

## ADDENDA

### LANGE: ON THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

(CDHCG, 389-390, verbatim)

Between Abram's connection with Hagar and the next manifestation of Jehovah there are full thirteen years. But then his faith is strengthened again, and Jehovah appears to him (17:1). The most prominent and important theophany in the life of Abram is the appearance of the three men (ch. 17). But this appearance wears its prevailing angelic form, because it is a collective appearance for Abram and Lot, and at the same time refers to the judgement upon Sodom. Hence the two angels are related to their central point as the sun-images to the sun itself, and this central point for Abram is Jehovah himself in his manifestation, but not a commissioned Angel of the Lord. Thus also this Angel visits Sarah (21:1; compare 18:10). But the Angel appears in the history of Hagar a second time (21:17), and this time as the Angel of God (Maleach Elohim), not as the Maleach Jehovah, for the question is not now about a return to Abram's house, but about the independent settlement with Ishmael in the wilderness. The person who tempts Abram (22:1) is Elohim—God as he manifests himself to the nations and their general ideas or notions, and the revelation is effected purely through the word. Now, also, in the most critical moment for Abram, the Angel of the Lord comes forward, calling down to him from heaven since there was need of a prompt message of relief. In the rest of the narrative this Angel of the Lord identifies himself throughout with Jehovah (vers. 12, 16). To Isaac also Jehovah appears (26:2), and the second time in the night (ver. 24). He appears to Jacob in the night in a dream (28:12, 13). Thus also he appears to him as the Angel of God in a dream (31:11), but throughout identified

## THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

with Jehovah (ver. 13). Jehovah commands him to return home through the word (31:3). Laban receives the word of God in a dream (31:24). The greatest event of revelation in the life of Jacob is the grand theophany, in the night, through the vision, but the man who wrestles with him calls himself God and man (men) at the same time. According to the theory of a created angel, Jacob is not a wrestler with God (Israel), but merely a wrestler with the Angel. It is a more purely external circumstance which God uses to warn Jacob through the word to remove from Shechem (35:1). In the second peculiar manifestation of God to Jacob after his return from Mesopotamia (35:9), we have a clear and distinct reflection of the first (32:24). In the night-visions of Joseph, which already appear in the life of Isaac, and occur more frequently with Jacob, the form of revelation during the patriarchal period comes less distinctly into view. But then it enters again, and with new energy, in the life of Moses. The Angel of Jehovah (Ex. 3:2) is connected with the earlier revelation, and here also is identified with Jehovah and Elohim (ver. 4). But he assumes a more definite form and title, as the Angel of his face, since with the Mosaic system the rejection of any deifying of the creature comes into greater prominence, and since it is impossible that the face of God should be esteemed a creature.

The reasons which are urged for the old ecclesiastical view of the Angel of the Lord, are recapitulated by Kurtz in the following order: 1. The Maleach Jehovah identifies himself with Jehovah. 2. Those to whom he appears recognize, name, and worship him as the true God. 3. He receives sacrifice and worship without any protest. 4. The biblical writers constantly speak of him as Jehovah. We add the reasons. 1. The theory of our opponents opens a wide door in the Old Testament for the deifying of the creature, which the Old Testament everywhere condemned;

## GENESIS

and the Romish worship of angels finds in it a complete justification. 2. The Socinians also gain an important argument for their rejection of the Trinity, if, instead of self-revelation of God, and of the self-distinction included in it in the Old Testament, there is merely a pure revelation through angels. As the fully developed doctrine of the Trinity cannot be found in the Old Testament, so no one can remove from the Old Testament the beginnings of that doctrine, the self-distinction of God, without removing the very substructure on which the New Testament doctrine of the Trinity rests, and without obscuring the Old Testament theology in its very centre and glory. 3. It would break the band of the organic unity between the Old and New Testaments if it could be proved that the central point in the Old Testament revelation is a creature-angel, and that the New Testament revelation passes at one bound from this form to that of the God-man. The theory of the creature-angel in its continuation through a colossal adoration of angels, points downwards to the Rabbinic and Mohammedan doctrine of angels which has established itself in opposition to the New Testament Christology, and is bound together with that exaggerated doctrine of angels in more recent times, which ever corresponds with a veiled and obscure Christology. On the other hand, it removes from the New Testament Christology its Old Testament foundation and preparation which consists in this, that the interchange between God and men is in full operation, and must therefore prefigure itself in the images of the future God-man. 4. The doctrine of angels itself loses its very heart, its justification and interpretation, if we take away from it the symbolic angel-form, which rules it, as its royal centre, *i.e.* that angelic form which, as a real manifestation of God, as a typical manifestation of Christ, as a manifestation of angels, has the nature and force of a symbol. But with the

## THE ANGEL OF JEHOVAH

obliteration of the symbolic element, all the remaining symbolic and angelic images, the cherubim and seraphim, will disappear, and with the key of biblical psychology in its representation of the development of the life of the soul, to an organ of revelation, we shall lose the key to the exposition of the Old Testament itself. 5. Augustin was consistent when, with his interpretation of the Angel of Jehovah as a creature-angel, he decidedly rejects the interpretation which regards the sons of God (ch. 6) as angel-beings; for the assumption of angels who, as such, venture to identify themselves with Jehovah, and notwithstanding they are in peril, abandon themselves to lustful pleasures and a magical transformation of their nature, combines two groundless and intolerable phantoms. We hold, therefore, that Old Testament theology, in its very heart and centre, is in serious danger from these two great prejudices, as the New Testament from the two great prejudices of a mere mechanical structure of the Gospels, and of the unapostolic and yet more than apostolic brothers of the Lord. (See the defence of the old ecclesiastical view in the Commentary by Keil, also with a reference to Kahnis, *de Angelo Domini diatribe*, 1858. The assertion of the opposite view held by Delitzsch in his Commentary, meets here its refutation).

6. The aspect of all theophanies as visions. It is a general supposition, that divine revelation is partly through visions, or through inward miraculous sights and sounds. We must, however, bring out distinctly the fundamental position, that every theophany is at the same time vision, and every vision a theophany; but that in the one case the objective theophany and in the other the subjective vision, is the prevailing feature. The subjective vision appears in the most definite form in dream-visions, of which Adam's sleep, and Abram's night-horror (chs. 2 and 15.), are the first striking portents. It develops itself with great

## GENESIS

power in the lives of Isaac, Jacob, and Joseph, and is of still greater importance in the lives of Samuel and Solomon, as also in the night-visions of Zechariah. We find them in the New Testament in the life of Joseph of Nazareth and in the history of Paul. It needs no proof to show that the manifestations of God or angels in dreams, are not outward manifestations to the natural senses. In the elements of the subjective dream-vision, veils itself, however, the existing divine manifestation. But what the dream introduces in the night-life, the seeing in images—that the ecstasy does in the day or ordinary waking life (see Lange: "Apostolic Age"). The ecstasy, as the removing of the mind into the condition of unconsciousness, or of a different consciousness, is the potential basis of the vision, the vision is the activity or effect of the ecstasy. But since the visions have historical permanence and results, it is evident that they are the intuitions of actual objective manifestations of God. Mere hallucinations of the mind lead into the house of error, spiritual visions build the historical house of God. But in this aspect we may distinguish peculiar dream-visions, night-visions of a higher form and power, momentary day-visions, apocalyptic groups or circles of visions, linked together in prophetic contemplation, and that habitual clear-sightedness as to visions which is the condition of inspiration. But that theophanies which are ever at the same time Angelophanies and Christophanies, and indeed as theophanies of the voice of God, or of the voice from heaven, of the simple appearance of angels, of their more enlarged and complete manifestations of the developed heavenly scene—that these are always conditioned through a disposition of fitness for visions, is clear from numerous passages in the Old and New Testaments (2 Ki. 6:17, Dan. 10:7; John 12:28-29, 20:10-12; Acts 9:8, 12:7-12, 22:9-14).

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

### THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

(by H. Christopher, *The Remedial System*, pp. 146-150)

The promise that God would bless the whole world through him [Abraham] had reference to Christ, the son of Abraham, through whom God would fulfill his promise of blessing the whole world through the offspring of Abraham. Whilst it was the first and chief promise made to Abraham, it was the last in fulfillment. Nearly two thousand years intervened. It was ratified and covenanted by the blood of Christ, and looked to the possession of the heavenly Canaan, and to a circumcision that cut off the heart from all that is worldly and sensual, and to a seal that became the pledge of the purchased possession, and its settlement in the heavenly Canaan, by the resurrection from the dead, when the spiritual people of God cross the Jordan of death, and take possession of the land of promise, for which even Abraham looked, when he sought "a city whose maker and builder is God."

This promise and its blessings have no connection with the others made to Abraham. They differ as widely as flesh and spirit, and as earth and heaven. They connect or coalesce nowhere. The first were but preparatory and necessary to the last. When the last appeared, the first had served their chief, if not all their, purpose. The first had chief reference to man's body, while the last has chief reference to man's spirit. And as the spirit of man is superimposed, as it were, upon the body, and is capable of a separate and independent existence, so was the last promise superimposed upon the first, and is capable of existing, and does exist, independently of it. Hence, the promises and the covenants by which they were ratified, connect with each other only as the flesh connects with the spirit. Between them lies an impassable gulf. There is no possible passage from the first to the last. The Jew has no rights and privileges under Christ by virtue of his

being the son of Abraham according to the flesh; for the promise was; "In Isaac shall thy seed be called," and he was the child of promise and of faith. The christian is the child of promise and of faith, and hence is reckoned through Isaac as a special creation of God, and is, therefore, himself a new creation. The last creation supersedes all former ones, and by this supersession abrogates them. The adoption of the children of Abraham as the special and peculiar people of God, set aside the adoption by creation, and during the time of their adoption, the natural adoption was set aside, and the rest of mankind ignored, and treated as an uncovenanted people. So when the christian adoption came in, the Jewish was set aside, and all the rest of mankind, not embraced in the new adoption, were ignored and treated as uncovenanted. Hence, under christianity there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither circumcision nor uncircumcision; but all the families, nations, and races of mankind are *one in Christ*, in perfect fulfillment of the promise: "*In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed.*"

All this is necessarily true. The Remedial System is developed by differentiations which mark the boundaries of the development. The patriarch had no privileges, special and peculiar, after the calling of Abraham. By that call God isolated a part from the whole, and made this part his special care. By the new creation through Christ another isolation was made, which placed Jew and Greek on the same plane before God, and abrogated all special and peculiar rights or privileges claimed by the Jews.

This is necessarily true from another consideration. The claim of the Jew rested on an explicit covenant. That covenant recognized him as the chosen of God, through a means wholly different from that by which he had recognized the patriarch, and does now recognize the Christian.

## THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

This consideration or means was his *birth*. He was the son of Abraham according to the flesh, and entitled, consequently, only to the rights and privileges guaranteed by the covenant ordained to grant and secure these. He could claim only under the stipulated grants of his covenant. Under other and different covenants, and made with other people, he could, of course, have no claim or right whatever. His circumcision effected all it was designed to effect, and meant more than the Jew was willing to accept. It cut him off from all the rest of the world, and also from all other covenants of God, but according to the flesh. His circumcision bound him down to the provisions and obligations of that covenant, and confined him within its prescribed limits. What claim, therefore can a Jew have to the grants and blessings of a covenant that has no special reference to him whatever, and that was not made with him as a Jew? The European had as well claim equal rights with the American under the constitution of the United States. The Jew was the chosen of God only according to the flesh, and entitled only to blessings of his covenant. He is not the chosen of God according to the spirit, or the seed of Isaac according to the promise, and hence he can have no right with those who are.

There are four things necessary to make a nation the peculiar and chosen people of God, and all these obtained in the case of the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh. These things are, 1. A creation. This we have in the birth of Isaac. His conception was a miracle, and hence a creation. 2. A seal. This we have in circumcision. 3. A purchase. This we have in the deliverance of this people from Egypt. And 4. A covenant. And this we have in the covenant made before Mt. Sinai. All these are peculiar and consistent, and perfectly harmonious with all that God has promised, or has done for, the Jews. They



were all equally necessary, and they follow each other as necessary results one of the other. The seal came to ratify the creation, the purchase, in demonstration of the fulfillment of the promise, and the covenant, in order that the people might also pledge themselves by covenant. By this the people became cemented and organized into a nation. As such they needed laws and institutions for their government and welfare as a people; and as the people of God, religious institutions for the various purposes which God had in view with that people.

It will be observed that this covenant made with Abraham's descendants arose under that which covenanted them as the peculiar people of God, and was, consequently, entirely Jewish. The covenant of Mt. Sinai was made with that people, and the institutions subsequently given, were given to that people, and to no other. The Jewish institution, in all its entirety, was as verily circumcised as were the people for whose benefit it was ordained. It was as completely isolated from all other religions and peoples, as were that people. Hence, it had no connection with any other, nor relation, except that of opposition.

The covenant stipulated and embraced no more than did the promise under which it was made. It was a ratification, or acceptance on their part, of the stipulations of the promise. It was the covenant by which God renewed his promise to be their God, and by it the people accepted the offer, and covenanted to be the people of God. This covenant bound both parties to their pledge—God to be their God, and them to be his obedient people. It did not, and could not stipulate and grant more than did the promise; hence, all these were temporal in their nature. This completed all that God had to provide for that people. Henceforth there was naught for either party to do, but to carry out the provisions of the covenant which formulated the promise.

## THE ABRAHAMIC PROMISE

But this covenant was not only temporary as respects the rights, privileges, and blessings which it secured to that people; but it was also temporary in its duration. The people broke that covenant: and "a covenant broken on one side, is broken on both." It was faulty in that it only contemplated and provided for man's temporal wants. Indeed, this was the fault of the whole Jewish fabric, from the inception to the close. This was foreseen; and not only foreseen, but the whole structure was but a means to an end; a measure to give time for the preparation and institution of a better. The promise of God under which the whole Jewish structure arose, was not the first and chief promise that God made to Abraham, nor his chief purpose in calling him. This chief and greatest promise was that through him he would bless the whole human family. This promise the apostle interprets as having reference to Christ, and consequently, it was sooner or later, to take precedence of all others. It could not be annulled by any subsequent promise, unless that promise annulled, at the same time, all former ones. But this the subsequent promises did not do, as is affirmed by the people.

The promise which had reference to Christ, preceded the ratification of that concerning the land several years, and antedated the covenant of circumcision twenty-four years. The covenant at Mt. Sinai followed the latter four hundred and six thereafter. So that nothing which transpired under the later promises could annul the first.

The first and chief promise which contemplated spiritual blessings and a spiritual offspring through Isaac, was not ratified, fulfilled, or covenanted, for nearly two thousand years. All that has grown out of this promise has no connection with what arose under the others. It differs from them in every respect. It differed from them in the beginning. It came into the world through a different line. There were two lines of descendants in

## GENESIS

Isaac, as two promises were fulfilled in his descendants. The one line was "the seed of Abraham according to the flesh," and the other "the seed according to the spirit," the latter of which is reckoned the true line under the covenant of the first promise. This excludes the children according to the flesh from all rights and privileges pertaining to the children according to the spirit. As respects, therefore, their nature, rights, and privileges, the Jewish and Christian institutions differ radically and entirely; to that degree as to exclude the one wholly from the other. The creation, the circumcision or seal, the purchase, and the covenant, that made the descendants of Abraham according to the flesh the people of God, have no place nor value under the Christian institution. The latter has its own creation, seal, purchase, and covenant, all of which are spiritual and eternal, and these give the christian no rights or privileges under the former. Hence, as respects institutions differing so completely and widely, there can be no community of rights and privileges; nor can the one flow out of the other so as to establish any genetic connection between them.

As the spiritual and the eternal necessarily supersede the fleshly and temporal, so does the Jewish institution, in whole and in part, give way to the christian. Under the latter arises a people of God as distinct from the former as spirit is from flesh. The christian is a new creation, and all that pertains to his creation is new. Before it the Jew and Gentile stand on the same ground. Both must become the subjects of this new creation before they can be regarded as belonging to the people of God. All the claim which the Jew once preferred, goes for naught under the operation of the new creation. A new birth is just as essential for the Jew as for the Gentile. Hence, the Jew's creation, seal, purchase, and covenant are all naught when he stands before the christian's. His birth of the

## THE EXCELLENCE OF FAITH

flesh avails nothing, and neither does his circumcision. Nothing is now acceptable to God but the new creation in Christ.

These things being true, all that is Jewish has passed away. The Jews are no longer the people of God. Their whole religious service has perished; and what purpose God has now with that people remains to be seen. That he has no further purpose with them in regard to the fulfillment of his promise of blessing the world through them by Christ, is evident from the fact that christianity has superseded Judaism, and that the whole religious service of that people perished with the total destruction of their temple. Christ is the end of the law, and of all that pertained to it. It was but a pedagogue to lead the Jews to Christ; so that when he came all that was Jewish was set aside, and the pedagogue was dismissed. All now become "the children of God by faith in Christ Jesus," in whom "there is neither Jew nor Greek; neither bond nor free; neither male nor female; but all are one in Christ Jesus." And all who are Christ's by virtue of the new creation, the spiritual seal, the eternal purchase, and the everlasting covenant, are "the seed of Abraham, and heirs according to the promise": "In thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed."

(N. B. After hunting several years for a copy of Christopher's book, I found it in the Dallas Christian College Library—C. C.)

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE EXCELLENCE OF FAITH

(Read Rom. 5:1-11).

In the study of First Principles the term which first engages our attention is *faith*. We shall find that it occupies a prominent place in connection not only with conversion, but also with every phase of Christian activity and growth.

## GENESIS

Faith is one of the most far-reaching words in the vocabulary of inspiration. Without faith none of the blessings of the spiritual realm would be available to man. Contrariwise, on the ground of faith, such blessings as eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived (1 Cor. 2:9), are within his power to appropriate and enjoy.

Faith is an oft-recurring word in the New Testament. Jesus had much to say about it, and the word is used repeatedly in the Epistles. Paul states expressly that we are justified by faith (Rom. 5:). .

The excellence of faith is indicated in scripture by the following representations:

1. *Faith is superior to things and circumstances of this material world.*

When given full sway in the human heart it rises above the circumstances of life and controls them. The power of faith is described in such scriptures as Matt. 17:20, Mark 9:23 and 11:23, Luke 17:6. Christians of this materialistic age, in bondage as they are to the "tyranny of things," are inclined to look on these sayings of the Master with more or less skepticism. The tragedy is that we have never really learned to walk by faith. We cannot testify that these sayings are true for the simple reason that we have never learned to stand on God's promises. True, we claim to do so, and we sing "Standing on the Promises," but always with mental reservations. It is only through the exercise of implicit faith that we can throw off the fetters of anxiety and fear which enslave us to this present evil world. We are willing to obey the Lord in confession and baptism, but we certainly fall far short of His teaching in regard to such everyday matters as fear, worry, forgiveness, humility, and the like. (See Matt. 5:3-12, 21-26, 38-42; 6:25-33; 7:1-5, 7-12, etc. Cf. 1 John 4:18) He might well say to us as to His disciples of old, "O ye of little faith!"

## THE EXCELLENCE OF FAITH

### 2. *Faith is the ground of our justification.*

"Being therefore justified by faith"—not by faith *alone*, or mere intellectual assent (the theologians have added the word *alone*)—"we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ." Not by faith *alone*, because "faith apart from works" (*i.e.*, works of faith) is dead (Jas. 2:26). The faith that is "unto the saving of the soul" (Heb. 10:39) expresses itself in works of obedience, sacrifice and service (Rom. 12:1-2). To walk by faith is to "live by the Spirit" (Gal. 5:22-25). God so loved us that He gave His only begotten Son as a propitiation for our sins (John 3:16), but we must appropriate this matchless Gift by faith. By true faith in Him we "have access into this grace wherein we stand" (Rom. 5:2). "For by grace ye have been saved through faith, and that" (*i.e.*, that *salvation*) "not of yourselves, it is the gift of God" (Eph. 2:8).

### 3. *Faith is the motivating principle of all Christian worship and service.*

True worship is (1) communion of the human spirit with the Divine Spirit, (2) on the terms of the truth as revealed in scripture (John 4:24). This can be realized only through faith. Repentance is faith *choosing*; the confession is faith *speaking*; baptism is faith *obeying*; the Lord's Supper is faith *remembering*; liberality is faith *acknowledging* God's ownership; prayer is faith *communing*; meditation is faith *pondering*; and the whole Christian life is faith *serving*. Therefore we are justified by faith. From the day of conversion to that of the putting on of immortality, the actuating principle in the life of every true Christian is faith.

### 4. *Implicit faith, along with obedience, is a necessary condition to the answer of prayer.* (John 14:12-15, 15:5-10, etc.).

(1) Acts 12:1-17. We read here that many of the early disciples were gathered together in the house of Mary,

## GENESIS

the mother of John Mark, praying for Peter's deliverance from prison. Yet they were "amazed" when their prayer was answered and Peter stood in their midst. Most of our praying is of this kind; it has little conviction back of it. (Matt. 21:22).

(2) The prayer of faith, *i.e.*, the petition offered in harmony with the teaching of God's word, will not go unanswered.

"Unanswered yet? The prayer your lips have pleaded  
In agony of heart these many years?  
Does faith begin to fail? is hope departing?  
And thing you all in vain those falling tears?  
Say not the Father hath not heard your prayer,  
You shall have your desire, sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? Tho' when you first presented  
This one petition at the Father's throne,  
It seemed you could not wait the time of asking  
So urgent was your heart to make it known.  
Tho' years have passed since then, do not despair;  
The Lord will answer you, sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? Nay, do not say 'ungranted';  
Perhaps your part is not yet wholly done;  
The work began when first your prayer was uttered,  
And God will finish what He has begun;  
If you will keep the incense burning there,  
His glory you shall see, sometime, somewhere.

"Unanswered yet? Faith cannot be unanswered;  
Her feet are firmly planted on the Rock;  
Amid the wildest storms she stands undaunted,  
Nor quails before the loudest thunder-shock.  
She knows Omnipotence has heard her prayer,  
And cries, 'It shall be done, sometime, somewhere!'  
And cries, 'It shall be done, sometime, somewhere!'"

## THE NATURE OF FAITH

5. *The blessings and rewards of the gospel are all received and realized through faith.*

Among these are: (1) salvation from the guilt of sin (Mark 16:16, Acts 2:38, 10:43, 16:31, 26:18); (2) spiritual life (John 20:31, 6:40, John 3:16, 36; 1 John 5:12); (3) spiritual light (John 1:9, 8:12, 12:36); (4) heavenly adoption (Gal. 3:26); (5) the indwelling Spirit (John 7:39, Eph. 1:13, Gal. 3:14); (6) justification (Rom. 5:1, Gal. 2:16); (7) true righteousness (Rom. 1:16-17, 10:6, 3:22); (8) true worship (John 4:24, Eph. 3:12); (9) providential oversight (1 Pet. 1:5); (10) eternal rest (Heb. 4:3). In fact the "inheritance" of all the promises of God is to be realized through faith (Heb. 6:12).

*Conclusion:* No wonder then that faith is represented to be the foundation which supports the entire pyramid of Christian virtues that true disciples build, one stone upon the other, and upon which they climb heavenward (2 Pet. 1:5-7). True Christians "walk by faith, not by sight" (2 Cor. 5:7).

Faith, hope and love, according to Paul, constitute the abiding trinity of spiritual virtues (1 Cor. 13:13). Of these three, love is "greatest"; because, in "the home over there," faith will have given way to spiritual knowledge, and hope to fruition, leaving only love to consummate the blissful intercourse of the redeemed with their heavenly Father (Rev. 21:1-5).

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE NATURE OF FAITH

(Read Hebrews, ch. 11, esp. v. 1.)

The eleventh chapter of *Hebrews* has been called "Israel's Roll of Honor." It is the great "faith chapter" of the Bible. It is an inspired discourse on the subject of faith. The discourse begins properly with the last three verses of ch. 10, in which the writer speaks of a faith that



## GENESIS

is "unto the saving of the soul." The subject-matter which follows, in ch. 11, is an analysis of that kind of faith, what it is, whence it is obtained, and how it operates unto salvation, as exemplified in the lives of many illustrious believers of olden times. The writer proves to be an excellent sermonizer, as we might expect in view of his having been inspired by the Spirit of God. He states his text in v. 1, and then proceeds to develop it with appropriate illustrations drawn from Old Testament history. His concluding exhortation follows, in ch. 12, vs. 1-2. We shall attempt here to evaluate the teaching of this great chapter on the *nature* (i.e., the original and essential characteristics) of faith.

Let me repeat that the kind of faith under consideration here is the faith that works "unto the saving of the soul." By some this has been called "*saving faith*." Not that faith of *itself* will save any one, because it will not; but that the right kind of faith will motivate the believer to such intelligent and sincere cooperation with God, on God's terms and according to His plan, that He may consistently save the one who so believes. It is God who pardons and saves, but always through Jesus Christ (John 14:6).

*What is faith?* Considering the excellence of faith, it is exceedingly important that we know what faith is. I am profoundly thankful that the Holy Spirit has not left us in darkness regarding this essential matter. Nor has he left it to our finite minds to formulate a definition. We are not compelled to go either to philosophy or to theology for a definition of faith—we have it in clear, unmistakable terms, in the Christian Scriptures.

What, then, are the essential characteristics of faith? This question is fully answered in the words of our text, as follows:

1. *Faith is "assurance . . ."* "Assurance" is defined as "confidence inspired or expressed," "that which pro-

## THE NATURE OF FAITH

duces certainty." It connotes positiveness, certainty, even *boldness*.

2. *Faith* is "assurance of things hoped for." That is, faith is the foundation of hope.

(1) *Authorized Version*: "the substance of things hoped for." The word *substance* means in our language "the stuff, material, or matter of which anything is composed." It is used here, however, in its *derivative* sense. It is derived from the Latin prefix, *sub* (under) and the Latin participle *stans* (standing). *Substance*, then is *that which stands under*. Faith is that which stands under hope. Cf. *Living Oracles*: "faith is the confidence of things hoped for." *Moffatt*: "faith means we are confident of what we hope for." *Weymouth*: "faith is a well-grounded assurance of that for which we hope." *Goodspeed*: "faith means the assurance of what we hope for."

(2) Faith is the foundation of hope. This is true in every department of human activity. It is true in the *business* world. I visited a friend on one occasion to solicit a contribution from him for a worthy cause. Having heard my case, his reply was: "I believe in your proposition, and I am sorry that I am not in a position to help just at this time. But I will do something later. I have invested a considerable sum of money in an oil well in Texas, and I am expecting returns from this investment within a few months. If you will come back about a year from this date, I will give you a substantial donation." I thanked him, and departed. About a year later I called at his office a second time, and as soon as I entered he looked at me and exclaimed: "I know what you have come for, but I can't do anything for you." "What is the trouble?" I asked, "didn't the oil well turn out satisfactorily?" And in extreme disgust he said: "I wish I had the money back that I sank in that hole in the ground." The first time I called he was extremely hopeful, because

## GENESIS

he believed in the enterprise in which he had invested; the second time I found him with hopes blasted, because he had lost all faith in it. Where there is no faith, there is no hope.

(3) This is also true in the *social realm*. In the course of time a young couple will fall in love, marry, and establish a home. The success of their undertaking will depend largely on their faith in each other. On this foundation of faith they will erect a structure of dreams and plans and hopes. But let the confidence of one in the other be destroyed and this structure will fall to the ground. Both marriage and home are erected on a foundation of faith.

(4) So, in the *realm of spirit*, as elsewhere, hope rests upon faith. Every act of worship and service we perform is motivated by faith. Faith underlies the pyramid of Christian virtues (2 Pet 1:5-7). And all our aspirations and hopes respecting "the home over there," "the inheritance incorruptible, and undefiled, and that fadeth not away" (1 Pet. 1:4) rest on faith. In everything faith is the foundation of hope.

(5) *Illustrations from the chapter* (Heb. 11). (a) Abel's hope that his offering would be acceptable to God rested on faith, v. 4. (1 John 3:12) (b) Enoch's walk with God was a walk of faith, v. 5. (c) Faith was the foundation of Noah's hope of deliverance from impending judgment, v. 7. (d) Abraham's hope of attaining the far country which he was to receive for an inheritance was founded on faith, v. 8. Also, his hope of receiving Isaac back from the dead was inspired by faith, "from whence he did also in a figure receive him back," vs. 17-19. (e) Sarah's expectation of a son, the child of promise, rested on faith, v. 11. (f) Joseph's hope that the children of Israel would ultimately take possession of the land of promise rested upon his faith, v. 22. (g) The aspirations, hopes and plans of Moses for his people, and his matchless

## THE NATURE OF FAITH

efforts in their behalf, were all inspired by his faith, vs. 24-29. In every example cited, faith is presented as the foundation of hope.

3. *Faith is a "conviction . . ."* A "conviction" is defined as a "strong belief," "something firmly believed." The faith which operates unto the saving of the soul is something more than a passive intellectual *assent*. It is a *conviction*. It *must* be a conviction, one that takes hold of the soul and determines the course of one's life. In the light of this definition, it is obvious that faith is precisely the thing that is lacking in the modern church.

4. Faith is "a conviction of *things not seen*," i.e., a conviction *with respect to* things not seen.

(1) *Authorized Version*: "the evidence of things not seen." *Moffatt*: "Faith means . . . we are convicted of what we do not see." *Weymouth*: "a conviction of the reality of things which we do not see." *Goodspeed*: "our conviction about things we cannot see."

(2) Note that faith is a conviction with respect to things *not* seen. I have never seen Paris, but I have a conviction that there is a city by that name and that it is the capital of France. My conviction is the result of satisfactory evidence. Things which are seen are matters of observation and knowledge, but things that are not seen belong to the realm of faith. God who is a Spirit (John 4:24) cannot be seen, and is therefore to be apprehended only by faith. Angels, spirit, resurrection, immortality, heaven, etc., all these realities of the unseen world are matters of faith. Faith pertains not to the things that are illusive and transitory, but to the things which are abiding. "For the things which are seen are temporal; but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18).

(3) We have never seen God, but we *believe* that He is and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him (Heb. 11:6). We were not present to see the worlds

## GENESIS

created, but our conviction is that they were "framed by the word of God" (v. 3). We have never seen Christ, our Elder Brother, but we believe in Him as the One who is abundantly able to save us from sin and mortality. We have never had a glimpse of heaven, but we believe that the Spirit of Him who raised up Jesus from the dead dwelleth in us, He that raised up Christ Jesus from the dead shall give life also to our mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwelleth in us (Rom. 8:11). Therefore we are exhorted to live by faith, to walk by faith and to die in the faith.

(4) *Illustrations from the chapter* (Heb. 11). (a) Abel brought his offering to the altar with the conviction that the God whom he had never seen, but in whom he believed, would accept it, v. 4. (b) In Noah's heart there was an overwhelming conviction that judgment would come upon the antediluvian world because of its wickedness. Although summer and winter, and seedtime and harvest, continued to come and go as usual for one hundred and twenty years, he never faltered. Through all the trying experiences of this period of grace he retained his conviction. Because that during all these intervening years there was no evidence in nature of the impending catastrophe, it was a conviction with respect to things not seen, v. 7. (c) Abraham left home and kindred and friends, and started on a strange journey to a land both unknown to him and unseen by him. He had no idea how far he would have to travel in order to reach it. All that moved him was a conviction with respect to the far country and a conviction that God would give it to him for an inheritance. Vs. 8-12. (d) These fathers of Israel, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, all died in the faith, having never received the literal fulfilment of the promises. So far as we know they all died without possessing a single acre of the land of promise save the few square feet they

## THE NATURE OF FAITH

had purchased for a burial ground. It seems that as they continued in their pilgrimage their faith became clearer, and they began to look beyond the *literal* to the *spiritual* fulfilment of the promise, in the city which hath foundations whose builder and maker is God, vs. 13-16. (e) Joseph's conviction with respect to the exodus of his people from Egypt pertained to an event far in the future, an event not seen, v. 22. (f) Moses, "the man who saw an undying flame," chose to share ill treatment with the people of God, above the temporary enjoyment of the pleasures of sin, because he "endured as seeing him who is invisible" (vs. 23-29). In all these cases, faith was a conviction with respect to things not seen.

(5) As in the various cases cited from Old Testament history, so it is with respect to faith in the present dispensation and under the new covenant: (a) our faith must be something more than mere assent; (b) it must be genuine conviction in order to work "unto the saving of the soul"; (c) it must be conviction with respect to things not seen, viz., God, the Son of God, the Spirit of God, the future life, heaven, etc.; (d) this faith undergirds all our spiritual blessings, aspirations and hopes (1 Cor. 2:6-10).

*Conclusion:* 1. *This inspired definition of faith is perfect and complete.* Nothing can be taken from it without weakening its import. Nothing *can* be added to it that would give it greater force.

2. Christian faith takes in all those convictions with respect to God, the Son of God, the Word of God, the Spirit of God, immortality, heaven, and the like; all of which are eternal realities above and beyond the realm of time and space. Like Moses, we "endure as seeing him who is invisible," "looking unto Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith" (Heb. 12:2). Like Abraham, we realize that we are pilgrims and strangers upon this earth, that our present dwelling places are but the tabernacles of a night-

## GENESIS

time; and, like him, we anticipate a more glorious fulfilment of the promises than would be possible in this world of places and things (1 Cor. 2:9-10). Our ultimate goal is that heavenly country towards which he made his pilgrimage. In the words of Emily Dickinson:

"I never saw a moor,  
I never saw the sea,  
Yet know I how the heather looks,  
And what a wave must be.

"I never spoke with God,  
Nor visited in heaven;  
Yet certain am I of the spot  
As if the chart were given."

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE SOURCE OF FAITH

(Read Rom. 10:1-17).

Having ascertained the essential nature of faith (1) the assurance of things hoped for, and (2) a conviction with respect to things not seen, we shall now turn our attention to the *source* of faith. Whence is the faith obtained that is "unto the saving of the soul"? We may find the answer to this important question by turning again to the cases cited in the eleventh chapter of Hebrews:

1. *Abel*, v. 4. Whence did Abel obtain his conviction that the offering of a sacrifice of blood would be pleasing to God and would bring him God's blessing? Evidently *from the word of God*. It seems obvious that God laid down the law of sacrifice as soon as man fell, in order to establish the principle that "apart from shedding of blood there is no remission" (Heb. 9:22). Abel, in bringing an offering in which blood was shed, obeyed the law; Cain, in bringing the "fruit of the ground," disobeyed

## THE SOURCE OF FAITH

it (1 John 3:12). This explains why Abel's offering was accepted and Cain's rejected.

"That this institution was of divine origin is evident from several considerations: I. We learn from Hebrews 11:4, that Abel offered his sacrifice in faith. But in Romans 10:17, we are told that 'faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God.' And hence it follows that Abel could not have offered in faith without a command from God . . . II. It could not have been a human invention, because Reason can perceive no connection between the means and the end. It is evidently a *positive* and not a moral or natural institution. III. Its universality is another proof of its divine origin. Mr. Faber says that 'throughout the whole world there is a notion prevalent that the gods can be appeased only by bloody sacrifices. There is no heathen people,' he adds, 'that can specify a time when they were without sacrifice. All have had it from a time which is not reached by their genuine records. Tradition alone can be brought forward to account for its origin.' IV. The distinction between clean and unclean beasts even in the time of Noah (Gen. 7:2) proves also the divine origin of sacrifice. This is a distinction which is altogether *positive*, and which has no foundation in either reason or philosophy" (Milligan, SR, 67).

2. *Enoch*, v. 5. Enoch's walk of faith was evidently inspired and directed by the word of God (Gen. 5:24).

3. *Noah*, v. 7. How did Noah obtain his conviction that an overwhelming deluge would come upon the antediluvian world? How did he obtain the conviction that in the building of the ark a means of deliverance would be provided him and his family? Evidently from the word of God. God told him the flood would come in due time. God told him to build the ark and how to build it. God gave him the plans for it. God promised him deliverance through the instrumentality of the ark. *And Noah be-*



## GENESIS

*lieved God.* His conviction was inspired not by any manifestation in nature, but solely by the word of God. See Gen. 6:13-22, 7:1-5, 8:15-17.

4. *Abraham*, vs. 8-19. Whence did Abraham obtain his conviction regarding the land to which he journeyed? Whence did he obtain his belief that this land would be given him for an inheritance? From the word of God. See Gen. 12:1-4, 13:14-18, etc. It was God who told him about the "far country" and promised it to him for an inheritance. Whence did Abraham and Sarah obtain their conviction regarding the birth of the "child of promise?" From the word of God (Gen. 17:15-21). Whence did Abraham obtain his conviction that God would not allow Isaac to suffer an untimely end (Heb. 11:19)? From the word of God. Had not Isaac been miraculously conceived and born? Were not the details of the Abrahamic promise to be worked out through him? (Gen. 12:3, 13:16, 17:19, Heb. 11:18). Cf. Gen. 15:6, Rom. 4:3, Gal. 3:6, Jas 2:23.

5. *Joseph*, v. 22. Whence did Joseph obtain his conviction that his people would leave Egypt and repossess Canaan? Evidently from God's promise to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Gen. 12:1-4, 13:14-18, 17:15-21, 26:2-5, 28:12-17).

6. *Moses*, vs. 22-29. From whom did Moses receive his commission to lead his people out of bondage? From whom did he receive the Law "ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator" (Gal. 3:19)? From God Himself. See Exo. 3:1—4:17, 20:1-26, Deut. 5:1-33, etc. Who was his constant Guide and Protector through all those terrible marches in the wilderness? Who rained manna from heaven upon the starving people? Who guided them by means of a cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night? Moses constantly "endured, as seeing him who is invisible."

## THE SOURCE OF FAITH

7. *Joshua*, v. 29. Whence did Joshua obtain his confidence that the walls of Jericho would fall? From Jehovah's word. He went to God for a war program, in his extremity, and God supplied it (*Josh.* 6:1-20).

8. *Rahab*, v. 30. Whence did Rahab obtain her belief that she should give aid and succor to the men of Joshua's army? Evidently from her knowledge of God's promises and judgments (*John.* 2:9-21, 6:22-25, *Jas.* 2:25).

9. *The creation*, v. 3. Whence do we obtain our belief that our physical universe was the materialization of God's word? Our conviction that "what is seen hath not been made out of things which appear" (*i.e.*, that this universe was not fashioned out of pre-existing materials, as the evolutionists and materialists contend)? From the word of God. (See *Psa.* 33:6, 9; 148:5, etc. Note that the expression, "God *said*," is found ten consecutive times in *Gen.* 1. Cf. also *John* 1:1-3, *Heb.* 1:1-3, 2 *Pet.* 3:5-8, etc.).

10. *Other great heroes and heroines of faith*, vs. 32-39. All received their inspiration to deeds of heroism from the attractions and impulsions of God's word. So, then, belief cometh of hearing the divine word, as our text says. Believers in all ages endure as seeing Him who is invisible.

*Conclusion:* So much for the examples from Old Testament history. But what about the faith that operates unto the salvation of the soul, in the present dispensation, under the new covenant?

1. From what source do we obtain our belief that God is, and that He is a rewarder of them that seek after Him (*Heb.* 11:6)? From the testimony about Him as revealed and recorded in Scripture. From the complete and perfect revelation of Him afforded us in the person and work of Jesus Christ, whom to know aright is eternal life. *John* 15:9-11, 1 *Cor.* 2:6-16, *Heb.* 1:1-3, 1 *Pet.* 1:3-12, etc.

## GENESIS

2. From what source do we obtain our conviction that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God? From the testimony presented in the Scriptures, particularly that of the gospel records. This is our only source of accurate information about Him. See John 17:20, John 20:30-31, Acts 15:7, Acts 17:11-12, etc. Why should we reject the testimony of these competent eye-witnesses, these men who walked and talked and supped with Him, and listen to the quibblings of half-baked professors removed from Him by a span of twenty centuries?

3. Whence do we obtain our convictions respecting the future life and its rewards and retributions? From the testimony of Scripture? From the great and exceeding precious promises of God.

4. Rom. 10:17. Hear the conclusion of the whole matter. Faith does not come by feeling, nor by a direct operation of the Spirit, nor in answer to prayer, but faith *does* come by hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:6-8, 1 Thess. 2:13).

\* \* \* \* \*

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

(Heb. 11:1-19, esp. v. 13)

One of the most illustrious characters of ancient times to whom our attention is called by the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews, is Abraham, the father of the Hebrew people.

Abraham's life and walk were so eminently motivated by faith, that his name has gone down in sacred history as the Father of the Faithful, and as the Friend of God (Rom. 4:17, Gal. 3:29, Isa. 41:8, 2 Chron. 20:7, Jas. 2:23).

1. *Note, in the first place, that Abraham's whole life was a pilgrimage of faith.*

(1) *It was by faith that he first went out from his native home, Ur of the Chaldees. As faith comes from*

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

hearing the word of God (Rom. 10:17), so he went out *in response to God's command* (cf. Gen. 12:1-3). He did not go out in consequence of any urge within himself, but solely in obedience to God. "By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed to go out unto a place which he was to receive for an inheritance" (Heb. 11:8).

(2) *By faith he made his initial pilgrimage from Ur of Chaldea to the land of promise.* As faith is a conviction *with respect to things not seen* (Heb. 11:1), he therefore "went out not knowing whither he went" (v. 8). Commenting on this verse, Milligan says: "Here we have given the fact that Abraham received a call from God; that by his call he was required to leave his home and kindred in Ur of Chaldea, and go out into a strange land; that this land, though promised to his posterity, was wholly unknown to him at the time; and that he nevertheless obeyed God, and went out of his own country, not knowing whither he went" (Milligan, NTCH, in loco.)

(3) *By faith "he became a sojourner in the land of promise, as in a land not his own," etc.* It would seem from this that Abraham never regarded Canaan as his *home*. He knew of course, by faith, that when the Canaanites should have filled up the cup of their iniquity to the full, in the fourth generation, the land would be given to his posterity for an everlasting possession, as indeed it was in the time of Joshua (Gen. 15:12-21). But until that time neither he nor his seed, he realized, had any rights or privileges there beyond what might have been accorded other strangers under like circumstances. (Cf. Acts 7:5). Hence Abraham died without owning a foot of the land other than the cave of Machpelah, which he purchased from Ephron the Hittite for a burying-ground (Gen. 23:3-20); and hence, also, neither he, nor Isaac, nor Jacob, ever established a permanent residence in the country. They were satisfied to live in movable tents, feeling assured that "according to the promise," they were to fall heir to

## GENESIS

a better inheritance than any that is to be found on this earth.

(4) *By faith he looked beyond the literal to the spiritual fulfilment of the promise.* "For he looked for the city which hath the foundations," etc. (Heb. 11:9-10). "From this and other like passages we are constrained to think that God had given the patriarchs information with regard to the heavenly country, far beyond what is now recorded in Genesis or any other part of the Old Testament. What we find there at present was written for our instruction, as well as for the benefit of the ancients (Rom. 15:4). But much may have been said to them which would in no way benefit us; and which was, therefore, excluded from the Canon by Moses, Ezra and other inspired writers. The origin of sacrifice, for instance, is nowhere expressly mentioned in the Old Testament; nor is there anything said in it respecting the origin of the Patriarchal priesthood. Information, clear, full, and explicit, on all such matters, was of course needed by the ancients; but for us the more general instructions of the Bible are quite sufficient. And so, also, we think it was with respect to the heavenly country. The Patriarchs seem to have received revelations concerning it which have never been transmitted to us; for it is obvious that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, lived in constant expectation of entering it at the close of their earthly pilgrimage. They were satisfied to live here as strangers and pilgrims, knowing that they had in heaven a city having permanent foundations whose Architect and Framers is God. This city is manifestly the heavenly Jerusalem (Gal. 4:28, Heb. 12:22, 13:14), which for the present is located in heaven, but which will hereafter descend to the earth after the latter shall have been renovated by fire (Rev. 21). Then will be fulfilled in its full and proper sense the promise made to Abraham, that he and his seed should be the heirs of the world (Rom. 4:13)" (Milligan, *ibid.*).

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

"In the land of fadeless day,  
Lies 'the city four-square';  
It shall never pass away,  
And ther is 'no night there.'  
God shall 'wipe away all tears,'  
There's no death, no pain nor fears,  
And they count not time by years,  
For there is 'no night there.'"

(5) *By faith he anticipated the birth of the "child of promise"* (Heb. 11:11-12, Gal. 4:23, Gen. 17:15-21, 18:9-15, 21:1-7). The miraculous conception and birth of Isaac, typical in respect to its *supernaturalness* of that of Jesus, were direct fulfilments of the promise of Jehovah which Abraham believed. In this respect Abraham's faith was even greater than Sarah's, who, on being told, at ninety years of age and long after she had passed the age of child-bearing, that she should give birth to a son, received the announcement at first with considerable incredulity (Gen. 18:9-15).

(6) *By faith he offered up Isaac on Mount Moriah*, "accounting that God is able to raise up, even from the dead; from whence he did also in a figure receive him back" (Heb. 11:17-19). Abraham's faith was such that he knew that the promise of God (Gen. 17:21, 21:12) could not and would not fail, "and as he could not anticipate that God would interfere, as He did, so as to prevent the immolation of his son, there was really left for him no alternative other than simply to conclude that God would restore Isaac to life. This conviction seems to be implied in the remark which he made to his servants, 'Abide ye here with the ass, and I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again.' The word rendered *come again* (*we will return*) is in the plural number, and seems to indicate a belief on the part of Abraham, that God would immediately raise Isaac up again from the dead" (Milligan, *ibid.*) The

account of this, the severest trial and consequently the supreme manifestation of Abraham's faith, is related in Gen. 22:1-14).

(7) *Having walked in faith, he likewise "died in faith,* not having received the promises but having seen them and greeted them from afar," etc. What were the "promises?" (a) That Abraham should have a numerous offspring (Gen. 13:16, 15:3-5, 17:2-4, 22:16); (b) that God would be a God to him and to his seed after him (Gen. 17:1-8); (c) that He would give to him and his seed an everlasting inheritance (Gen. 12:7, 13:15, 15:18-21, 17:8); (d) that through him and his seed, all the nations of the earth should be blessed (Gen. 2:3, 22:18). With respect to these four details, Abraham looked beyond their *literal* to their *spiritual* fulfilment. "To each of these God attached a double significance. . . . They each consisted, so to speak, of two elements, one of which had reference to the carnal side of the covenant, and the other to the spiritual side; one to the type, and the other to the antitype. Thus Abraham was made the honored father of two families: to each of which an inheritance was promised, and through each of which the world was to be blessed" (Milligan, *ibid.*). Abraham, it would seem, understood all this, understood by faith that the spiritual side of the promise would be realized through his seed, the Messiah, and consequently rejoiced to "see his day, and he saw it, and was glad" (John 8:56). (Cf. Gal. 4:21-31, 3:6-13, etc.) Hence, he died in faith, knowing that the promise in its various details would be worked out according to God's eternal purpose and plan. Hence, too, by his constant life and walk of faith, he admitted that he did not seek a home on this earth, that here he considered himself merely a stranger and sojourner, that he did not expect to enter into possession of his true home until he should have reached the end of his pilgrimage and been received into a better country than this, *i.e.*, heaven itself. Wherefore

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

God approved and rewarded the faith of Abraham, and of Isaac and Jacob as well, by preparing for their inhabitation, and for all the redeemed of all ages, a city whose foundations had, even in their day, been laid prospectively in the blood of Jesus Christ (cf. Heb. 12:22-24).

2. *Note, in the second place, that Abraham's pilgrimage of faith was designed to be typical of the believer's journey.*

(1) *"A voyage to a distant land"—such is the life of every Christian believer.*

"Our life is like the hurrying on the eve  
Before we start on some long journey bound,  
When fit preparing to the last we leave,  
Then run to every room the dwelling round,  
And sigh that nothing needed can be found;  
Yet go we must, and soon as day shall break;  
We snatch an hour's repose; when loud the sound  
For our departure calls; we rise and take  
A quick and sad farewell, and go ere well awake."

(2) *Here we walk by faith, and not by sight, if we are true Christians.* Though in the world, we are not of the world. The worldly spirit deals with things present, but the spirit of faith anticipates the more glorious "things to come." The worldly spirit is neither far-reaching nor far-sighted. Its range is bounded by the horizon of time and sense. It has no wings with which to soar into realms invisible. It is of the earth, earthly. Whence comes the manna? why gushes the water from the rock? whither guides the pillar of cloud and fire?—these are questions it never asks. It knows not how to soar, how to anticipate and trust and wait, how to endure as seeing Him who is invisible, how to repose under the shadow of His wings, unmindful of the dangers of the wilderness and unalarmed by foes. But the heavenly-minded man walks by faith—that faith which is the substance of things hoped for, and



## GENESIS

a conviction with respect to things not seen. And, among all the great verities which possess his soul there is none greater, none nobler, none surer, than his conviction with respect to the saints' everlasting home. All the circumstances of his present journey, all the remembrances, all his reasonings, all his aspirations, point to a Better Land. By faith he sings:

"There is a land of pure delight,  
Where saints immortal reign,  
Infinite day excludes the night,  
And pleasures banish pain.  
There everlasting spring abides  
And never-withering flowers;  
Death, like a narrow sea, divides  
This heavenly land from ours."

(3) *We realize that as far as this present life is concerned we are but strangers and sojourners on the earth.* We dwell in tents, as did Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; in the tabernacles of a night-time. We are here today, and gone tomorrow. There is nothing that we possess here that we can really call our own. All that we shall have in the end is a few square feet of earth in which our mortal remains will be laid away to mingle with the dust. *This is not sentimentality—it is plain fact.* We can't take anything material with us into the next world, for the simple reason that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God. No matter how diligently we may toil and strive to accumulate houses and lands and worldly goods, of what value will these things be when we reach the end of the road? We are pilgrims, nothing more, walking by faith in the direction of the heavenly country which we expect to reach beyond the swelling of the Jordan, the country that will truly be, "Home, Sweet Home." The true Christian philosophy is expressed by Phoebe Carey in these lines:

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

"One sweetly solemn thought  
Comes to me o'er and o'er:  
I am nearer my home today  
Than I have ever been before.

"Nearer my Father's house  
Where the many mansions be;  
Nearer the great white throne,  
Nearer the crystal sea.

"Nearer the bound of life,  
Where we lay our burdens down;  
Nearer leaving the cross,  
Nearer gaining the crown."

(4) *Observation teaches us that much in this life is inequality and injustice.* As far as this world alone is concerned, honesty is not always the best policy, Judas fares about as well as John, and Nero quaffs more of the wine of "living" than Paul. The voice of experience speaks to us that if this life is all, it is scarcely worth the living. In the words of Robert Browning:

"Truly there needs be another life to come!  
If this be all  
And another life await us not for one,  
I say, 'Tis a poor cheat, a stupid bungle,  
A wretched failure, I for one protest  
Against, and I hurl it back with scorn."

(5) *Life as we live it here is largely illusion.* (See F. W. Robertson, *Sermons*, "The Illusiveness of Life"). *Our senses deceive us.* They deceive us with respect to distance, shape, and color. That which, afar off, seems to be oval, turns out to be circular when modified by the perspective of distance; that which appears to be a speck, becomes a vast body, on nearer approach. Stand in the middle of a railroad track, and look in either direction, and the rails

## GENESIS

appear to converge; but they do not actually do so. Look at what we call the horizon and it seems that the earth and sky meet, but they do not actually meet. The beautiful berry turns out to be bitter and poisonous; that which apparently moves is in reality at rest; that which seems to be stationary is in perpetual motion; the earth moves, but the sun, which appears to be moving, stands still. All experience here is but a correction of life's illusions—a modification or reversal of the judgment of the senses. *Our natural anticipations deceive us.* Every human life starts out bright with hopes that will never be realized. These hopes may be different in nature: finer spirits may look on life as an arena for good deeds, while the more selfish regard it as a place only for personal enjoyment; but the results are usually the same. Regardless of the nature of these hopes, the majority will fail of fruition. It would seem almost a satire on life to compare the youth in the outset of his career, flushed and sanguine, with the aspect of the same man when he is nearly done, worn, sobered, covered with the dust of life, confessing that its days have been few and evil. Where is the land flowing with milk and honey? Not on this earth. With our affections it is even worse. Man's affections are but tabernacles of Canaan, the tents of a nighttime, never the same, always changing. Where are the charms of character, the perfection and purity and truthfulness which seemed so resplendent in our friend? Association has rendered them sordid. They were only our conceptions and they proved false; hence we outgrow friendships. Life as we live it here is an unenjoyable Canaan with nothing real or substantial about it. *Our expectations, resting on divine revelation, deceive us.* For example, the attitude of the church with respect to the second coming of Christ. The apostles expected Him to return while they were yet here, and the early churches were vitalized by this hope of seeing the great and notable day of the Lord. John, in penning the

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

last words of the New Testament, expressed this hope, "Come, Lord Jesus." The church, throughout the centuries of the Christian era, has revived and revitalized this hope many times; in fact it has never died away. And even today, if it should turn out that "we who are alive" shall "remain unto the coming of the Lord," we would consider ourselves fortunate indeed. However, He has not come. *He will come*—but not as yet. The promise, "This Jesus shall so come in like manner as ye beheld him going into heaven," remains unfulfilled. *What is the meaning of all this illusiveness of earthly life?* Faith replies that it is not *delusion*, but *illusion*; that the non-fulfilment of the promises literally, is a pledge of their spiritual fulfilment later; that God, by their very non-realization, lures us onward and upward to nobler things. Suppose, for instance, that the spiritual side of the Abrahamic promise had been revealed to ancient Israel at first; suppose they had been informed at the outset that God's rest is inward, that the land of promise is to be found only in the Jerusalem which is above; not material, but immaterial; not visible, but invisible. That rude, gross people, yearning after the flesh-pots of Egypt, willing to go back into slavery so only they might have enough to eat and drink—would they have quitted Egypt on such terms? Would they have taken one step on that pilgrimage which was to find its meaning in the discipline of the ages? No—they had to be lured on by something visible, something tangible. *So we are lured on through life as upon a journey.* Could man see the route before him—a flat, straight road, unbroken by tree or eminence, with the sun's heat burning down upon it, stretching out in dreamy monotony—he could scarcely find either the inclination or the energy with which to begin his journey. It is the very uncertainty of that which is not seen, that which lies just around the bend, that keeps expectation alive. The view we think we may get from yonder summit, the landscape that may be glimpsed as

## GENESIS 532

the road winds around yonder knoll, hopes like these beguile the weary traveler on. So our heavenly Father leads us on, educating us day by day, and hour by hour, to walk in faith, ever holding up the seen as an incentive to the unseen. So He deals with us, luring us on by means of life's unsatisfactory and illusive rewards, ever schooling us in the art of waiting, of enduring as seeing Him who is invisible. Canaan first; then the hope of a Redeemer; and finally the Better Land. *It was in this manner that the ancient saints interpreted this mystery of the illusiveness of life.* They did not regard life as a dream, nor as a bubble, nor as a delusion. Though they no doubt felt as keenly as any moralist could feel, the brokenness of its promises, yet by faith they pressed on, confessing that they were pilgrims and strangers here, that they had no continuing city, never mournfully moralizing about it, but admitting it cheerfully and even rejoicing that it was so. They felt that all was right; they knew that the promise had a deeper than material significance; so they looked for the city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God. They even died in faith, not having received the promises, not expecting to receive them here, but hereafter. *Now observe the glorious result that comes from the indestructible power of believing and continuing on, in spite of apparent failure.* The primitive Christians, for instance, believed in their day that the millenium was at hand. They had heard the apostolic warning, brief and clear, to "watch." Now suppose, instead of this, they had been able to look into the future and see all the dreary pages of church history unfolded, with its heresies, its apostasy and divisions; suppose they could have known that even after two thousand years the world would scarcely know the alphabet of the Christian religion; knowing all these things, what would have become of their gigantic and heroic efforts, their sacrifices, their persecutions and their martyrdoms? With such knowledge of the future, do you sup-

## THE PILGRIMAGE OF FAITH

pose there ever would have been what we consider the heroism, the sacrifice, the passionate zeal of primitive Christianity? It is in this way that God leads His children on, on to realization and achievement through the illusiveness of the past; as a father educates his child, holding up the seen, all the while nurturing the thought of the unseen. Thus we shall continue to the end—to that day when the kingdoms of this world shall become the kingdoms of our God and His Christ. *Thus the non-fulfilment of God's promises becomes to the man of faith an earnest of their deeper and nobler fulfilment.*

(6) *Finally, as in Abraham's case, heaven is the goal of our pilgrimage.* We expect to find illusion here, and we expect to find *reality* hereafter. We know that things here are seen and temporal, and we know, too, that the things we shall enjoy hereafter, the things that are now unseen, will be eternal. Interpreted, then, in the light of faith, *life's illusions are not disappointing; in fact nothing is disappointment if spiritually discerned.* Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called our God; for "he hath prepared for us a city" (Heb. 11:16).

"There's a land that is fairer than day,  
And by faith we can see it afar,  
For the Father waits over the way,  
To prepare us a dwelling-place there."

Just recently Dr. F. B. Meyer, one of England's greatest preachers, entered into rest. Writing to a friend just three days before his death, this is what he said: "Dear Friend: I have just been told, to my surprise, that my days on earth are numbered. It may be that before you receive this letter, I shall have passed within the Palace of the King. Do not trouble to write. I will meet you in the morning. Yours, with much love, F. B. Meyer."

"I will meet you in the morning"—"within the palace of the King." This is Christian faith. This is conviction.

## GENESIS

Death isn't the end, it is the beginning, the beginning of greater growth, greater progress, greater service, and greater joy. As Louise Chandler Moulton has written:

"At the end of Love, at the end of Life,  
At the end of Hope, at the end of Strife,  
At the end of all that we cling to so—  
The sun is setting—*must* we go?"

"At dawn of Love, at Dawn of Life,  
At dawn of Peace that follows Strife,  
At dawn of all we long for so—  
The sun is rising—*let us go!*"

*Conclusion:* "Wherefore God is not ashamed of them, to be called their God; for he hath prepared for them a city." This is the promise! *And God keeps His promises!*

"How beautiful to be with God,  
When earth is fading like a dream,  
And from this mist-encircled shore  
To launch upon the unknown stream!  
No doubt, no fear, no anxious care,  
But, comforted by staff and rod,  
In the faith-brightened hour of death,  
How beautiful to be with God.

"Beyond the partings and the pains,  
Beyond the sighing and the tears,  
Oh, beautiful to be with God  
Through all the endless, blessed years—  
To see His face, to hear His voice,  
To know Him better day by day,  
And love Him as the flowers love light,  
And serve Him as immortals may."

My sinner friend, will you not turn now, and start upon your pilgrimage of faith?