ‘I have run the way of your commandments’ (Ps. 118:32). But this struggle is proposed to us for justice: ‘Even unto death fight for justice’ (Sir. 4:33).

662. – Then (v. 2) he gives the example of Christ and does two things: first, he shows why Christ’s passion should be taken as an example and what should be considered in it; secondly, he shows the fruit of that consideration (v. 3).

663. – For it says in Eph (2:8): ‘By grace you are saved through faith.’ But Christ is the author of faith. Therefore, if you wish to be saved you must look to His example. Hence, he says, **Looking on Jesus** in His sufferings. This was signified by the brazen serpent lifted up as a sign, so that all who looked upon it were cured (Num. 21:8); ‘As Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the son of man be lifted up: that whosoever believes in him may not perish; but may have life everlasting’ (Jn. 3:14). Therefore, if you wish to be saved, look on the face of your Christ.

664. – For He is the **author [pioneer] of faith** in two ways: first, by teaching it by word: ‘He has spoken to us by His Son’ (Heb. 1:2); ‘The only begotten, who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’ (Jn. 1:18); secondly, by impressing it on the heart: ‘Unto you it is given for Christ, not only to believe in him, but also to suffer for him’ (Phil 1:29). Likewise, He is the **finisher [perfecter] of our faith** in two ways: in one way by confirming it through miracles: ‘If you do not believe me, believe the works’ (Jn. 10:32); and by rewarding faith. For since faith is imperfect knowledge, its reward consists in perfectly

understanding it: ‘I will love him and will manifest myself to him’ (Jn. 14:21). This was signified by Zechariah (4:9) where it says: ‘The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of his house,’ namely, the Church, whose foundation is faith, ‘and his hands shall finish it.’ For the hands of Christ, Who descended from Zerubbabel, founded the Church and will finish the faith in glory: ‘We see now through a glass in a dark manner, but then face to face’ (1 Cor. 13:12); ‘Contemplation is the reward of faith, by which reward our hearts are cleansed through faith,’ as is says in Acts (15:9): ‘purifying their hearts by faith.’ (Augustine, *On the Trinity*, c. 10).

665. – For three things should be considered in the passion of Christ: first, what He despised; secondly, what He endured; thirdly, what he merited. As to the first he says, **who for the joy set before him endured the cross**. That joy was earthly joy, for which He was sought by the crowd, when they wished to make Him king; but He scorned it by fleeing into the mountain (Jn. 6:15); ‘Laughter I counter error, and to mirth I said: Why are you vainly deceived?’ (Ec 2:2). Or having set before him the joy of eternal life as a reward, he endured the cross. This is the second thing He endured, namely, the cross: ‘He humbled himself, being made obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross’ (Phil 2:8). In this is shown the bitterness of His torment, because His hands and feet were nailed to the cross; and the shame and ignominy of His death, because this was the most shameful of deaths: ‘Let us condemn him to a most shameful death’ (Wis. 2:20). In regard to the third, namely, what He merited was to sit at the right hand of the Father; hence, he says, **and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God**. For the exaltation of Christ’s humanity was the reward of His passion: ‘He sits on the right hand of the majesty on high’ (Heb. 1:3).

666. – Then (v. 3) he indicates the fruit of this consideration: first, he advises us to consider His example diligently; secondly, he shows its usefulness (v. 3b); thirdly, he gives the reason (v. 4).

667. – He says, therefore: Thus we have said: **Looking on to Jesus, the pioneer and perfecter of our faith**: not only that, but also **consider**, i.e., again and again, **him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself**: ‘In all your ways think of him’ (Pr. 3:6). The reason for this is that the remedy for every tribulation is found in the cross. For obedience to God is found there: ‘He humbled himself, being made obedient’ (Phil 2:8); so is piety towards one’s parents, because He provided for His mother there; and also love of neighbor; hence, He prayed for sinners: ‘Father, forgive them for they know not what they do’ (Lk. 23:34); ‘Walk in love, as Christ loved you and delivered himself for you’ (Eph. 5:2); and patience in adversity: ‘I was dumb and was humbled and kept silence from good things: and my sorrow was renewed’ (Ps. 38:30); ‘He shall be led as a sheep to the slaughter, and shall be dumb as a lamb before his shearer, and he shall not open his mouth’ (Is. 53:7); and final perseverance in all things; hence He persevered to the end: ‘Father, into your hands I commend my spirit’ (Lk. 23:46). Hence, an example

of every virtue is found in the Cross: 'The Cross was not only the altar on which He suffered, but the chair from which He taught' (Augustine).

668. – Therefore, Consider him who endured. But what shall we think? Three things: the type of suffering; hence, he endured hostility, i.e., affliction in words, because they said: 'Vah, you that destroy the temple of God' (Mt. 27:40): 'You will deliver me from the contradictions of the people' (Ps. 17:44); 'All the day long I have spread my hands to a people that does not believe, and contradicts me' (Rom. 10:21); 'And for a sign that shall be contradicted' (Lk. 2:34). And such hostility, i.e., so grave and ignominious: 'O all you that pass by the way, attend, and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow' (Lam 1:12). Secondly, from whom he suffered, namely, from sinners, for whom He suffered: 'Christ also died once for our sins, the just for the unjust' (1 Pt 3:18). Thirdly, the person suffering, for He suffered in His members from the beginning of the world before His passion, but then in His own person; hence, he says, against himself: 'I have made you, and I will bear' (Is. 46:4); 'I paid that which I took not away' (Ps. 68:5); 'He bore our sins in his body upon the tree' (1 Pt 2:24).

669. – He shows its usefulness, when he says, **that you may not grow weary or fainthearted**: for the consideration of Christ's passion makes us not fail: 'If Christ's passion is recalled to mind, nothing is too difficult to bear with equanimity' (Gregory). Therefore, let us not fall away from the faith, as though weary in soul: 'They shall run and not be weary; they shall walk and not faint' (Is. 40:3); 'Be not weary in well-doing' (2 Th 3:13).

670. – Then when he says, **you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood**, he gives the reason for this. As if to say: You should not grow weary in your tribulations, because you have not endured as much as Christ. For He shed His blood for us: 'This is the blood of the new covenant which shall be shed for you' (Mt. 26:28). But you have suffered the loss of your goods. Yet it is a greater work to give one's life than external possessions; although sometimes the root from which it springs, namely, charity, might be less. Hence he says, **In your struggle against sin you have not resisted to the point of shedding your blood** for Christ.

Heb. 12:5-11

⁵And have you forgotten the exhortation which addresses you as sons?-- “My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor lose courage when you are punished by him. ⁶For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives.” ⁷It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? ⁸If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. ⁹Besides this, we have had earthly fathers to discipline us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? ¹⁰For they disciplined us for a short time at their pleasure, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. ¹¹For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

671. – Having exhorted them to endure evil patiently, according to the example of the ancient fathers and Christ, the Apostle now exhorts them to do the same on the authority of Scripture. In regard to this he does three things: first, he gives the authority; secondly, he explains its meaning (v. 7); thirdly, he argues to his conclusion (v. 8).

672. – He cites the authority, which is found in Proverbs (3:11) but in different words from our version; for we have: ‘My son, reject not the correction of the Lord; and do not faint when you are chastised by him. For whom the Lord loves, he chastises; and as a father in the son he pleases himself.’ But because the Apostle quotes that authority for our consolation, he uses other words; hence, he says, **And have you forgotten the exhortation**. As if to say: It is strange, your comforts have given joy to my soul’ (Ps. 93:19); ‘I will never forget your justifications’ (Ps. 118:94). But he says, **exhortation** [consolation] i.e., God consoling; and he speaks emphatically: ‘Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our tribulation’ (2 Cor. 1:3). He continues, **which addresses**, i.e., the God of consolation, **you as sons**. Therefore, if he chastises, He does not hate; but His chastisement is directed to our good, because He speaks to us as to sons.

673. – But he gives the words of another saying: **My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, as some who hate discipline**; and he adds the reason, **For the Lord disciplines him whom he loves**. By this authority he forbids two things, namely hatred of discipline and impatience with it. By reason of the first he says, **My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord**, as some who hate discipline and of whom it says in Proverbs (9:8): ‘Rebuke not a scorner, lest he hate you’; ‘They have hated him that rebukes in the gate; and have abhorred him that speaks perfectly’ (Am 5:10). Therefore, the Apostle says, **Do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord**. As if to say: God chastises you for

discipline; do not regard lightly [neglect], i.e., do not despise it by negligence: ‘He that rejects wisdom and discipline is unhappy’ (Wis. 3:11). By reason of the second he says, **Do not lose courage [be wearied] when you are punished by him**. For some, even though they do not hate a harsh correction, bear it impatiently; therefore, he says, **Be not wearied, while you are rebuked [punished] by him**. For a man is spiritually wearied, when he is so sad that he faints: ‘That you be not wearied, fainting in your mind’ (Heb. 12:3); ‘Be not grieved with her bonds’ (Sir. 6:26).

674. – Then when he says, **For the Lord disciplines [chastises] whom he loves**, he gives the reason. But as the Philosopher says, the word ‘chastisement’ is generally used in regard to children: for we call a person chaste, whose concupiscence has been chastised. Similarly, a child is said to be chastised, when he is well disciplined. For something prone to evil needs chastening. But concupiscence is such, and so is a child who follows his own impulses. Therefore, one who chastises does so to keep them from evil. And because our senses and thoughts are prone to evil (Gen. 6:5), the Lord chastises us to draw from evil: ‘The Lord chastising has chastised me; but he has not delivered me over to death’ (Ps. 117:18); ‘You have chastised me, and I was instructed as a young bullock unaccustomed to the yoke’ (Jer. 31:18). But He chastises not to punish but to save. Hence he says, **He scourges every son whom he receives**. Therefore, those who are not scourged are not numbered among his sons: ‘They are in the labor of men; neither shall they be scourged like other men’ (Ps. 72:5). Hence, it is a sign, as it were, of eternal reprobation: ‘My jealousy shall depart from you’ (Ez. 16:42). Nor is it strange, if He scourges every son He adopts, because He did not spare His own Son: ‘Ought not Christ to have suffered these things?’ (Lk. 24:26).

675. – Then (v. 7) he shows the meaning of the above scriptural quotation: first, he explains the meaning of the admonition; secondly, the meaning of the reason; thirdly, he shows that the reason is fitting (v. 7c).

676. – The Apostle’s advice was not to neglect the Lord’s discipline and not to become weary. But he includes both in these words, for not to neglect and not to grow weary are nothing less than to persevere in discipline; hence Job (6:10): ‘This is my consolation that afflicting me with sorrow, he spare not’; ‘Embrace discipline, lest at any time the Lord be angry’ (Ps. 2:12). He told us why we should not be negligent when he said, **Whom the Lord loves he chastises**; hence, he says here: **God is treating you as sons**. As if to say: Persevere, because he deals with you as with His sons: ‘You shall call me Father and shall not cease to walk after me’ (Jer. 3:19).

Then he shows that the reason is fitting when he says, **What son is there whom his father does not discipline [correct]**? For it is the father’s duty to correct his son: ‘He that spares the rod hates his son; but he that loves him corrects him betimes’ (Pr. 13:2); ‘A horse not broken becomes stubborn; and a child left to himself will become headstrong’ (Sir. 30:8). Therefore, correction is necessary, as a sting of the flesh was given to Paul, lest he fall (2 Cor. 12:7).

677. – Then (v. 8) he argues from what he has already said: first, he concludes to something unwelcome; secondly, by giving an example (v. 9); thirdly, he mentions the resulting usefulness (v. 11).

678. – In regard to the first he gives this reason: All the saints who have pleased God passed through many tribulations, by which they were made sons of God. Therefore, one who does not persevere in discipline is not a son but a bastard, i.e., born of adultery. From this reason he draws this conclusion: **If you are left without discipline [chastisement], in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons.** ‘All who would live godly lives in Christ will suffer persecution’ (2 Tim. 3:12); ‘All that have pleased God passed through many tribulations, remaining faithful’ (Jdt. 8:23). Nor is it necessary that the saints always have outward tribulations, when they are afflicted inwardly by the wicked lives of perverse men: ‘Lot dwelling among them that vexed the just soul from day to day with unjust works’ (2 Pt 2:8). But a son, properly speaking, is born of a legitimate father; our mother is the Church, whose spouse is God Himself: ‘I will espouse you to me in faith’ (Hos 2:20). Therefore, those born of the spirit of the world or the devil are bastards: ‘But draw near hither, you sons of the sorceress, the seed of the adulterer and of the harlot’ (Is. 57:3). Therefore, it is clear that they are not truly sons, unless they are born of a legitimate father.

679. – Then (v. 9) he gives the second reason drawn from our own experience, namely, paternal correction. This proceeds according to the twofold difference between God the Father and the father of our flesh. The first difference is that a man begets a man as to the body, but not as to the soul, which is created and not transmitted: ‘I have not given you a spirit and a soul’ (2 Macc 7:22); hence, he says, **We have had earthly fathers to discipline us:** ‘Have you children? Instruct them’ (Sir. 7:25). **And we respected them:** ‘Honor your father and your mother’ (Ex. 20:12). But God is our Father in a more excellent way, namely, as to the soul, which He creates: ‘The spirit will return to God who gave it’ (Ec 12:7). Furthermore, He makes the soul just by adopting us as sons: ‘The Spirit gives testimony to our spirit that we are the sons of God’ (Rom. 8:16). Hence, he says, **shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits,** i.e., our souls, which are called spirits, because they are not evolved from matter, **and live?** for the end of obedience is everlasting life: ‘If anyone keep my word, he will not taste death forever’ (Jn. 8:52); ‘He became to all that obey him the cause of eternal salvation’ (Heb. 5:9).

680. – Secondly, there is a difference between human and divine correction; first, as to the end, because the end of human correction is transitory, for it is directed to living well in this life, which lasts a few days; secondly, as to the reason, because man corrects according to his will, which can be mistaken, yet we obey it. But not so in divine correction: for He instructs us in something useful for eternity, namely, to receive the holiness which He Himself is: ‘Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; let him be your fear and let him be your dread. And he shall be a sanctification to you’ (Is. 8:13). Therefore, he says, they disciplined us for short time; and this in regard to the first: at their pleasure, in regard to the second. But he

disciplines us for our good: 'I am the Lord who teaches you profitable things' (Is. 48:17); and this that we may share his holiness. Therefore, we should all the more accept his chastisement.

681. – He continues: **All discipline [chastisement] seems painful rather than pleasant; later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness [justice] to those who have been trained by it.** This is the third reason, which is drawn from the benefit of the correction. But since chastisements are forms of medicine, the same judgement seems to be true of chastisement as of medicine. But just as medicine, when it is taken, is bitter and disgusting, and yet its end is very sweet and desirable, so chastisement, although it is harder to endure, brings forth the best fruit. But it should be noted that chastisement, i.e., discipline, is drawn from the word 'to learn.' But children, who are taught, learn from the rod. Therefore, discipline is taken for science, as in the beginning of *Posterior Analytics*: 'Every intellectual doctrine and discipline comes into existence from pre-existing knowledge,' which in Greek is called *epistemon*. But sometimes it is taken for correction, which in Greek is *paideia*. He says, therefore: **All chastisement**, which is instruction by blows and annoyances, for the moment, indeed, **seems painful rather than pleasant**; because outwardly it brings sadness in enduring it, but inwardly it brings sweetness because of the end intended. Hence he says, **seems** and not 'is': 'As sad and always rejoicing' (2 Cor. 6:10); 'A woman, when in labor, is sorrowful; but when she has brought forth, she no longer remembers the anguish, for her joy' (Jn. 16:21); 'That which is at present momentary and light of our tribulation works for us above measure exceedingly an eternal weight of glory' (2 Cor. 4:17).

682. – Therefore, he says, **later it yields fruit**, for fruit implies sweetness: hence, fruition is delight in the end now achieved. **Most peaceful**, for fruit is had here with disturbance of external inconveniences and internal trials; therefore, it is not most peaceful, as there. In glory, indeed, there will be no inward gnawing of conscience, no inclination to sin, no outward affliction. For according to Augustine, whatever you desire will be there; therefore, the fruit will be most peaceful: peaceful in the tranquility of conscience; more peaceful in obtaining the first stole; most peaceful in obtaining the second: 'My people shall sit in the beauty of peace, in the tabernacles of confidence and in wealthy rest' (Is. 32:18); 'Her fruit is better the chiefest and purest gold' (Pr. 3:14). Therefore, **it will yield the fruit of righteousness [justice]**, i.e., which justice earns: 'To him that sows justice there is a faithful reward' (Pr. 11:30). Or **of justice**, i.e., to lay hold on justice: 'Sow for yourselves in justice and reap in the mouth of mercy' (Hos 10:12); 'Going, they went and wept, sheaves' (Ps. 125:6). But fruit is brought forth only **to them that are exercised in it**, i.e., by discipline: 'Strong meat is for the perfect; for those who by custom have their senses exercised' (Heb. 5:14).

12-3

Heb. 12:12-17

¹²Therefore lift your drooping hands and strengthen your weak knees, ¹³and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be put out of joint but rather be healed. ¹⁴Strive for peace with all men, and for the holiness without which no one will see the Lord. ¹⁵See to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God; that no “root of bitterness” spring up and cause trouble, and by it the many become defiled; ¹⁶that no one be immoral or irreligious like Esau, who sold his birthright for a single meal. ¹⁷For you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no chance to repent, though he sought it with tears.

683. – Having indicated how we should behave toward enduring evils of chastisement, the Apostle now shows how we should act to avoid the evils of guilt. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives his admonition; secondly, the reasons (v. 18). In regard to the first he warns men who sin; secondly, those not yet sinning (v. 14). But there are two kinds of sin: omission and transgression: first, therefore, he warns against sins of omission; secondly, against sins of transgression (v. 18).

684. – A sin of omission occurs in two ways: one, when a person fails to do good; another, by failing to endure evil and adversity. In regard to the first he says, **Therefore**, i.e., because chastisement yields the most peaceable fruit, then to obtain this fruit, **lift your drooping hands**. For since the hand is the organ of the organs, it is said to droop, when it stops performing good works; therefore, it must be lifted up by a right intention to do things pleasing to God: ‘Let us lift up our hearts with our hands to God’ (Lam 3:41); ‘The lifting up of my hands as an evening sacrifice’ (Ps. 140:2); ‘The slothful hand has wrought poverty; but the hand of the industrious riches’ (Pr. 10:4); ‘The hand of the valiant shall bear rule, but that which is slothful shall be under tribute’ (Pr. 12:24). As a sign of this, when Moses lifted up his hands, Israel conquered; but when he let them fall, Amalek overcame them (Ex. 17:11).

In regard to the other sin of omission he says, **strengthen your weak knees**. The entire weight of the body is held up by the knees. Therefore, those who have not the courage to endure adversity bravely have weak knees. Therefore, this weakness must be put aside: ‘You have strengthened the weary hands; your words have confirmed them that were staggering, and you have strengthened the trembling knees’ (Jb. 4:3); ‘Strengthen the feeble hands and confirm the weak knees’ (Is. 35:3). Therefore, lift up the hand and knees and do not give in to idleness or hesitate because of weakness.

685. – Then (v. 13) he rebukes the sin of transgression. Now that sin is a kind of obliqueness and curvature. For that is straight whose middle does not point to a direction different from the extremes, i.e., whose action does not depart from its proper intention and end. But there are three kinds of obliqueness: namely in the affections, in action and in understanding. From sinful affection follows obliqueness in the

understanding and depravity in loving. Therefore, in regard to the first, which is the root of the others he says, **make straight paths for your feet**, i.e., correct affections. For as the feet carry the body, so the affections carry the mind. Therefore, straight feet are proper affections: ‘Their feet were straight feet’ (Ez. 1:7). Therefore, make straight the affections, by which the whole body is carried spiritually. ‘Make straight in the wilderness the paths of our Lord’ (Is. 40:3) i.e., as far as in you lies, devote yourself to this. In regard to the second, he says, **so that what is lame** as to outward action. For just as the tibia is said to be lame, when it does not follow the rule of the locomotive power, so an action is lame when it turns to the right in prosperity or to the left in adversity, and does not follow the rule of divine law: ‘This is the way: walk in it and do not go aside to the right or left’ (Is. 30:21). Or he limps who along with the Gospel observes the ceremonial laws of the Old Testament. In regard to obliqueness of the understanding he says, **may not be put out of joint**. For an intellectual error follows an evil action: ‘They err that do evil’ (Pr. 14:22); ‘These things they thought and were deceived; for their own malice blinded them’ (Wis. 2:21). Therefore, a person who would avoid those two deviations must have his feet and his affects right; hence, he says, **but rather be healed**. For just as bodily health consists in the proper balance of the humors, so spiritual health in the proper arrangement of the affections: ‘Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed’ (Jer. 17:14).

686. – Then (v. 14) he advises those who do not sin to avoid sin. In regard to this he does two things: first, he prefaces certain remedies for helping to avoid all sins; secondly, he advises them to avoid all sins (v. 15b).

687. – In regard to the first it should be noted that there are various ends of human actions: for some are ordained to another, as justice ordains a man to his neighbor; and the end is peace; hence, Is (32:17): ‘Peace will be the work of justice.’ Others are ordained to the one acting, as fasting, and the end is purity. For we fast for the sake of cleanness and purity. In regard to the first, he says, **Strive for peace**, i.e., do not only have it, but seek how to have it with all men: ‘If it be possible, as much as in you lies, have peace with all men’ (Rom. 12:18); ‘Seek after peace and pursue it’ (Ps. 33:15). In regard to the second he says, **and for the holiness**: ‘Let us wash ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and of the spirit’ (2 Cor. 7:1).

688. – He shows that those remedies are necessary by indicating the two injuries we incur without them: first, the loss of glory in the future and of grace in the present. In regard to the first he says, **without which no man shall see God**, in which happiness consists: ‘This is eternal life: That they may know you, the one true God, and Jesus Christ whom you have sent’ (Jn. 17:50). As if to say: Without peace toward our neighbor, and cleanness and purity in regard to ourselves, we cannot be happy: ‘Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the children of God’ (Mt. 5:9). But the inheritance of the beatific vision is owed only to sons: ‘Nothing defiled shall enter into it’ (Rev. 21:27); ‘Lord, who shall dwell in your tabernacle? He that enters without stain’ (Ps. 14:1); ‘Who shall ascend into the mountain of the

Lord? The innocent in hands and the clean of heart' (Ps. 23:3). In regard to the second loss, namely, of God's grace in the present he says, **see to it that no one fail to obtain the grace of God**. For grace is lost by discord and uncleanness: 'He is not a God of dissension, but of peace' (1 Cor. 4:33); 'His place was made in peace' (Ps. 75:3); 'Your eyes are too pure to behold evil; and you cannot look on iniquity' (Hab. 1:13); 'The Holy Spirit of discipline will flee from the deceitful... He shall not abide when iniquity comes in' (Wis. 1:5). But the Apostle is speaking figuratively. For grace is not obtained by merit; otherwise, grace would not be grace. Yet a man must do what he can. But God in His most generous will gives it to all who prepare themselves: 'Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If any man open to me, I will come in to him' (Rev. 3:20); 'He will that all men be saved' (1 Tim. 2:4). Therefore, God's grace is not wanting to any one, but it communicates itself to all, as far as it is concerned, just as the sun is not wanting to the eyes of the blind. He says, therefore: **see that no one fail to obtain the grace of God**.

689. – But on the other hand: if grace is not given because of works, but only by the fact that a person places no obstacle, it seems to follow that the possession of grace depends solely on free will and not on God's choice. This is Pelagius's error. I answer that the very fact that a person places no obstacle is due to grace. Hence, if anyone places an obstacle and his heart is moved to remove it, this is due to the gift of God's grace calling by His mercy: 'But when it pleased him who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by his grace' (Gal. 1:15). But this gift of grace is not sanctifying grace. Therefore, the fact that a person removes that obstacle is owing to God's mercy; if it is not removed, it is owing to God's justice. But he does not say, 'lest you fail,' but lest anyone fail, because everyone should be solicitous for his neighbor: 'He gave everyone commandment concerning his neighbor' (Sir. 17:12).

690. – Then (v. 15b) he comes specifically to advising the avoidance of sins contrary to each of the aforesaid medicines: first, he advises them to avoid sins contrary to peace; secondly, contrary to holiness (v. 16).

691. – He says, therefore, **that no root of bitterness spring up and cause trouble**. That is bitter which cannot be tasted without disgust. Therefore, a person's conversation is said to be bitter when it cannot be without offending those with whom he lives. Against this it is said of wisdom: 'Her conversation has no bitterness, nor her company any tediousness, but joy and gladness' (Wis. 8:16). Therefore, one knows how to live in wisdom, when his conversation is not bitter. This happens when his words and deeds are not harsh. Hence he says, **that no root of bitterness spring up and cause trouble**, i.e., bitterness gradually begun and rooted in the heart, springing up to cause trouble [hinder peace] and consequently, grace and the vision of God: 'Lest there should be among you a root bringing forth gall and bitterness' (Deut 29:18): 'Ephraim has provoked me to wrath with his bitterness' (Hos 12:14). Or the root of bitterness is an evil thought of harmful pleasure, which springs up when by consent one accomplishes the deed. And by it many become defiled, because not only the one in whom it exists but others also are defiled by his example: 'A little leaven corrupts the whole lump' (1 Cor. 5:6).

692. – Then when he says, **Lest there be any one immoral [fornicator] or profane, as Esau**, he warns them to avoid sins contrary to holiness, to which are specifically opposed carnal sins, such as gluttony and lust, which are completed in carnal delight, by which the mind is defiled. Therefore, they defile the mind and the flesh. Hence he particularly warns them to avoid these, saying: each one looking diligently, not only in himself, but also lest he be a fornicator and sin against his neighbor: ‘Mutually guard each other’s purity’ (Augustine); ‘Fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not be so much as named among you, as becomes saints’ (Eph. 5:3); ‘Keep yourself from all fornication’ (Tob. 4:13). Secondly, he forbids gluttony, saying, **or profane** person. Here profane suggests something far from the fane, such as gluttons are, who make a god of their belly, as Esau. He uses Esau as an example because he sold his birthright because of gluttony. So, too, a glutton sells his eternal inheritance for a bit of food. But Esau was not only a glutton, he was also lustful, because he married two foreign wives against his parents’ will. The birthright had two portions and, before Aaron’s priesthood, included the priestly honor; hence in selling his birthright he was committing simony. Therefore, it seems that Jacob, too, who purchased it, committed simony. But this is not so, for Jacob understood through the Holy Spirit that it was owed to him according to what is stated in Malachi (1:2): ‘Jacob I loved, Esau I hated.’ Therefore, he did not buy it, but redeemed from an unjust possessor something that was owed to him. And this is what he says:

Who, namely Esau, sold his birthright for a single meal.

693. – Then he shows the punishment which followed when he says, **for you know that afterward, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected**. For it says in Genesis (27:30) that after Isaac had blessed Jacob, Esau came and asked for a blessing, which he did not obtain, although his father did it unknowingly, because in that stupor which he experienced, he was in ecstasy and learned from the Holy Spirit that he was not to retract what he had done; hence, he said: ‘I have blessed him and he shall be blessed’ (Gen. 27:33). Therefore, Esau by the counsel of the Holy Spirit was rejected. This gives us to understand that no one should neglect to do well as long as he lives, no matter how rejected he may be in God’s foreknowledge; because after this life no one can obtain God’s inheritance, even though it be naturally desired.

694. – **For he found no place to repent, though he sought it with tears**. For as it is recorded in Genesis (27:34): ‘He roared out with a great cry, and being in great consternation, said: Bless me also, my father.’

But on the other hand it says in Ezekiel (18:21): ‘If the wicked do penance for all his sins, which he has committed, and keep all my commandments and do judgement and justice, living he shall live, and he shall not die.’ I answer that as long as one is living in this world, he can do true penance. But sometimes a person repents not from a love of justice, but from the fear of punishment or temporal harm. This is the way Esau repented, not because he had sold his birthright, but for the rejection. Consequently,

his penance was not accepted, because it was not genuine. For this is the way the damned in hell repent, as it says in Wisdom (5:3): ‘Repenting,’ not because they had sinned, but because they have been excluded.

695. – Yet, according to a Gloss, the phrase, fornicator or profane person, has another meaning, namely, that fornicator is one who along with the faith observes the carnal ceremonies, as though a having concubine as well as a wife; but a profane person, i.e., far from the fane is, as it were, entirely unbelieving.

Heb. 12:18-24

¹⁸For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire, and darkness, and gloom, and a tempest, ¹⁹and the sound of a trumpet, and a voice whose words made the hearers entreat that no further messages be spoken to them. ²⁰For they could not endure the order that was given, “If even a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned.” ²¹Indeed, so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, “I tremble with fear.” ²²But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, ²³and to the assembly of the first-born who are enrolled in heaven, and to a judge who is God of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, ²⁴and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel.

696. – Having warned them to avoid the evils of guilt, the Apostle now assigns the reason, which is based on a comparison between the Old and New Testaments. In regard to this he does two things: first, he makes the comparison; secondly, he argues from it (v. 25). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions what pertains to the Old Testament; secondly, what pertains to the New (v. 22).

In regard to the first it should be noted that, as Augustine says: ‘The slight difference between the Law and the Gospel is fear and love,’ for the Law was as our pedagogue in Christ. But children are influenced by fear; ‘The wicked man being scourged, the fool shall be wiser’ (Pr. 19:25). Therefore, the Apostle says here that when the Law was given, certain fearful things took place.

First, therefore, he mentions the things which frightened those to whom the Law was given; secondly, he deals with the terror inspired by the lawgiver (v. 21). In regard to the first he mentions three things: first, the frightening things they saw; secondly, the frightening things they heard (v. 19); thirdly, in regard to threats (v. 19c).

697. – Those three things are related to the three things which were frightening there, namely, on the part of God, on the part of the Law, and on the part of the ministers of the Law. On the part of God he mentions three frightening things, namely, the zeal to punish, the severity of the punishment and the concealment of the one giving the Law. The zeal is designated by fire: ‘The Lord, your God, is a consuming fire, a jealous God’ (Deut. 4:24); ‘He is like a refining fire’ (Mal. 3:20). Hence, God frequently calls Himself jealous, because He does not let His spouse’s crime go unavenged: ‘I am the Lord, your God, mighty, jealous’ (Ex. 20:5); ‘The Lord, his name is Jealous’ (Ex. 34:14); ‘The jealousy and rage of the husband will not spare in the day of revenge’ (Pr. 6:34). Hence it says here: **For you have not come to what may be touched, a blazing fire.** For that fire, as Exodus (19:18) says, was corporeal and, therefore, could be felt; it was in a definite place, so that one could approach it. But in the New Law the fire of the Holy Spirit was given (Ac. 2). For as the fire of emulation appeared to the Jews fifty days

after their departure from Egypt, so the Holy Spirit's fire, which could not be sensed, but perceived by the mind, appeared to the disciples on the fiftieth day after the resurrection: 'From above he sent fire into my bones and has instructed me' (Lam 1:13). But that fire was infinite in nature and place, for 'he inhabits light inaccessible' (1 Tim. 6:16) and could not be approached.

698. – The severity of the punishment is signified by the whirlwind, which is wind accompanied by rain: 'He shall crush me in a whirlwind' (Jb. 9:17). Or it can refer to temptations. For the Law did not restrain concupiscence, because it did not give grace that would aid *ex opere operato*, but it only repressed the act; consequently, it generated a whirlwind of temptations.

699. – But the concealment of the lawgiver is signified by the darkness, which showed that the state of the Law was hidden, i.e., veiled: 'Even to this day, when Moses is read, the veil is upon their heart' (2 Cor. 3:15). But in the New Law that veil is removed: as a sign of this the veil of the temple was rent in Christ's passion, because 'we behold the glory of the Lord with open face' (2 Cor. 3:18). Likewise, that darkness signifies the divine excellence. For just as that which is in the dark cannot be clearly seen, and a strong light blinds the eye, so He Who inhabits light inaccessible made Himself dark.

700. – Then when he says, **and a tempest**, he mentions the things terrifying to the hearing on the part of the Law. Now there were three terrifying things to the Law, namely, the severity of the threats, the strictness of the precepts, and the large number of precepts. In regard to the first he says, **and a tempest** which, strictly speaking, is a disturbance of the sea; but in a wide sense it is a disturbance of the air accompanied by whirlwind and rain. Hence it signifies the strictness of the precepts, whose fulfillment was enjoined on man as though he were waging war against himself. The voice of words signifies the vast number of precepts. These were God's words spoken by an angel: 'Being ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator' (Gal. 3:19). For God spoke there through angels. All these things were so terrifying that those who heard that voice entreated that **no further message be spoken to them**. Hence, it is stated in Exodus (20:18): 'Being terrified and struck with fear, they stood afar off, saying to Moses: You speak to us and we will hear. Let not the Lord speak to us, lest we die.'

701. – He mentions the reason why they excused themselves, namely, because they could not endure God's words; hence, they could not endure the order that was given: 'What is all flesh that it should hear the voice of the living God, who speaks out of the midst of the fire, as we have heard, and be able to live' (Date: 5:26). For God's words are said to be unendurable either when they cannot be understood by the intellect or transcend the affections.

702. – Then he gives the threatened punishment, saying: **And if even a beast shall touch the mountain, it shall be stoned**: 'Everyone that touches the mount, dying he shall die. No hands shall touch him, but he shall be stoned to death, or be shot through with arrows. Whether it be beast or man, he shall not live'

(Ex. 19:12). The Apostle, to heighten the terror, mentions here only the beasts which the Law commands to be killed, in order to show the gravity of sin. Yet mystically the mountain is the loftiness of the divine mysteries, and the beast is a man living bestially: 'Man, when he was in honor, did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts, and is become like to them' (Ps. 48:13). This beast touches the mount in two ways: first, by blasphemy: 'They have set their mouth against heaven' (Ps. 72:9); 'Bring forth the blasphemer outside the camp..., and let all the people stone him' (Lev. 24:14); secondly, by obtruding himself into divine matters: 'He that is a searcher of majesty shall be overwhelmed by glory' (Pr. 25:27).

703. – From all this he draws the conclusion, namely, that they were terrifying things, because not even the beasts were spared; hence he says, **and so terrible was the sight**. This indicates the difference between the New and Old Testaments, because the Old Testament was given in terror to terrify the hearts of Jews, who were prone to idolatry; but the New was given in love: 'You have not received the spirit of slavery again in fear, but you have received the spirit of the adoption of sons, whereby we cry Abba: Father' (Rom. 8:15). Hence Christ did not begin His preaching with fearful things, but promised the kingdom of heaven: 'Do penance, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Mt. 3:2); 'The law of clemency is on his tongue' (Pr. 31:26).

704. – Then when he says, **Moses said: I am frightened, and tremble**, he deals with the lawgiver's fear, namely Moses: 'For the law was given by Moses' (Jn. 1:17). Now if Moses himself in giving the Law was so frightened as to say, I am frightened inwardly and I tremble outwardly, and he was more perfect than the rest, this was a sign that the Law was terrifying even to the perfect: because it did not give grace but merely disclosed guilt. Hence, it was a heavy yoke of which Peter (Ac. 15:10) says: 'which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear.' But Christ's law is a sweet yoke, because 'the charity of God has been poured forth into our hearts by the Holy Spirit who has been given to us' (Rom. 5:5). Hence, it should be noted that the words the Apostle uses here are not found in Exodus (20). Perhaps he took them from Exodus (4:10), where Moses was frightened at the sight of the burning bush and said: 'I am not eloquent from yesterday or the day before'; after which he said, in deed at least, if not in word: I am frightened and tremble.' Or perhaps the Apostle was using another version which we do not have. But it all shows that the Old Law was a law of fear.

705. – Then he mentions the conditions of the New Testament, saying: **But you have come to Mount Zion, and to the city of the living God**. Here he shows the things proposed to us in it; and three things are promised to us, namely, the hope of future glory, participation in the Church, and familiarity with God.

706. – In heavenly glory there are two things which will particularly gladden the just, namely, the enjoyment of the godhead and companionship with the saints. For no good is joyfully possessed without companions, as Boethius says: and in Ps. 132 (v. 1): 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren

to dwell together.’ But enjoyment consists in two things, namely, in the intellect’s vision and in the will’s delight. For, as Augustine says: ‘We enjoy the things we know, in which the delighted will rests.’ Because of the vision he says, **You have come to mount Zion**, for Zion signifies the loftiness of divine contemplation: ‘Look upon Zion, the city of our solemnity’ (Is. 33:20). The gladness and pleasure of the will is signified by the heavenly Jerusalem, and to the city of the living God: ‘Jerusalem, which is built as a city’ (Ps. 121:3); ‘Who has placed peace in your borders: and filled you with the fat of corn’ (Ps. 147:12, 14); ‘That Jerusalem which is above is free’ (Gal. 4:26). Hence, there will be nothing further to be desired: ‘Since I am become in his presence as one finding peace’ (S of S 8:10).

707. – But an additional joy will be the company of the saints, of whom he says, **and to innumerable angels**: ‘Their angels always see the face of my Father in heaven’ (Mt. 18:10). That there are thousands is clear from Dan (7:10): ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him’; ‘Is there any numbering of his soldiers?’ (Jb. 25:3); ‘And the number of them was thousands of thousands’ (Rev. 5:11).

708. – **And to the assembly of the firstborn, who are enrolled in heaven**: these are the members of the Church, which is called the house of God (1 Tim. 3:15). The firstborn saints, who received the gifts of grace first and more abundantly, are the apostles, through whom it flows to others: ‘And not only it, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit’ (Rom. 8:23); ‘Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets’ (Eph. 2:20). For just as in ancient times among the Romans, the senators, who were raised to great dignity and whom the first Pompilius inscribed on golden tablets, were called ‘Chosen Fathers,’ so the Apostle here, to indicate the dignity of the apostles, says that they are written in heaven. The book in which this is written is the knowledge God has within himself of those to be saved. Hence, just as that which is written does not soon slip from memory, so those who are written there by final justice will be saved infallibly. Hence, that book is called the book of life: ‘Rejoice and be glad, because your names are written in heaven’ (Lk. 10:20).

709. – Then when he says, **and to a judge who is God of all**, he shows how they have attained familiarity with God: first, with God the Father, because you are come to a judge Who is God of all, i.e., God the Father, from Whom judicial authority proceeds. For it is from the Father that the Son has power to judge: ‘This is not befitting you who judge the whole earth’ (Gen. 8:25). But the statement in Jn (5:22) that the Father has given all judgement to the Son is understood as referring to His bodily presence, because the sole person of the Son will appear in the judgement. But this approach is by faith and charity. ‘Being justified, therefore, by faith, let us have peace with God, through our Lord Jesus Christ, by Whom also we have access through faith into this grace, wherein we stand’ (Rom. 5:1).

710. – Secondly, familiarity with the Holy Spirit when he says, **and to the spirits of just men made perfect**. According to a Gloss here, there are three versions, of which the best is in Greek: ‘And the Spirit

of the just made perfect,' i.e., you have come to the Holy Spirit Who makes the saints perfect in justice: 'As I see, there is a spirit in men' (Jb. 32:88); 'Know you not that you are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwells in you?' (1 Cor. 3:16). For all justice and perfection is from the Holy Spirit. Another version has: 'And of the spirits of the just made perfect.' Here the sense is: 'You have come to God Who is indeed the judge of all, but is the inheritance of the spirits of the just made perfect'; 'The Lord is my portion, says my soul' (Lam 3:24). The third version has: 'And the spirit of the just made perfect,' i.e., that we might be with the spirits of the saints who are just and perfect. But the first is better and clearer.

711. – Thirdly, as to familiarity with the Son he says: **and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant**. As if to say: You have come to Christ, Who is the mediator of that new pact in which spiritual things are promised to us. But not so Moses; hence he says above (9:15): 'For if the blood of goats and heifers, and the ashes of a heifer being sprinkled, sanctify such as are defiled to the cleansing of the flesh: how much more shall the blood of Christ?' And the Apostle speaks according to the rite of the Old Law where, after the Law was given, the People were sprinkled with blood, which was a figure of Christ's blood, by which the faithful were to be cleansed.

712. – Then he continues: **that speaks more graciously [better] than the blood of Abel**. For the shedding of Christ's blood was prefigured in the shedding of the blood of all the just from the beginning of the world: 'The lamb which was slain from the beginning of the world' (Rev. 13:8), i.e., foreseen to be slain. Therefore, the shedding of Abel's blood was a sign of that shedding. But Christ's blood speaks better than Abel's blood, which cries for vengeance, but Christ's blood cried for pardon: 'Father, forgive them' (Lk. 23:34); 'He prayed for transgressors' (Is. 55:12); 'This is the blood of the new covenant, which shall be shed for you unto the remission of sins' (Mt. 26:28). Or **speaking better**, i.e., making to speak better, because the blood of Abel makes us say that Abel was a pure and just man; but the blood of Christ makes us say that Christ is true God making us just.

12-5

Heb. 12:25-29

²⁵See that you do not refuse him who is speaking. For if they did not escape when they refused him who warned them on earth, much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven.

²⁶His voice then shook the earth; but now he has promised, “Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven.” ²⁷This phrase, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of what is shaken, as of what has been made, in order that what cannot be shaken may remain. ²⁸Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken, and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; ²⁹for our God is a consuming fire.

713. – After describing the condition of both testaments, the Apostle now argues from this description and does two things: first, he argues; secondly, he draws the conclusion (v. 28). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he prefaces his intention; secondly, he argues to his conclusion (v. 25b).

714. – He says, therefore: Thus we have said that the blood of Christ speaks more graciously than the blood of Abel. **See to it, therefore, that you do not refuse**, i.e., despise, **him that is speaking**, i.e., fulfill what he says. But the blood of Christ says two things to us: first, it speaks by reminding us of His favor, by which He remitted our sins. Therefore, one who sins again, despises the one speaking. Furthermore, He speaks by exhorting us to imitate Him: ‘Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example to follow in his footsteps’ (1 Pt 2:2). Therefore, one who does not take up His cross to follow, refuses the one speaking: ‘Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts’ (Ps. 94:8); ‘This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased’ (Mt. 17:5).

715. – Then when he says, **For if they escaped not, much more shall not we**, he argues by comparing the speaking of the Old Testament to that of the New; and this in regard to two things: first, as to the manner of speaking; secondly, as to the efficacy of the speaking.

716. – The manner of speaking, because He spoke upon earth; but here He speaks from heaven. Hence, he says, **If they**, namely, the ancient fathers, **refused him who warned them on earth**, namely, Christ: ‘For I myself that spoke, behold I am here’ (Is. 52:6), namely, by angels or prophets: ‘God who a sundry times and in divers manners spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets’ (Heb. 1:1); or **him**, i.e., the angel through whom the Law was given to Moses: ‘Ordained by angels’ (Gal. 3:19); ‘For if the word spoken by angels became steadfast’ (Heb. 2:2): ‘This is Moses who was in the church in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on mount Sinai, and with our fathers’ (Ac. 7:38) did not escape the vengeance of the divine law: ‘The way to escape shall fail them’ (Jb. 11:20): ‘Every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense’ (Heb. 2:2).

717. – The conclusion follows by arguing from the lesser case: If those who refused the one speaking upon earth did not escape, **much less shall we escape if we reject him who warns from heaven;** because we shall not be able to escape. For the one who speaks to us in the New Testament is Christ already in heaven: ‘The Lord Jesus, after he spoke to them, was taken up into heaven’ (Mk 16:19); ‘From heaven he made you to hear his voice that he might teach you’ (Dt. 4:36). Therefore, the doctrine of the Old Testament is the doctrine of Christ speaking on earth for two reasons: because there under the figure of earthly things He spoke of heavenly things; furthermore, He promised earthly things there. But the doctrine of the New Testament is that of Christ speaking from heaven, because we turn earthly things into signs of heavenly things by a mystical interpretation. Likewise, heavenly things are promised in it: ‘For your reward is great in heaven’ (Mt. 5:12); ‘If I speak to you of earthly things and you do not believe; how will you believe, if I speak to you of heavenly things?’ (Jn. 3:12).

718. – Then he compares the two testaments in regard to the efficacy of the speaking. As to the efficacy of the Old Testament’s speaking he says, **His voice then shook the earth**, i.e., wrought many changes on earth, namely, by the signs in Egypt, by the division of the sea, by the earthquake in the desert: ‘The earth was moved: and the heavens dropped at the presence of the God of Sinai, at the presence of the God of Israel’ (Ps. 67:10). This signified that all that speaking moved their hearts by earthly promises.

719. – Then when he says, **but now he has promised**, he deals with the efficacy of the New Testament and proves it by the authority of a prophet, and then explains it.

720. – That authority is found in Hag (2:7) but not according to our version; for we have: ‘Yet one little while, and I will move the heaven and the earth, and the sea, and the dry land.’ But the Apostle says, **Yet once more I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven**. But the sense is the same. And it is clear that those words were uttered near the end of the time of the Old Testament, namely, after the return from captivity; at which time nothing remained of the Old Testament. Therefore, it is clear that what was promised was to be fulfilled in the New Testament, namely, the new heaven and the new earth: ‘Behold, I create new heavens and a new earth’ (Is. 65:17). This creation was shown to John in the spirit: ‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev. 21:1). For in that new creation the heavens will be moved. But heaven can be taken in two senses: in one way for the ethereal heaven and that will be cleansed by the fire of the final conflagration, as has been stated above. In another way, the starry heaven, which will not be cleansed, but will be changed to a new state: for it will cease its motion and the clarity of its parts will be increased, because ‘The light of the moon will be as the light of the sun, and the light of the sun seven times brighter’ (Is. 30:26). He says, therefore, **but now**, i.e., through the New Testament, **he promises, saying, Yet once more and I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven**.

721. – Then when he says, **This phrase, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of what is shaken**, he explains the words of the prophecy; and he lays great stress on the phrase, **Yet once more**. For in saying, **yet**, he shows that they are moveable; but in saying, **once more**, he indicates that they are to be changed from the state of movability and corruptibility to a state of incorruption and immutability. For if they were to remain in a state of changeableness after that change, he would not have said, **once more**, but ‘again and again.’ This is against Origen who believed that the world will be renewed an infinitude of time and be recovered. He says, therefore: and in that he says, ‘Yet once more,’ he indicates the removal of what is shaken, to a state of immovableness. And as though someone were asking whether God can do this, he adds, **as of what has been made**. For all things made are subject to God’s power; hence, just as God made them from nothing, so He can change them as He wills. And this **in order that what cannot be shaken may remain**, i.e., that are immovable, i.e., that they remain immovable as to their essences, but changed as to certain accidental dispositions: ‘As a vesture you will change them, and they shall be changed’ (Ps. 101:28). This has been explained in chap. 1. From all this it is clear that although the things of the Old Testament were moved, it was not to a state of incorruption and immutability; but this is done only in the New, to signify that the promises of the Old Testament were changeable, but not those of the New.

722. – Then when he says, **Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, he reaches the main conclusion. For after commending in many ways the grace and benefits conferred and to be conferred upon us by Christ, his main desire is to induce us to serve Him. he concludes that inasmuch as immovable things are promised in the New Testament, we should serve Christ Who promised them, in fear and reverence. And that is the principal conclusion.

723. – Hence, he first recalls the favor granted, saying, **therefore**, inasmuch as God promises a heaven and an immovable earth, by which are signified the immovable and eternal good things to come, **let us be grateful**, i.e., give thanks: ‘Thanks be to God for his unspeakable gift’ (2 Cor. 9:15). And **receive**, because we receive, if not the reality, yet in the hope of the promise, **a kingdom that cannot be shaken**: ‘Your kingdom is a kingdom of all ages’ (Ps. 144:13); ‘Of his kingdom there will be no end’ (Lk. 1:33). Or by, **receiving**, is understood the gift of grace, which we receive in the present as a pledge of future glory. Therefore, he says: **Therefore receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken**, i.e., of future glory, which is promised to us: ‘Fear not, little flock, because it has pleased your Father to give you a kingdom’ (Lk. 12:32). For what we hope for, we have, namely, the grace we have received as a beginning of glory. For if nature is not lacking in what is necessary, much less God. Therefore, He gives us the hope of that kingdom, and consequently, the grace, by which we may arrive at it: ‘We have access by faith into grace’ (Rom. 5:2); ‘The Lord will give grace and glory’ (Ps. 83:12).

724. – He continues thus: **and so let us offer to God acceptable worship**. Here he comes to the service as something required of us. For natural reason dictates that we are obligated to show reverence and honor

to anyone from whom we receive many favors; therefore, much more to God, Who has given us the greatest things and has promised us an infinitude of them. Hence, he says that by that grace, namely, given and to be given to us, **let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe**. For it is not enough merely to serve God, which can be done by outward action; we must also please Him by a right intention and by love: ‘He pleased God and was beloved’ (Wis. 4:10); ‘I will please the Lord in the land of the living’ (Ps. 114:9). But God is especially served by an inward service: ‘Let us serve him in holiness and justice’ (Lk. 1:74). Now by reason of creation God is called Lord, but by reason of regeneration, Father. But to a Lord fear is owed, and to a Father love and reverence: ‘The son honors the father, and the servant fears his lord. If I am your father, where is my honor; and if I am your Lord, where is my fear’ (Mal. 1:6). Therefore, the Lord should be served in fear and in reverence: ‘Serve the Lord in fear; and rejoice unto him with trembling’ (Ps. 2:11).

725. – That we should serve God in that manner he proves by the authority of Deuteronomy (4:24): **For our God is a consuming fire**. When God is said to be a fire, it does not mean that He is something corporeal, but it is because intelligible things are designated by sense-perceptible things, among which fire has greater nobility and clarity; and greater activity; and a higher natural place; and is more cleansing and more consuming. Therefore, God is especially called fire on account of His clarity, because He inhabits light inaccessible (1 Tim. 6:16), and because He is supremely active: ‘You have worked all our works in us’ (Is. 26:12), and He is in a loftier place: ‘The Lord is high above all nations; and his glory above the heavens’ (Ps. 112:4). Furthermore, he cleanses and as it were, consumes sins; hence, he says that **he is a consuming fire**: ‘He is like a refining fire’ (Mal. 3:2); and he continues: ‘And he shall purify the sons of Levi’; ‘making purgation of sins’ (Heb. 1:3). He also consumes sinners by punishing: ‘But a certain dread in expectation of judgement and the rage of a fire that shall consume the adversaries’ (Heb. 10:27). Therefore, because such things are promised to us: ‘And the light of Israel shall be as a fire, and the Holy One thereof as a flame’ (Is. 10:17); ‘A fire shall go before them and shall burn up enemies round about’ (Ps. 96:3), we should strive to serve and please God

13-1

Heb. 13:1-8

¹Let brotherly love continue. ²Do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers, for thereby some have entertained angels unawares. ³Remember those who are in prison, as though in prison with them; and those who are ill-treated, since you also are in the body. ⁴Let marriage be held in honor among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for God will judge the immoral and adulterous. ⁵Keep your life free from love of money, and be content with what you have; for he has said, "I will never fail you nor forsake you." ⁶Hence we can confidently say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me?" ⁷Remember your leaders, those who spoke to you the word of God; consider the outcome of their life, and imitate their faith. ⁸Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever.

726. – Having instructed them how to bear with evil, the Apostle now tells them how to act in doing good. Hence, according to a Gloss he is beginning his moral instruction after commending and urging them to imitate him. in regard to this he does two things: first, he urges them to good; secondly, he prays for them (v. 20). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows them how to do good to their neighbor; secondly, to themselves (v. 4); thirdly, to prelates (v. 7).

727. – He says, therefore: Thus, we have said that an immovable kingdom has been promised to us. If we would enter it, we must have charity: **Let brotherly love continue**: 'He that does not love his brother whom he sees, how can he love God whom he does not see' (1 Jn. 4:20); 'Honor one another; love the brotherhood' (1 Pt 2:17). But because charity is not idle, as Gregory says, he urges them to acts of charity: 'Let us love not in tongue but in deed and in truth' (1 Jn. 3:18). Hence, he says that we should show charity to travelers by hospitality, to those in bands by compassion, to the poor by coming to their aid. In regard to the first he says, **do not neglect to show hospitality to strangers**.

728. – He says, **do not neglect**, because formerly, when they were prosperous, they were very hospitable; but now that they were poor and could not do so much, he exhorts them to continue to do as much as possible: 'Pursue hospitality' (Rom. 12:13). He makes special mention of hospitality, because a person who receives travelers does three acts of charity at once, because he receives and feeds and gives them drink: 'Using hospitality one towards another without murmuring' (1 Pt 4:9). He gives the reason when he says, **for thereby some have entertained angels unawares**, as in the case of Abraham and Lot (Gen. 18 & 19). Another version reads: 'By this, as unawares, they entertained angels,' because they did not believe that they were angels. This was also true in the beginning; hence, Abraham adored them, thinking that they were holy men sent from God. But he adored them with adoration called *dulia*, which is shown to saints; and he offered them food, as though they were men. But after he understood that they were

angels in whom God was speaking, he spoke to them as to God, saying: ‘This is not befitting you who judge all the earth’ (Gen. 18:25); and Lot in like manner.

729. – In regard to the second he says, **Remember them that are in prison**, i.e., those who for the love of God were sent to prison. Remember them by visiting and redeeming, **as though in prison with them**: ‘I was in prison and you visited me’ (Mt. 25:36). Against this Isaiah (14:27) says: ‘I opened not the prison to his prisoners.’ But they did this sometimes, as is clear from Hebrews (10:34). But it particularly pertains to a work of mercy to regard another’s suffering as one’s own.

730. – In regard to the third he says, and **those that are ill-treated** [labor] either with bodily labor: ‘You shall eat the labors of your hands’ (Ps. 127:2) or with spiritual solicitude: The farmer that labors must first partake of the fruits’ (2 Tim. 2:6); or in enduring evils: ‘I have perceived that in these also there was labor, and vexation of spirit’ (Ec 1:17). In short, our whole life is a labor: ‘Man is born to labor as a bird to fly’ (Jb. 5:7). Remember, **since you are also in the body**, by which you have experienced what those who labor need: ‘Judge of the disposition of your neighbor by yourself’ (Sir. 31:18); ‘All things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you also to them’ (Mt. 7:12).

731. – Then (v. 4) he urges them to do good to themselves. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives an admonition against the concupiscences of carnal pleasures; secondly, against coveting external things (v. 5).

732. – It should be noted that sin in regard to sex occurs in two ways: in one way by the illicit union of one married person with another; as to this he says, **Let marriage be held in honor among all** who would not be continent: not fornication. It is called honorable, when it takes place with all the circumstances owed to marriage. This shows that the marriage act can exist without sin; which is against certain heretics: ‘If a virgin marry, she does not sin’ (1 Cor. 7:28). Hence, to show that the marriage act is good, the Lord performed His first sign during a marriage and ennobled marriage by His bodily presence and willed to be born of a married woman. In another way by violating the marriage bed, as when a husband approaches another man’s wife, or a woman another’s husband. In regard to this he says, **and the marriage bed undefiled**: ‘So that now they neither keep life, nor marriage undefiled, but one kills another through envy, or grieves him by adultery’ (Wis. 14:24); ‘Happy is the barren, and the undefiled that has not known bed in sin; she shall have fruit in the visitation of holy souls’ (Wis. 3:13).

733. – Then the Apostle adds the reason when he says: **for fornicators and adulterers God will judge**. In this he escapes the error of those who say that God neither punishes nor is concerned about carnal sins: ‘Let no man deceive you with vain words. For because of these things (namely, because of carnal sins) the anger of God comes upon the children of unbelief’ (Eph. 5:6). Therefore, he says, **fornicators**, on

account of which he said, **marriage honorable**; and **adulterers** on account of which he said, **and the bed undefiled**; **God will judge**, i.e., condemn: 'No fornicator or unclean or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) has inheritance in the kingdom of God and of Christ' (Eph. 5:5).

734. – Then (v. 5) he forbids them to covet external goods, in regard to which one might sin in two ways: in one way by being niggardly; in another way by being covetous. For liberality is a virtue which inclines one to the happy medium between giving and retaining money. As to the first, i.e., niggardliness, he says: **Keep your life from love of money** [covetousness]. For a covetous person is tenacious; hence, Sirach (10:9) says: 'Nothing is more wicked than the covetous man.' As to the second he says, **and be content with what you have**. Those who desire to have more than they have, wish to heap up other things, not being content with what they have: 'Having food and clothing, with these we are content' (1 Tim. 6:8). Or in saying, let your life be free of covetousness, he is forbidding avarice in regard to covetousness and niggardliness; but in saying, be content with what you have, he is excluding the root of avarice, namely, anxiety: 'Be not anxious' (Mt. 6:31). For men are not forbidden to be solicitous about things needed for the future, but care and anxiety should not preoccupy their mind. For one who is so preoccupied with anxiety about the future is 'solicitous of the morrow.'

735. – Then (v. 5b) he gives the reason for this advice, and it is the reason why we should not be excessively anxious, but should do what lies in our power with trust in God's help: for he has said (Jos. 1:5): 'I will not leave you, without giving you what you need; neither will I forsake you, lest you perish from hunger'; 'I have not seen the just forsaken, not his seed seeking bread' (Ps. 36:25). Or I will not forsake you without freeing you from evil. This causes confidence in the heart so that **we can confidently say**, 'I will deal confidently and will not fear' (Is. 12:2).

736. – And what shall we say? The words of Ps. 117 (v. 6): 'The Lord is my helper, I will not be afraid; what can man do to me.' He is a helper inasmuch as He delivers from evil: 'A helper in troubles, which have found us exceedingly' (Ps. 45:2); therefore, I will not fear what man shall do to me, i.e., any carnal adversary: 'Who are you to be afraid of a mortal man?' (Is. 51:12); or the devil who is called a man overcome by a man, as Scipio was called African, because he was defeated in Africa: 'A hostile man has done this' (Mt. 13:28).

737. – Then (v. 7) he shows they should do good to their prelates. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows how they should act in regard to their dead prelates, namely, follow their example; secondly, in regard to those living, namely, obey them (v. 17). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows how they should follow the teachings of the good; secondly, how to avoid the doctrine of evil (v. 9).

738. – He says, therefore: **Remember your leaders [prelates], those who spoke to you the word of God**, i.e., the apostles, who have preached to you: ‘Look unto Abraham, your father, and to Sarah that bore you’ (Is. 51:2). But they not only preached by word, but showed what to do by action: ‘The Lord confirming the word with signs that followed’ (Mk 16:20). Remember not only their words, but look to their end: ‘Remember the works of the fathers which they have done in their generations: and you shall receive great glory and an everlasting name’ (1 Macc. 2:51); ‘Take, my brethren, for an example of suffering evil, of labor and patience, the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord (Jas. 5:10). But imitate not only **the outcome of their life**, so as to suffer patiently for Christ, but also their manner of life: for a good life leads to a good death: Whose faith follow and do not depart from it.

739. – He continues: **Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today: and the same forever**. According to a Gloss this is the way this section is introduced. For he had said before, I will not leave you or forsake you. But they could say: The one to whom this was said can well trust in God’s help, but not we to whom it was not spoken. But the Apostle rejects this, saying that Christ remains forever; hence, he says, **Jesus Christ, yesterday, and today: and the same forever**. Or it can be referred to what he had just said, namely, that they should imitate the apostles. They could say that the case is not the same, because they were instructed by Christ and served Him, but we not so. Therefore, the Apostle says that Christ remains; hence, he says that we should serve Him. And so he says, **Jesus Christ, yesterday**, namely, in the time of the first apostles, **and today**, namely, in their time, **and the same forever**: ‘I am with you all days even to the consummation of the world’ (Mt. 28:20); ‘Says the Lord, who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty’ (Rev. 1:8); ‘But you are always the selfsame, and your years shall not fail’ (Ps. 101:28). In these words he shows the eternity of Christ.

13-2

Heb. 13:9-16

⁹**Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents.** ¹⁰**We have an altar from which those who serve the tent have no right to eat.** ¹¹**For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin are burned outside the camp.** ¹²**So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood.** ¹³**Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp and bear the abuse he endured.** ¹⁴**For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.** ¹⁵**Through him then let us continually offer up a sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name.** ¹⁶**Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have, for such sacrifices are pleasing to God.**

740. – After exhorting them to follow the example and manner of life of those who have departed, the Apostle now warns them to continue in their teaching. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the warning; secondly, the reason (v. 10). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he warns them in general; secondly, he explains the warning (v. 9b).

741. – He says, therefore: **Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings.** As if to say: Thus we have said that you should imitate the faith of the apostles. Therefore, do not be led away from their teaching to any other doctrine. Here it should be noted that since truth consists in the mean, which is one, many false statements can be opposed to one truth, just as there are many extremes to one middle. Therefore, the doctrine of faith is one, because only one line can be drawn between two points. But all other doctrines are manifold, because there are many deviations from what is straight. Hence, he says, **by diverse doctrines**, i.e., divided: ‘Their heart is divided: now they shall perish’ (Hos 10:2). These are the doctrines about which he said (1 Tim. 4:1): ‘Doctrines of devils, speaking lies in hypocrisy.’ Furthermore, they are strange, i.e., straying from the Catholic faith. But such doctrines must not be supported by us, because we are not strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens of the saints, and the domestics of God’ (Eph. 2:19).

742. – Then when he says, **For it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace**, he explains in detail which are various and strange doctrines. Here it should be noted that in the early Church there was one error rampant, namely, that it was necessary for salvation to observe the ceremonies of the Law, which consisted especially in partaking of certain foods, such as the paschal lamb (Ex. 12) and in abstaining from certain foods, as is clear from Leviticus (chap. 12) and from other passages. Another error was that of the Nicolaitans, that it was lawful to use bodily pleasures indiscriminately. These words can be applied to both these errors, but more properly to the first. He says, therefore, **Be not led away from the truth by**

diverse and strange doctrines: ‘Be not easily moved from your sense’ (2 Th. 2:2); ‘I wonder that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ, unto another gospel’ (Gal. 1:6). For God requires our heart of us: ‘My son, give me your heart’ (Pr. 23:26); therefore, **it is well that the heart be strengthened with grace.** For it should be firm and stable; against which Ps. 39 (v. 13) says: ‘My heart has forsaken me.’ But it is not strengthened with bodily foods, but with sanctifying grace: ‘Justified freely by his grace’ (Rom. 3:24) and with the redemption which is in Christ Jesus. Therefore, he says, **not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents:** ‘The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit’ (Rom. 14:17). Therefore, the heart is not established with moderate or superfluous use of food, but rather with God’s grace: ‘His heart is ready to hope in the Lord, his heart is strengthened he shall not be moved until he look over his enemies’ (Ps. 111:8). But hope is an anchor stabilizing the heart: ‘We have fled for refuge to hold fast the hope set before us, which we have as an anchor of the soul, sure and firm’ (Heb. 6:18). And he says, **which have not benefited their adherents,** i.e., hope in them, because those who use them for bodily needs profit with bodily health, but those who put their entire interest in them, walk in them. These are the ones whom they do not profit unto the salvation either of soul or body: ‘Shall the holy flesh take away from you your crimes, in which you have boasted?’ (Jer. 11:15).

743. – Then when he says, **We have an altar, from which they have no power to eat who serve the tabernacle,** he gives the reason, and it is quite subtle. For, as it is stated in Leviticus (chap. 16), on the tenth day of the seventh month the high priest entered with the blood of a heifer and a goat into the holies because of his own ignorance, and burned their bodies outside the camp. And because it was the priest’s offering, the flesh was not eaten. For whatever they offered for the sin of the priests they did not eat, but burned outside the camp. From that figure the Apostle draws a mystery. For the blood of Christ was prefigured by the blood, as was explained in chapter 9. The heifer and the goat prefigured Christ, because the heifer was the priest’s offering and the goat was immolated for sin. This prefigured that Christ would be immolated for sin: not for His own but for the people’s. Therefore, the immolated heifer and goat is Christ, the Priest, offering Himself for our sins. Therefore, the blood of Christ was brought into the holies and the flesh burned outside the camp. Two things were thereby signified: one, that Christ was immolated in the city by the tongues of the Jews; hence Mark says that He was crucified at the third hour, although He was raised on the Cross at the sixth hour. The other is that by virtue of His Passion Christ brings us within the heavenly holies to the Father. But the fact that the bodies were burned outside the camp, as to our Head, signifies that Christ would suffer outside the gate; but as to us, who are the members, it signifies that Christ is immolated for those who are outside the camp of ceremonies of the Law and of the external senses. For those within the camp did not partake of that flesh. This, therefore, is the figure which the Apostle proposes: first, therefore, he shows what is signified; secondly, he presents the figure (v. 11); thirdly, he draws the conclusion (v. 13).

744. – He says, therefore: Let us strengthen our hearts not with food, but with grace; for we cannot do otherwise, because **we have an altar, from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.** That altar is the Cross of Christ, on which He was immolated; or Christ Himself in Whom and by Whom we offer our prayers. This is the golden altar spoken of in Rev (chap. 8). Of that altar, therefore, they have no right to eat, i.e., to receive the fruit of Christ's passion and to be incorporated into Him as head, who serve the tabernacle of the ceremonies of the Law: 'If you be circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing' (Gal. 5:2). Or they serve the tabernacle of the body, who pursue carnal pleasures: 'Make not provision for the flesh in its concupiscences' (Rom. 13:14). For such persons received no profit: 'He that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks judgement to himself' (1 Cor. 11:29). But the body is called a tabernacle, because we dwell in it as in a war against enemies and it remains a short while: 'The laying away of my tabernacle is at hand' (2 Pt. 1:14). Therefore, it should not be served.

745. – Then (v. 11) he continues the figure: first, the figure of the Old Testament; secondly, the figure of the New Testament (v. 12).

746. – In regard to the first he says: **For the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest are burned outside the camp.** This can be interpreted in two ways: one way thus: **the bodies of those animals**, namely, of the heifer and goat, **are burned outside the camp**, their blood being brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for the sin of the priest and of the multitude. In another way, so that by those beasts Christ or His saints are understood. For Christ and His members were prefigured by all the sacrifices of the Old Testament. Therefore, the body of Christ, Whose blood was brought into the heavenly holies for the sin of the whole world, suffered by fire on the altar of the Cross, and was burned outside the camp, i.e., outside the common society of men, with the fire of charity, with fasts, prayers, and other works of mercy. For these the blood of Christ was efficaciously brought into the holies. The first interpretation is literal.

747. – Wherefore, **Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered outside the gate.** He adapts what was prefigured in the New Testament to the figure of the Old Testament, so that there might be agreement between them. Hence he says, Wherefore, Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered outside the gate. This is clear.

748. – Then when he says, **Therefore let us go forth to him**, he draws two conclusions. In regard to the first he says: Therefore, we have said that we have an altar outside the camp. Hence, we must do two things: namely, go to it and sacrifice upon it.

749. – He tells how to go when he says that Jesus Christ suffered and bore the reproach of His passion outside the gate; therefore, **let us go forth to him outside the camp**, i.e., outside the general community

of carnal things, or outside the observances of the Law, or outside the senses of the body, **bearing abuse for him**, i.e., for Christ, i.e., the signs of Christ's passion by which Christ became a disgrace among men and offscouring of people: 'My heart has expected reproach and misery' (Ps. 68:21). Or **bearing abuse for him**, i.e., let us reject the ceremonies of the Law, now that that truth has come, on account of which we are a reproach among the Jews, i.e., on account of the signs of penance, which are reproved by carnal men: 'Esteeming the reproach greater riches than the treasures of the Egyptians' (Heb. 11:26). For just as Christ was accused of undermining the Law, so the apostles were reproached for preaching that the ceremonies of the Law should not be observed: 'And I brethren, if I yet preach the circumcision, why do I yet suffer persecution' (Gal. 5:11).

750. – He adds the reason when he says: **For here we have no lasting city, but we seek one that is to come**. For a man willingly remains in his own place. For our end is not in the things of the Law or in temporal things: 'Our end is Christ unto the salvation of all who believe' (Rom. 10:4). Therefore, we have not here a lasting city, but where Christ is. Therefore, let us go to Him: 'If you have risen with Christ, seek the things that are above, where Christ is sitting on the right hand of God' (Col. 3:1); 'Look upon Sion, the city of our solemnity' (Is. 33:20); 'He looked for a city that has foundations; whose builder and maker is God' (supra 11:10). They also seek a better city, i.e., the heavenly one. For we strive to be transferred to it as to our place and altar. Therefore, let us go to it.

751. – Then when he says, **By him them let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God**, he presents the second conclusion, namely, that we should sacrifice upon the altar and offer certain kinds of sacrifice. For there are two kinds of sacrifice that we should offer upon Christ's altar, namely, devotion to God and mercy towards our neighbor.

752. – In regard to the first he says that the sacrifices of the Law are not to be offered: 'Sacrifice and oblation you did not desire' (Ps. 59:7); therefore, by him, i.e., by Christ, let us offer the sacrifice of praise: 'A sacrifice of praise will honor me' (Ps. 49:25). But that sacrifice of praise is called the fruit of our lips, i.e., confession with the mouth. For God is praised better by the mouth than by the killing of animals; hence he says, **the fruit of lips that acknowledge his name**, for this is necessary: 'With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation' (Rom. 10:10); 'We will render the calves of our lips' (Hos 14:3); 'I created the fruit of the lips' (Is. 57:19). But this sacrifice should be offered always, i.e., continually, as there was a continual sacrifice during the Law, as it says in Numbers (chap. 28): 'I will bless the Lord at all times: his praise shall be always in my mouth' (Ps. 33:2).

753. – He mentions another sacrifice, when he says, **Do not neglect to do good and to share what you have**. As if to say: You formerly performed works of mercy; but now at least with the heart, if you cannot in deed. Therefore, he says, **Do not neglect to do good**, be liberal, in regard to the things you give: 'In doing good, let us not fail' (Gal. 6:9); 'Do good to the humble, and give not to the ungodly' (Sir. 12:6).

Do not forget **to share what you have**, i.e., the things you have saved: ‘All they that believed were together, and had all things in common’ (Ac. 2:44); ‘Communicating to the necessities of the saints’ (Rom. 12:13). Or **share**, namely, by charity, through which all things are common.

754. – But why should we share that double benefit is shown when he says: **for such sacrifices are pleasing to God**, i.e., we can merit God by such sacrifices: ‘I am your protector and your reward exceeding great’ (Gen. 15:1); ‘Then you shall accept the sacrifice of justice, oblations and whole burnt offerings’ (Ps. 50:21); ‘They shall worship him with sacrifices and offerings; and they shall make vows to the Lord and perform them’ (Is. 19:21).

13-3

Heb. 13:17-25

¹⁷Obey your leaders and submit to them; for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give account. Let them do this joyfully, and not sadly, for that would be of no advantage to you. ¹⁸Pray for us, for we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things. ¹⁹I urge you the more earnestly to do this in order that I may be restored to you the sooner. ²⁰Now may the God of peace who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, ²¹equip you with everything good that you may do his will, working in you that which is pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. ²²I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation, for I have written to you briefly. ²³You should understand that our brother Timothy has been released, with whom I shall see you if he comes soon. ²⁴Greet all your leaders and all the saints. Those who come from Italy send you greetings. ²⁵Grace be with all of you. Amen.

755. – After showing them how to act in regard to their dead prelates, namely, by continuing in their teachings, the Apostle now shows how to act toward living prelates: first, how to act in regard to the others; secondly, in regard to Paul himself (v. 18).

756. – He says, therefore, **Obey your leaders** [prelates]. Here it should be noted that there are two things we owe our prelates, namely, obedience to their precepts; hence, he says, obey: ‘Obedience is better than victims’ (1 Sam 15:22), and reverence, so that we honor them as fathers and subject ourselves to their discipline. Therefore, he says, **and be subject to them**: ‘Be subject to every human creature’ (1 Pt 2:13); ‘He that resists the power, resists God’s ordinance’ (Rom. 13:2).

757. – He states the reason for subjecting themselves when he says, **for they are keeping watch over your souls, as men who will have to give an account**. For the reason why we should obey and subject ourselves to our prelates is that the labor lies upon them and danger threatens them. Hence, in regard to the labor of anxiety which lies on them in ruling their subjects he says that they keep watch, i.e., are perfectly vigilant: ‘He that rules, with carefulness’ (Rom. 12:8). For the duty imposed on prelates is to watch over the flock entrusted to them; hence, it says in Luke (2:8): ‘There were shepherds,’ by which prelates are designated, ‘watching and keeping the night watches over their flocks,’ because while men sleep, the enemy comes and oversows cockle among the wheat (Mt. 13:25).

758. – As to the danger threatening them he says, **as men who will have to give an account**. For this is the greatest danger, that a man must render an account for the deeds of others, even though he is not sufficient for his own: ‘Keep this man: and if he shall slip away, your life shall be for his life’ (1 Kg

20:39). For prelates will render an account of those committed to them, when on the day of judgement, they will be asked: 'Where is the flock that is given you, your beautiful cattle? What will you say in your heart? For you taught them against you (by saying good things are doing evil) you instructed them against your head by your bad example' (Jer. 13:20); 'Prelates should know that they are worthy of as many deaths as the many examples of damnation they pass on' (Gregory); 'My son, if you be surety for your friend, you have engaged fast your hand to a stranger. You are ensnared with the words of your mouth and caught with your own words. Do, therefore, my son, what I say and deliver yourself, because you are fallen into the hands of your neighbor. Run about, make haste, stir up your friend: (Pr. 6:1). For a prelate obliges himself to Christ for his subjects by his hand, (i.e., by the example of good works) and by his mouth (i.e., by preaching). But Christ is called a stranger, as Bernard says, because 'He is a friend during the espousals, but a stranger in requiring an account.

759. – But it seems that a person must render an account for himself only: 'All of us must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ, that everyone may receive the proper things of the body' (2 Cor. 5:10). I answer that everyone will give an account mainly for his own deeds, but he will give an account for others to the extent that his acts pertain to others. But the acts of prelates pertain to others according to Ezekiel (3:17); 'Son of man, I have made you a watchman to the house of Israel; and you shall hear the word from out of my mouth and shall tell it to them.' Then he continues that if the prelate, who is understood by the name of the watchman, has not told it to the wicked, the wicked man will, of course, die in his sin, but his blood will be required at the hand of the watchman.

760. – Therefore, if he watches, as being to render an account for us, we should do what lies in our power, namely, obey and not rebel. **Let them do this joyfully and not sadly**, i.e., that they undergo danger and labor for us with joy and not with grief, because a good prelate gets much joy when he sees his subjects acting well: for then his work is not in vain: 'I have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in truth' (1 Jn. 3:4); 'Therefore, my dearly beloved brethren, and most desired, my joy and my crown: so stand fast in the Lord, my dearly beloved' (Phil 4:1). For they groan in your rebellion: 'My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you' (Gal. 4:19); 'Who will give water to my head and a fountain of tears to my eyes?' (Jer. 9:1). They also groan with pity, when on account of your rebellion they do not received the fruit of their labors, which is the fruit of eternal inheritance: 'Behold, they that see shall cry without, the angels of peace shall weep bitterly' (Is. 33:7).

761. – He adds the reason why we should obey them, **for that would be of no advantage to you**, that they should groan for us because of our rebellion, for God will take revenge for them. 'They provoked to wrath and afflicted the spirit of the Holy One. And he was turned to be their enemy: and he fought against them' (Is. 63:10).

But note that he says, **it is of no advantage [expedient] to you**, and not ‘it is not expedient to them.’ For to groan over the sins of their subjects is expedient for prelates. This is the way Samuel wept over Saul’s rejection (1 Sam. 15:35).

762. – Then he says, **pray for us**. Thus does the Apostle tell them how they should act in regard to him: for he asks that they pray for him. The same is had in Romans (15:30): ‘I beseech you, therefore, brethren, through our Lord Jesus Christ and by the charity of the Holy Spirit, that you help me in your prayers for me to God,’ because, as a Gloss says: ‘It is impossible,’ i.e., very difficult, ‘for the prayers of many not to be heard’; ‘If two of you shall consent upon the earth, concerning anything whatsoever they shall ask, it shall be done to them by my Father in Heaven’ (Mt. 18:19). Therefore, in asking that they pray for him the Apostle, who was certain that he was acceptable to God, was striking at the pride of those who scorned asking prayers of others, as a Gloss says.

763. – He gives the reason for this request when he says, **we are sure that we have a clear conscience**. This can be taken in two ways: first, in relation to those whose prayers he is asking, because, since the Apostle did not preach to the Jews but only to the Gentiles, it does not seem that he was acceptable to them. Hence, they could excuse themselves from granting his request. Therefore he says, as though excusing himself, that he is not aware of anything but seeking their good; hence, he says, **we are sure that we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things**. In this we are given to understand that he intends to help them as much as he is able. But because a good conscience is from God alone, he attributes it to the confidence he has in God. Or it can be referred to the Apostle himself, because, since he would not preach to the Jews, he did not seem worthy of their prayers: for the Lord would not hear them, since he seemed to be an enemy of their faith, as it says in Jeremiah (7:16): ‘Do not pray for this people, not take to you praise and supplication for them: and do not withstand me: for I will not hear you.’ Therefore, the Apostle removes this, saying: **Pray for us**, because we have no consciousness of any sin or evil deed, but we are sure that we have a clear conscience. He does not say, ‘I am certain,’ because who understands sins? ‘A man does not know whether he is worthy of love or hatred’ (Ec. 9:1); ‘I am not conscious of anything, but I am not thereby justified’ (1 Cor. 4:4). Therefore, **we have a clear conscience, desiring to act honorably in all things**, therefore your prayers should benefit me.

764. – Then (v. 19) he gives another reason why they should pray for him, namely, because this will benefit them. Therefore, **I urge you the more earnestly to do this**, i.e., to pray, because it will profit you: ‘I long to see you that I may impart to you some spiritual grace’ (Rom. 1:11). But the Apostle who thus has recourse to prayer for all his deeds, suggests to us that all his ways and deeds were ordained by him according to God’s plan: ‘The clouds spread their light, which go round about, whithersoever the will

of him that governs them shall lead them' (Jb. 37:11). For by the clouds are understood preachers and apostles: 'Who are these that fly as clouds?' (Is. 60:8).

765. – Then (v. 20) the Apostle prays for them. First, he prays; secondly, he excuses himself by asking something of them (v. 22).

766. – In regard to the first he describes the One Whom he seeks, saying **the God peace**. For God's proper effect is to make peace, because 'he is not a God of dissension but of peace' (1 Cor. 14:33) and 'have peace: and the God of peace and love shall be with you' (2 Cor. 13:11). For peace is nothing more than unity of affections, which God alone can make one, because hearts are united by charity, which is from God alone. For God knows how to gather and unite, because God is love, which is the bond of perfection. Hence, 'he makes men of one manner to dwell in a house' (Ps. 67:7). For man made peace between himself and God through the ministry of Christ.

767. – Hence, he says, **who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep**. But sometimes Christ is said to have been raised up by the Father's power: 'If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus Christ from the dead' (Rom. 8:11); and sometimes He is said to have raised Himself: 'I have slept and taken my rest: and I have risen up' (Ps. 3:6). But these statements are not contrary, because He rose by God's power, which is one in the Father and Son and Holy Spirit. Therefore, he brought him again from the dead, i.e., from the tomb, which is the place of the dead: 'As Christ rose from the dead by the glory of the Father, so we also shall walk in the newness of life' (Rom. 6:4). But Christ is called the great shepherd of the sheep, i.e., of the faithful and the humble: 'I am the good shepherd, and I know mine, and mine know me' (Jn. 10:14); for the sheep are they who obey God: 'And my sheep hear my voice' (Jn. 10:27). But he calls him the great shepherd, because all others are His vicars, for He feeds His own sheep, but the others feed Christ's sheep: 'Feed my sheep' (Jn. 21:17); 'When the prince of pastors shall appear, you shall receive a never fading crown of glory' (1 Pt 5:4).

768. – He brought Him out **by the blood of the eternal covenant**, i.e., in virtue of the blood of Christ by Whom is confirmed the New Covenant, in which eternal things are promised, but not in the Old. For Christ calls His blood the blood of the New Covenant; but the Apostle says, **of the everlasting covenant**. Therefore, both are mentioned in the words of the consecration of the Blood. But Christ by His passion merited the glory of His resurrection for Himself and for us; hence, he says, **who brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus. . . by the blood of the eternal covenant**: 'He humbled himself, being made obedient unto death' (Phil 2:8); 'By the blood of your testament you have sent forth your prisoners out of the pit, wherein is no water' (Zech 9:11).

769. – Then he adds his petition when he says, **May he equip [fit] you with everything good**. For the human will, since it is the inclination of reason, is the principle of human acts, as heaviness is the principle of downward movement of heavy bodies; hence it is related to the acts of human reason as a natural inclination to natural acts. But a natural thing is said to be fit for that to which it has an inclination. So, too, man, when he has the will to do good, is said to be fit for it. God, too, when He inserts a good will in a man, fits him, i.e., makes him fit. Therefore, he says, **May God fit you with every good that you may do his will**, i.e., make you will every good: ‘The desire of the just is every good’ (Pr. 2:3). For this is God’s will, namely, what God wills us to will; otherwise, our will is not good. But the will of God is our good: ‘This is the will of God, your sanctification’ (1 Th. 4:3); ‘That you may prove what is the good and acceptable and the perfect will of God’ (Rom. 12:2).

770. – Now a man is made fit for doing well in two ways: In one way, by working outwardly; this is the way one man fits another, by persuading or threatening; in another way, by manifesting something inwardly; and this is the way that God alone fits a will, because He alone can change it: ‘The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord; whithersoever he will he will incline it’ (Pr. 21:1). Hence, he says, **working in you**: ‘It is God who works in us both to will and to accomplish’ (Phil 2:13). But what will He do? **That which is pleasing in his sight**, i.e., He will make you will what pleases Him. But this is faith and meekness and fear of the Lord: ‘Faith and meekness are agreeable to him’ (Sir. 1:34); ‘The Lord takes pleasure in them that fear him’ (Ps. 146:11). But all these are obtained **through Jesus Christ**, for nothing is obtained from the Father except through the Son: ‘If you ask the Father anything in my name, he will give it to you’ (Jn. 16:25); ‘By whom he has given us most great and precious promises’ (2 Pt. 1:4); ‘By whom we have access by faith unto grace’ (Rom. 5:2). **To whom**, namely, Christ, **is glory forever and ever. Amen**, i.e., eternal glory: ‘To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.’ (1 Tim. 1:17). For this glory is owed him, inasmuch as He is God.

771. – Then (v. 22) he adds a petition in which he excuses himself; then he concludes the epistle. In regard to the first he does three things: first, he gives his excuse; secondly, he recommends the messenger through whom he writes (v. 23); thirdly, he sends several greetings (v. 24).

772. – He says, therefore, in regard to the first: **I appeal to you, brethren, bear with my word of exhortation** [consolation], i.e., patiently bear with the words of this epistle, in which, even though I have rebuked some of you, it is all for your consolation: ‘What things soever are written, are written for our consolation’ (Rom. 15:4). Then he shows why they should bear with it patiently, when he says, **for I have written to you briefly**. This is true in regard to the mysteries contained in it; for almost all the mysteries

of the New Testament are contained in this epistle. But short talks are most welcome; because if they are good, they will be heard eagerly. If they are bad, they are a little boring: ‘Let your words be few’ (Ec 5:1).

773. – Then he recommends the one through whom he writes, saying, **You should understand that our brother Timothy has been released**, namely, from prison, where he was with the Apostle. Or released by me to preach and come to you, both because he had been circumcised (Ac. 16:3) and because, **with whom I will see you, if he comes soon**. In this he shows the love he had for them. He also shows this because, even though he did not visit them, he was suffering in Rome and was uncertain whether he would be set at liberty for a while.

774. – Then he gives the greeting: first, he asks them to greet the others, saying, **Greet all you prelates**, i.e., the apostles still living, **and all the saints**, namely, the other disciples. But he does not write to them, because his intention was to write only against the observances of the Law. Therefore, because this epistle is instructive, it was not his intention to instruct the apostles, who preceded him in the faith. Secondly, he salutes them on the part of the others, saying, **The brethren from Italy send you greetings**. For he wrote the epistle from Rome.

775. – Then he concludes in his accustomed manner, as though sealing it with a personal greeting: **Grace be with all of you. Amen**, i.e., the remission of sins and any other of God’s gifts, which are obtained through the grace of God, be firmly with all of you. The Amen is a confirmation of everything.