

Commentary

By

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On the

Epistle to the Hebrews

VIVES & RSV

PROLOGUE

‘There is none like you among the gods, O Lord, nor are there any works like yours’ (Ps. 86:8).

1. – In these words Christ’s transcendence is described under two aspects: first as compared to other gods, when he says, ‘There is none among the gods like thee, O Lord’; secondly, as reflected in His effects, when he says, ‘nor are there any works like thine’.

2. – In regard to the first it should be noted that although there is but one God by nature, as it says in Deut. 6:4: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord’, nevertheless, by participation there are many gods both in heaven and on earth: ‘For there be gods many, and lords many’ (1 Cor. 8:5). For angels are sometimes called gods: ‘When the sons of God came to stand before the Lord’ (Jb. 1:6 & 11), and also prophets, as is said of Moses: ‘Behold I have appointed you the god of Pharaoh’ (Ex. 7:1), and priests: ‘You shall not speak ill of the gods’, i.e., of the priests (Ex. 22:28); ‘If the thief be not known, the master of the house shall be brought to the gods’ (Ex. 22:8).

Angels are called gods on account of their rich splendor of divine brightness: ‘Upon whom shall not his light arise?’ (Jb. 25:3). But angels are not like unto Christ among the gods, because He is the ‘brightness of the Father’s glory’ (Heb. 1:3); ‘Setting him on his right hand in the heavenly place above all principality and power and above every name named in this world and in the world to come’ (Eph. 1:20). The prophets are called gods, because the word of God was spoken to them; ‘He called them gods, to whom the word of God was spoken’ (Jn. 10:35). Therefore, Christ is God in some more excellent way, because He is the substantial Word of God. Priests are called gods, because they are God’s ministers: ‘You shall be called priests of the Lord, you ministers of our God’ (Is. 61:6). But Christ is God in a stronger sense, for He is not a minister but the Lord of all: ‘Lord of Lords’ (Rev. 19:16). ‘But Christ was faithful in his own house as a son’ (Heb. 3:6). Christ, therefore, is the great God above all the gods, because He is the splendor, the Word, and the Lord.

3. – Secondly, this transcendence is shown by His works; hence it says, nor are there any works like thine. Here it should be noted that the matchless work of Christ is threefold: one extends to every creature, namely, the work of creation: ‘All things were made through Him’ (Jn. 1:3); a second extends to the rational creature, who is enlightened by Christ, namely, the work of enlightenment: ‘He was the true light which enlightens every man that comes into the world’ (Jn. 1:9); the third extends to justification, which pertains only to the saints, who are vivified and sanctified by Him, i.e., by life-giving grace: ‘And the life was the light of men’ (Jn. 1:4). Now, the other gods cannot perform these works: for the angels are not creators, but creatures ‘Who make your angels spirits’ (Ps. 103:4); prophets are enlightened and not

enlighteners: 'He was not the light, but was to give testimony of the light' (Jn. 1:8); and priests do not justify: 'It is impossible that with the blood of oxen and goats sin should be taken away' (Heb. 10:4).

4. – The transcendence of Christ is thus clearly shown in our text; and this is the subject matter of this epistle to the Hebrews. By this subject matter this epistle is distinguished from the other epistles: for some of the epistles deal with the grace of the New Testament, so far as it extends to the whole mystical body of the Church. This is the theme of all the epistles he sent to the churches, i.e., to the Romans, Corinthians, Galatians, up to the first epistle to Timothy. In the others he treats of this grace, insofar as it extends to individual persons, namely, Timothy, Titus, Philemon. But in the epistle to the Hebrews he treats of this grace, inasmuch as it pertains to the head, namely, Christ. For these three things are found in the body of the Church, just as they are found in the natural body, namely, the mystical body itself, its chief members, namely, prelates and rulers, and the head, namely, Christ, from Whom life flows to all the members.

5. – But before we come to the task of dividing this epistle, it should be noted that before the Council of Nicaea, some doubted that this was one of Paul's epistles for two reasons: first, because it does not follow the patters of the other epistles. For there is no salutation and no name of the author. Secondly, it does not have the style of the others; indeed, it is more elegant. Furthermore, no other work of Scripture proceeds in such an orderly manner in the sequence of words and sentences as this one. Hence, they said that it was the work of Luke, the evangelist, or of Barnabas or Pope Clement. For he wrote to the Athenians according to this style. Nevertheless, the old doctors, especially Dionysius and certain others, accept the words of this epistle as being Paul's testimony. Jerome, too, acknowledges it as Paul's epistle.

To the first argument, therefore, one may respond that there are three reasons why Paul did not write his name: first, because he was not the apostle of the Jews but of the Gentiles: 'He who wrought in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, wrought in me also among the Gentiles' (Gal. 2:8); consequently, he made no mention of his apostleship at the beginning of this epistle, because he was unwilling to speak of it except to the Gentiles. Secondly, because his name was odious to the Jews, since he taught that the observance of the Law were no longer to be kept, as is clear from Acts (15:2). Consequently, he concealed his name, lest the salutary doctrine of this epistle go for naught. Thirdly, because he was a Jew: 'They are Hebrews: so am I' (2 Cor. 11:22). And fellow countrymen find it hard to endure greatness in their own: 'A prophet is not without honor, save in his own country and in his own house' (Mt. 13:57).

To the second argument the answer might be given that the style is more elegant, because even though he knew many languages: 'I speak with all your tongues' (1 Cor. 14:18), he knew the Hebrew language better than the others, for it was his native tongue, the one in which he wrote this epistle. As a result, he could write more ornately in his own idiom than in some other language; hence, he says: 'For though I be rude in speech, yet not in knowledge' (2 Cor. 11:6). But Luke, who was a skillful writer, translated this ornate Hebrew into Greek.

Heb 1:1-2

¹In many and various ways God spoke of old to our fathers by the prophets, ²but in these last days he has spoken to us by a Son, whom he appointed the heir of all things, through whom also he created the world.

6. – He wrote this epistle against the errors of those converts from Judaism who wanted to preserve the legal observances along with the Gospel, as though Christ's grace were not sufficient for salvation. Hence it is divided into two parts: in the first he extols Christ's grandeur to show the superiority of the New Testament over the Old; secondly, he discusses what unites the members to the head, namely, faith (chap. 11).

But he intends to show the New Testament's superiority over the Old by proving Christ's preeminence over the personnel of the Old Testament, namely, the angels, by whom the Law was handed down: 'The law was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator' (Gal. 3:19); and Moses, by whom or through whom it was given: 'The law was given by Moses' (Jn. 1:17); 'There arose no more a prophet in Israel like unto Moses, to whom the Lord spoke face to face' (Dt. 3:10), and the priesthood by which it was administered: 'Into the first tabernacle the priests indeed entered, accomplishing the offices of sacrifices' (Heb. 9:6). First, therefore, he favors Christ over the angels; secondly, over Moses (chap. 3); thirdly, over the priesthood of the Old Testament (chap. 5). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that the angles lack this greatness; secondly, since this is true of Christ, he shows that the angels lack this greatness (chap. 2).

7. – In regard to the first he indicates Christ's excellence in four matters: first, as to His unique origin, by calling Him the true natural Son of God; secondly, as to the extent of His rule (v. 2c); thirdly, as to the power of His activity (v. 2d); fourthly, as to the sublimity of His glory (v. 2e).

But because he intends to extol Christ so that it redounds to the glory of the New Testament, this favors the New over the Old,

8. – About which he mentions five things: first, how it was promulgated; secondly, the time (v. 1b); thirdly, the author or giver (v. 1c); fourthly, to whom it was given (v. 1d); fifthly, by which ministers (v. 13).

9. – He says, therefore, **In many ways**, referring first of all to various persons, because God spoke not to one person but to many, namely, Abraham, Noah and others; secondly, to the various times and always with the same certitude: 'He went out early in the morning,... And about the third hour... And again about the sixth hour...' (Mt. 20:1 ff.). Many also in regard to the matters treated, namely, divine things: 'I am who am' (Ex. 3:14); and future events: 'She knows signs and wonders before they be done' (Wis. 8:8);

and promises of future benefits, at least in figure: ‘Many things are show to you above the understanding of men’ (Sir. 3:25). Many also in the variety of figures; because at one time he uses the figure of a lion, at another the figure of a stone: ‘A stone was cut out of a mountain without hands’ (Dan. 2:34); ‘That he might show you that his law is manifold’ (Jb. 11:6).

And in various ways. This refers to the three kinds of vision: first, ocular vision: ‘In the same hour there appeared fingers, as it were the hand of a man writing over against the candlestick upon the surface of the wall’ (Dan. 5:5); secondly, imaginary vision: ‘I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and elevated’ (Is. 6:1); thirdly, intellectual vision, as to David: ‘I have had understanding above the ancients’ (Ps. 119:100). Hence, Hosea (12:10) includes all of these: ‘I have multiplied visions.’ It refers also to the various ways He spoke, because sometimes He spoke plainly and sometimes obscurely. In fact, there is not manner of speaking that has not been employed in the writings of the Old Testament: ‘Behold, I have described it to you three manner of ways, in thoughts and knowledge’ (Pr. 22:20). Thirdly, because He spoke by rebuking the wicked, by enticing the just, and by instructing the ignorant: ‘All scripture, inspired of God, is profitable to teach, to reprove, to correct, to instruct in justice’ (2 Tim. 3:16).

10. – Then he touches upon the time, when this teaching was delivered, i.e., the past, because **he spoke of old**, i.e., not suddenly, because the things that were spoken about Christ were so great as to be incredible, unless they had been taught bit by bit as time went on. Hence St. Gregory says: ‘As time went on, the knowledge of divine things grew.’ ‘The former things of old I have declared, and they went forth out of my mouth, and I have made them to be heard’ (Is. 48:3).

11. – Thus, he mentions the author, namely, God, Who speaks: ‘I will hear what the Lord God will speak in me’ (Ps. 84:9) For He does not lie: ‘God is not a man that he should lie’ (Num. 23:19).

These, then, are the first three things which commend the Old Testament: authorship, because it is from God; secondly, subtlety and sublimity, because in so many and various ways; thirdly, duration, because of old.

12. – Fourthly, he shows to whom it is delivered, namely, **to our fathers**. This is why it is familiar and known to us: ‘We declare unto you the promise which was made to our fathers’ (Ac. 13:32); ‘As he spoke to our fathers’ (Lk. 1:55).

13. – Fifthly, he indicates the ministers, because it was delivered not by jesters but **by prophets**: ‘Which he had promised before by his prophets’ (Rom. 1:2); ‘To whom all the prophets give testimony’ (Ac. 10:43).

14. – Then (v. 2) he describes the doctrine of the New Testament and mentions five properties. Four of these are differences from those of the Old, and one is the same. For when he had said, **in many and various ways**, he was indicating that every ordered multitude should be referred to one thing. Therefore,

although the manner is manifold, all is ordained to the last thing: ‘Be in the fear of the Lord all the day long’ (Pr. 23:17); ‘The consumption abridged shall overflow with justice. For the Lord God of hosts shall make a consumption and an abridgement in the midst of all the land’ (Is. 10:22). Likewise, of old referred to the time of waiting and of darkness, **but in these last days** refers to our days, i.e., to the time of grace: ‘The night is passed and the day is at hand’ (Rom. 13:12).

15. – It should be noted that in regard to the Old Testament he says, ‘speaking’, but here he says, **has spoken**, in order to designate that the speech of the New Testament is more perfect than that of the Old. To understand this it should be noted that three things are required for our speech: first, the conception of a thought whereby we preconceive in our mind that which is to be spoken by the mouth; secondly, the expression of the conceived thought to enable us to indicate what has been conceived; thirdly, the manifestation of the thing expressed, so that it becomes evident. God, therefore, when speaking, first conceived, so that there was but one conception and that from all eternity: ‘God speaks once’ (Jb. 33:14). This eternal conception is the engendering of the Son of God, concerning Whom it says in Ps. 2 (v. 7): ‘The Lord said to me: you are my Son, this day have I begotten you.’ Secondly, he expressed his concept in three ways: first, in the production of creatures, namely, when the conceived Word, existing as the likeness of the Father, is also the likeness according to which all creatures were made: ‘God said: Be light made. And light was made’ (Gen. 1:3). Secondly, through certain notions; for example, in the minds of the angels, in whom the forms of all things, which were concealed in the Word, were infused, and in the minds of holy men: and this by sensible or intellectual or imaginary revelations. Hence, every such manifestation proceeding from the eternal Word is called a speaking: ‘The word of the Lord which came to him’ (Jer. 1:2). Thirdly, by assuming flesh, concerning which it says in John (1:14): ‘And the Word was made flesh.’ Hence, Augustine says that the Incarnate Word is related to the uncreated Word as the voice’s work is related to the heart’s word.

But the first expression, namely, in creation, is not for the purpose of manifesting. For it is clear that that expression cannot be called a speaking; hence, it is never said that God speaks when making creatures, but that He is known: ‘The invisible things of him, from the creation of the world, are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made’ (Rom. 1:20). But the second expression, which is the infusion of forms in the minds of angels or of men, is directed only to the knowledge of divine wisdom; hence, it can be called a speaking. The third expression, namely, the assuming of flesh, took place of the purpose of existing and of knowing, and for expressly manifesting, because by assuming flesh the Word was made man and brought us to a complete knowledge of God: ‘For this was I born, that I should give testimony of the truth’ (Jn. 18:37). And he clearly manifests Himself to us: ‘Afterwards he was seen upon earth, and conversed with men’ (Bar. 3:38). Thus, therefore, although God speaks in the New and the Old Testaments, He speaks more perfectly in the New, because in the Old he speaks in the minds of men, but in the New through the Son’s Incarnation. Furthermore, the Old Testament was handed down to the Fathers looking on from afar and seeing God from a distance; the New has been handed down to us, namely, to the apostles, who have seen Him in His very person: ‘That which we have heard, which we

have seen with our eyes, and our hands have handled the Word of life, we declare unto you' (1 Jn. 1:1); 'He made not the covenant with our fathers but with us who are present and living. He spoke to us face to face' (Dt. 5:3). Hence, it is clear that that speaking was a promise: 'To Abraham were the promises made' (Gal. 3:16); but the New was a manifestation: 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (Jn. 1:17). Also, in the Old He spoke in the prophets; in the New in His Son, Who is the Lord of the prophets: 'The only begotten, Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (Jn. 1:18).

16. – Does this mean that all the ones through whom God spoke were prophets? I answer that five things are required of a true prophet: first, the revealing of things which transcend human knowledge; otherwise, he would not be called a prophet but a sage, as Solomon, whose mind was enlightened in regard to things within the ken of human reason. Hence, not even the Jew called him a prophet but a sage. Secondly, the understanding of the things revealed; otherwise, he would not be a prophet: 'There is need of understanding in a vision' (Dan. 10:1). That is why Nebuchadnezzar, not understanding the revelation made to him, is not called a prophet, but Daniel, who did understand it, was called a prophet. Thirdly, it is required that in the things he sees and by which he is alienated not be held as though by things themselves, but as in figures; otherwise, he would not be a prophet but a lunatic, who apprehends imaginary things as though they were real: 'The prophet that has a dream, let him tell a dream: and he that has my word, let him speak my word with truth' (Jer. 23:28). Fourthly, that he perceive the things revealed, with certitude, as though known through demonstration; otherwise, it would be a dream and not a prophecy: 'The Lord God has opened my ear and I do not resist: I have not gone back' (Is. 50:5). The fifth requirement is that he has the will to announce the thing revealed; accordingly, some claim that Daniel is not a prophet, because he does not receive the thing revealed in an expressible way. Hence, it is not said that the word of the Lord was made to Daniel, as it said of the other prophets: 'The word of the Lord is made a reproach to me, and a derision all the day. Then I said: I will not make mention of him, nor speak any more in his name; and there came in my heart as a burning fire' (Jer. 20:8).

17. – But another question arises: Why does he say, **in the prophets**, when he might better have said: 'by the prophets?' The answer is that he did this because he wished to exclude certain errors: first, the error of Porphyry, who claimed that prophets invented their statements and were not inspired by the Holy Spirit. To counter this the Apostle says, he spoke in the prophets. As if to say: They were not speaking of themselves, but God was speaking in them: 'For prophecy came not by the will of men at any time: but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit' (2 Pt. 1:21).

Secondly, to exclude the error of those who maintained that prophecy is something natural and can be possessed by one's natural disposition, as a melancholy person might have a very strong imagination; so strong, indeed, that he considers the things he imagines to be real. Hence, it says, he spoke in the prophets. As if to say: Prophecy does not come about through a natural disposition but by an inward utterance of God: 'The Spirit breathes where he will' (Jn. 3:8).

Thirdly, against the error of those who claim that prophecy can be possessed like a habit, as science is possessed, so that whenever a person decides to do so, he can prophesy. But this is not true, because the spirits of prophecy are not always present in the prophet, but only when their minds are enlightened by God; hence, in 2 Kg. (4:27), Elisha says: ‘Her soul is in anguish, and the Lord has hid it from me.’ Therefore, the Apostle says, in the prophets. As if to say: Not that prophecy is possessed by all or always, as habits are, but only in those in whom it pleases God to speak.

Fourthly, to exclude the error of Priscilla and Montanus, who maintained that prophets do not understand their utterances. But this is not true; hence, it is stated in Hag (1:3): ‘The word of the Lord came by the hand of Haggai, the prophet’; and in 1 Cor. (14:32): ‘The spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets.’ That which he says, in the prophets, i.e., in the understanding and power of the prophets. Thus, therefore, is clear Christ’s unique property, namely, that He is the natural Son: ‘The Father is in me and I in the Father (Jn. 14:10).

18. – But is He one of those sons of whom it is said: ‘I have said: you are gods, and all of you the sons of the Most High’ (Ps. 81:6). No; because these are called sons in a general sense, but He is the Son Who was appointed heir and lord of all things.

Is He one of those sons of whom it is said (Jn. 1:12): ‘He gave them the power to become the sons of God, i.e., who believe in his name?’ No; those are said to become the sons; but Christ is the Son through whom he made the world. Is he one of those sons who glory ‘in the hope of the glory of the sons of God’ (Rom. 5:2)? No, because they are sons through the hope they have of God’s glory, but He is the splendor of that glory. Others are called sons, because they were made to the image of this Son: ‘Whom he foreknew to be made conformable to the image of his Son’ (Rom. 8:29), but He is the image itself and the figure of His substance. Others are called sons inasmuch as they contain within themselves the Word of God: ‘That you may be blameless and sincere children without reproof in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation: among whom you shine as lights in the world. Holding for the word of life’ (Phil. 2:15). But He is the true Son Who carries all things by the word of His power.

Therefore, Christ’s supereminence is clear from His unique origin and from His relationship to other sons of God. It is these things which make the New Testament greater than the Old.

19. – Yet in regard to both testaments he says, ‘speaking’, or ‘has spoken’, in order to indicate that both have the same author. This is against the Manicheans: ‘By him we have access both in the same Spirit to the Father’ (Eph. 2:18); ‘Is he the God of the Jews only? Is he not also of the Gentiles?’ (Rom. 3:29). Again, the Old was given to our fathers, but the New to us, i.e., through his Son, Who is the Lord of the prophets: ‘The only begotten Son, Who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’ (Jn. 1:18).

20. – Then he shows the greatness of Christ’s power when he says, **whom he appointed the heir of all things**; for as it says in Gal. (4:7): ‘And if a son, an heir also through God.’ But in Christ are two natures, namely, the divine and the human: insofar as He is the natural son, He is not appointed heir, (He is so

naturally;) but inasmuch as He is man and has become a son of God: ‘Concerning his Son who was made to him of the seed of David’ (Rom. 1:3). Indeed, as a man, He has been appointed heir of all things, just as He has become a son of God: ‘All power is given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18) and it extends to every creature that He has taken under His rule. It extends, therefore, not only to one type of man, but to all, i.e., both Jews and Gentiles: ‘Ask of me and I will give you the Gentiles for your inheritance.’ (Ps. 2:8).

21. – Having shown Christ’s excellence as to His unique origin, he now shows His excellence as to the majesty of His dominion. It is suitable that these two be joined: **He has spoken to us through his Son, whom He appointed the heir of all things**: ‘If a son, then an heir’ (Rom. 8:17). But it should be noted that in Christ are two natures, namely, the divine and the human. But according to the divine nature, since He was not appointed Son, since He is the natural Son from all eternity, so neither was He appointed heir, since He is the natural heir from all eternity. But according to His human nature, just as He was made Son of God: ‘He was descended from David according to the flesh’ (Rom. 1:3), so He was made heir to all things: **Whom he appointed the heir of all things**: ‘This is the heir, come, let us kill him’ (Mt. 21:38). ‘I will again bring an heir to you, inhabitants of Mareshah; the glory of Israel shall come to Adullam’ (Mic. 1:15). Indeed, according to His divine nature it belongs to Christ to be the begotten heir of the Lord. First, because He is the power and wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:18) through Whom the Father makes all things. Therefore, if the Father is called the God of all by reason of creation, the Son also, through Whom all things were brought into existence, is called Lord. ‘I was with him forming all things’ (Pr. 8:30). Secondly, because the Son is the Father’s wisdom, by which He governs all things. In Wis. (8:1) it says of wisdom: ‘She reaches mightily from one end of the earth to the other and she orders all things well.’ Therefore, if the Father is called Lord by reason of governing: ‘You, the Father, govern all things’ (Wis. 13:3), the Son, too, has dominion. Furthermore, the Father is Lord inasmuch as all things are ordained to Him as to first principle and end of all things. So, too, the Son, Who is the wisdom of God preceding all things, is Lord: ‘Wisdom was created before all things. Who can search it out?’ (Sir. 1:3).

But according to His human nature it also belongs to Christ to be heir and Lord of all things. First, by reason of the union, i.e., from the fact that that man was assumed in the person of the Son of God: ‘The Lord God exalted him as Savior’ (Ac. 5:31); ‘He set him over every principality and power and dominion’ (Eph. 1:19). Secondly, by reason of power, because all things obey and serve him: ‘All power has been given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18). Thirdly, by reason of subjection: ‘At the name of Jesus every knee should bow of those in heaven, on earth and, below the earth’ (Phil. 2:10).

But he says, **of all things**, which refers to the totality of all nature, in which he obtains dominion, as it says in Ps. 8 (v. 8): ‘You have subjected all things under his feet.’ It also refers to the whole human race, so that the sense would be: **of all things**, i.e., not only the Jews but also other men, as it says in Ps. 2 (v. 8): ‘Ask of me and I will give you the Gentiles as your inheritance and the ends of the earth as your possession.’ *And of this it is said* (Est. 13:11, Vulgate): ‘You are Lord of all.’

22. – Then (v. 2) when he says, **by whom also he made the world**, he shows the power of Christ’s activity, i.e., why He has been appointed heir of all things. It was not because He was born at a certain moment of time and merited this by leading a good life, as Photinus says, but because all things were originally made by Him, as they were made by the Father. For it was through Him that the Father made all things. For through Him the Father made the world. But it should be noted that the grammatical object of the preposition ‘by’ or ‘through’ designates the cause of an act: in one way, because it causes a making on the part of the maker. For the making is midway between the maker and the thing made. In this usage the object of ‘by’ can designate the final cause motivating the maker, as an artisan works by gain; or the formal cause, as fire warms by heat; or even the efficient cause, as a bailiff acts through the king. But the Son is not the cause making the Father act through Him in any of these ways any more than He is the cause of His proceeding from the Father. But sometimes the object of ‘by’ designates the cause of the action, taken from the viewpoint of the thing made, as an artisan acts through a hammer; for the hammer is not the cause of the artisan’s action, but it is the cause why an artifact made of iron should proceed from the artisan, i.e., why iron [which the hammer strikes] be worked on by the artisan. This is the way the Son is the cause of things made and the way the Father works through the Son.

23. – But is the Son inferior to the Father? It seems so, because that which is the cause of a thing’s being made seems to be an instrument. The answer is that if the power in the Father and in the Son were not the same numerically, and the activity not the same numerical activity, the objection would hold. But the fact is that the power and activity, as well as the nature and the *esse* of the Father and of the Son are the same. Therefore, the Father is said to make the world through Him, because He begot Him forming the world: ‘Whatever the Father does, the Son also does’ (Jn. 5:19). ‘World’ (*saeculum*) here means the temporal span of a created thing. Worlds, i.e., *saecula*, therefore, are successions of times. Therefore, he made not only sempiternal times (in the sense in which philosophers say that God alone made eternal things, and angels created temporal things), but also temporal things, which the Apostle calls worlds (*saecula*): ‘By faith we understand that the world was framed by the Word of God’ (Heb. 11:3); ‘All things were made by him’ (Jn. 1:3).

Thus he removes the Manichean error in two ways: first, in calling God the author of the Old Testament; secondly, in saying that He made temporal things.

1-2

Heb 1:3

³He reflects the glory of God and bears the very stamp of his nature, upholding the universe by his word of power. When he had made purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high.

24. – Having shown Christ’s greatness in regard to His unique origin, the majesty of His dominion and the power of His activity, the Apostle now shows His greatness in regard to the sublimity of His glory and dignity. This is divided into two parts: in the first he shows that Christ is worthy of His dignity; in the second he discloses this dignity (v. 2c). But he shows Him worthy of this dignity for two reasons: one is the ease with which He acts; the other is His diligence and strenuousness in acting: first, therefore, he describes this ease: secondly, His strenuousness (v. 2b).

25. – In regard to the first it should be noted that three things are required for a high dignity to be administered with ease: the first is wisdom, to avoid mistakes in governing: ‘There is an evil that I have seen under the sun, as it were be an error proceeding from the face of the prince: a fool set in high dignity’ (Ec. 10:15); ‘Through me kings reign’ (Pr. 8:15). Secondly, a person must be of noble stock, lest his commands be scorned: ‘Her husband is honorable in the gates, when he sits among the senators of the land’ (Pr. 31:33). The third requirement is power in acting: ‘Seek not to be made a judge, unless you have strength enough to extirpate iniquities’ (Sir. 7:6).

These are the three marks the Apostle uses to show that Christ is worthy of His dignity: first, because He is not only wise but is Wisdom itself; hence, he says, **he reflects the glory of God**; secondly, because He is not only noble but is nobility itself, because **he bears the very stamp [figure] of his substance**; thirdly, because He is not only powerful but is power itself: **upholding all things by his word of power**. But these are the three things which make a person worthy to possess great dignity.

26. – The first is clarity of wisdom: ‘The wise shall possess glory’ (Pr. 3:35). Hence, he shows Christ’s wisdom when he says, **he reflects the glory of God**. Here it should be noted that according to Ambrose: ‘Glory is fame accompanied by praise’, i.e., public knowledge of someone’s goodness. But as it says in Lk. (18:19): ‘No one is good but God alone.’ Hence, He is good *par excellence* and essentially, but other things are good by participation, so that God alone is good *par excellence*: ‘My glory I give to no other’ (Is. 42:8); ‘To the king of ages, immortal, invisible, the only God, be honor and glory for ever and ever’ (1 Tim. 1:17). Therefore, knowledge of God’s goodness is called glory in a most excellent sense, i.e., clear knowledge of the divine goodness accompanied by praise. Such knowledge is possessed by men up to a certain point: ‘I know now in part’ (1 Cor. 13:12), but perfectly by God alone: ‘No one has ever seen God’ (Jn. 1:18). It is true that not even the angels, but God alone comprehends it. Therefore, only God’s

knowledge of Himself is glory in the full sense, because He has perfect and clearest knowledge of Himself. But because splendor is that which is first emitted by a bright object, and His wisdom is something bright: ‘The wisdom of a man shines in his countenance’ (Ec. 8:1), it follows that the first conception of wisdom is, as it were, a splendor. Therefore, the Word of the Father, which is a certain concept of His intellect, is the splendor and wisdom by which He knows Himself. That is why the Apostle calls the Son the splendor of glory, i.e., of the clear divine knowledge. Thus, he identifies Him not only as wise but as begotten wisdom: ‘I will not rest till her just one comes forth as brightness, and her savior be lighted as a lamp’ (Is. 62:1).

27. – The second mark which makes a man worthy of great dignity is noble birth, which he shows in Christ, because he is **the very stamp of his substance**. For it is proper that along with wisdom there be nobility in a prince: ‘And I took out of your tribes men over fifties and over tens, who might teach you all things’ (Dt. 1:15). The word stamp [figure] here is used to denote a mark or an image. As if to say: the image of His substance.

Yet it should be noted that although an image implies a likeness, not every likeness is an image: for the whiteness on a canvas is not my whiteness; but an image is a likeness in species. Therefore, that is properly called an image of someone, which bears a likeness to his species, or is an expressed sign of the species. But among the accidents none is such an expressed sign of a species as a thing’s figure. Hence, one who draws the figure of an animal draws its image. Therefore, the Son ‘Who is the image of the invisible God’ (Col. 1:15) is properly called the figure.

28. – But the figure of what? Of his nature [substance]. For there are many images of things: sometimes it is a sign representing the species but yet not agreeing with it in any way; as the image of a man on canvas, which in no sense possesses the true species of man. Sometimes it is similar to it in species not only in representing, but even in being, as the Son is the true image of His Father: ‘Adam begot a son in his own image’ (Gen. 5:3), i.e., in the nature of his species. Therefore, the Apostle adds, **of his substance**, because according to Augustine a son is called the image of the father, because he is of the same nature as he. He says, therefore, that he is the figure of his nature [substance].

29. – But why does he not say that He is the figure of His nature? Because it is possible for the nature of a species to be multiplied according to the multitude of individuals composed of matter and form. Hence, the son of Socrates does not have the same numerical nature as his father. But the substance is never multiplied; for the substance of the father is not distinct from the substance of the son: for substance is not divided according to diverse individuals. Therefore, because there is one and the same numerical nature in the Father and in the Son of God, he does not say ‘the figure of His nature’, but **of his substance**, which is indivisible: ‘I and the Father are one’ (Jn. 10:30); ‘I in the Father and the Father in me’ (Jn. 14:10).

30. – The third factor which makes a man worthy is strength; hence, it is stated in Sir. (7:6): ‘Seek not to be made a judge, unless you have strength enough to extirpate iniquities.’ Therefore, he shows this strength when he says, **upholding all things by his word of power**. For it is proper to princes and potentates to uphold: ‘Under whom they stoop that bear up the world’ (Jb. 9:13). Therefore, he upholds.

31. – But what does He uphold, and by what agency? In regard to the first it should be noted that anything which cannot stand by itself or walk needs to be upheld. But no creature of itself can subsist or act. The first statement is clear, because once the cause is removed, the effect is removed. But God is the cause of all subsistence, because He is no less the cause of a things’ continuance in existence and of its coming into existence than a builder is the cause of a house’s coming into existence. Hence, just as the house ceases coming into existence when the builder ceases to act, and just as the air ceases to be illuminated when the sun no longer shines; so, when the divine power is removed, the being, the coming-to-be and the substance of every creature is removed. Therefore, He upholds all things in their existence and in their activity: because when the divine influence is removed, all the activities of secondary causes are removed, because He is the first cause; and the first cause does more than the second: ‘Upon what are its bases grounded?’ (Jb. 38:6)

32. – But through what agency does he support them? **By his word of power**. For since the Apostle, when speaking of the creation of things, said that God made all things through the Son: By whom also He made the world, and since that through which a thing acts does not seem to act by its own power but by the power of the one through whom it acts, as the bailiff through whom the king acts by His own power. Hence, the Apostle says, he upholds all things by his word of power. For since the cause of existence and of conservation are the same, when he says that the Son is the cause of conservation, he is showing that He is also the cause of existence

33. – But is it not also by the Father’s power? It is also by His power, because the power of both is identical. He works, therefore, both by His own power and by the Father’s power, because His power comes from the Father. Yet the Apostle does not say, ‘by His power’, but **by his word of power**, in order to show that just as the Father produced all things by the Word: ‘He spoke and they were made: He commanded and they were created’ (Ps. 32:8), so the Son by the same Word that He is, made all things. By these words, therefore, the Apostle shows the strength of His power, because He has the same power as the Father: for the power by which the Father acts is the same as the power by which the Son acts.

34. – But a question arises here, because the Father, when He speaks, produces a Word; when the Word speaks, He should produce a word; and so the Word of the Father should be the word of the Son. The Greeks answer this by saying that just as the Son is the image of the Father, so the Holy Spirit is the image of the Son. This is the way Basil explains the phrase, supporting all things by his word of power, i.e., by the Holy Spirit. For just as the Son is the Word of the Father; so the Holy Spirit, they say, is the Word of the Son; consequently, the Son acts through Him just as the Father acts through the Son. Yet,

properly speaking, an utterance is not called a word, unless it proceeds as something conceived by the intellect in such a way that, as consequence, it proceeds in a likeness of species. But the Holy Spirit, even though He is like, is not like by reason of the way He proceeds, because He does not proceed as a concept issuing from an intellect, but as Love issuing from the will.

35. – But a question still remains about that Word. What is it? For a human command is either externally expressed by a sound, and this has no place in the godhead, because nothing is external to the divine nature, so as to proceed from the Son by Whom all things are upheld; or that command is inwardly conceived in the heart. But even that cannot stand, because nothing is conceived in God's mind but the eternal Word. Consequently, there would be two eternal Words, which it is blasphemous to say.

Therefore, the answer to this argument as Augustine says in explaining Jn. (12:48): 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day', is that I myself, Who am the Word of the Father, shall judge him. Similarly, in the phrase, by the word of his power, i.e., by himself Who is the powerful Word.

36. – Consequently, by those three characteristics he shows three things of Christ: for by the fact that he is the brightness, he shows his co-eternity with the Father; for in creatures splendor is coeval, and the Word is co-eternal. This is against Arius. But when he says, the image of his substance, he shows the consubstantiality of the Son with the Father. For since splendor is not of the same nature as the resplendent thing, then lest anyone suppose that it is not similar in nature, he says that it is the image or figure of His substance. But because the Son, even though He is of the same nature with the Father, would be lacking power, if He were weak, he adds, supporting all things by the word of his power. Therefore, the Apostle commends Christ on three points, namely, co-eternity, consubstantiality and equality of power.

37. – Then (v. 3b) he shows the second trait, which makes one worthy of great dignity, namely, strenuousness and industry in acting. For it was a display of great industry to merit by His suffering sin the assumed nature that which he already possessed by His own divine nature. Hence it is stated in Phil (2:8): 'he became obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross: for which cause God also exalted him.' Therefore, to purify from sin, even though it belongs to Him in virtue of His divine nature, belongs to Him also by the merit of His Passion; hence Sir. (47:13) says: 'The Lord took away his sins and exalted his horn forever'; 'he will save his people from their sins' (Mt. 1:21).

38. – It belongs to Christ to cleanse by reason of His divine nature and by reason of His special sonship. By reason of His divine nature, because guilt or sin is uniquely an evil of the rational creature, and God alone can repair such an evil. For sin lies in the will, which God alone can move: 'The heart is perverse above all things, and unsearchable; who can know it? I am the Lord who searches the heart and proves the reins' (Jer. 17:9). The reason for this is that something close to the end is brought to its end only by the first cause. But the will is concerned with the ultimate end, because it is made for enjoying God;

therefore, it is moved by God alone. Therefore, since Christ is true God, it is obvious that He can cause purification from sins: ‘Who can forgive sins but God alone?’ (Lk. 5:21)

39. – But by appropriation it belongs also to Christ. To understand this it should be noted that in sin is involved, first of all, a transgression of the eternal law and of God’s rights, since all sin is an iniquity which transgresses the law: ‘They have transgressed the law, they have changed the ordinance, they have broken the everlasting covenant’ (Is. 24:5). Therefore, since the eternal law and divine right stem from the eternal Word, it is clear that cleansing from sins is Christ’s prerogative, inasmuch as He is the Word: ‘he sent his Word and healed them’ (Ps. 106:20). Secondly, sin involves a loss of the light of reason and, consequently, of God’s wisdom in man, since such a light is a participation of divine wisdom: ‘And because they had not wisdom, they perished in their folly’ (Bar. 3:28); ‘They err that work evil’ (Pr. 14:22). Furthermore, according to the Philosopher, all evil is ignorance. Therefore, to set aright according to divine wisdom belongs to the One who is divine wisdom. But this is Christ: ‘We preach Christ, the power of God and the wisdom of God’ (1 Cor. 1:24); ‘For by wisdom they were healed’ (Wis. 9:19). Thirdly, in sin is a deformity of the likeness of God in man: ‘The heart of fools shall be unlike’ (Pr. 15:13). Therefore, it belongs to the Son to correct this deformity, because He is the image of the Father: ‘Therefore, as we have born the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly’ (1 Cor. 15:49). Fourthly, there is a loss of the eternal inheritance, the sign of which was man’s expulsion from Paradise: ‘God sent his Son, made of a woman, made under the law, that he might redeem them that were under the law, that we might receive the adoption of sons’ (Gal. 4:4). Therefore, it is obvious that it belongs to Christ to purge sins both by reason of His human nature and by reason of the divine.

40. – But how did He effect this purgation? It is clear from this. For in sin is a perversity of will by which man withdraws from the unchangeable good. To correct this, Christ bestowed sanctifying grace: ‘Justified freely by his grace’ (Rom. 3:24). Secondly, there is in the soul a stain left by the perversity of the will. To remove this stain He gave His blood: ‘He loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood’ (Rev. 1:5). Thirdly, there is a debt of punishment, which a man must pay. To satisfy this debt He offered Himself as a victim on the altar of the cross: ‘Christ loved the Church and gave himself for it in order to sanctify it’ (Eph. 5:25). Fourthly, there is slavery under the devil, to whom man subjected himself by sin, because ‘whoever commits sin is the servant of sin’ (Jn. 8:34). To save us from this slavery He redeemed us: ‘You have redeemed me, O Lord, the God of truth’ (Ps. 30:6).

41. – Then (v. 3c) he describes His dignity. As if to say: It does not seem improper for Him to sit on the right hand of majesty, because He is the splendor and the figure and the upholder of all things. But in the word sit three things are usually implied: One is the authority of the one seated: ‘When I sat as a king with the army standing about him’ (Jb. 29:25). In the divine court there are many who serve, because Dan. (7:10) says: ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to him and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.’ But no one is described as sitting there, because all present are servants and ministers:

‘Are they not all ministering spirits, sent to minister for them’ (Heb. 1:14); but He alone has royal dignity: ‘And he came even to the ancient of days: and he gave him power and glory and a kingdom’ (Dan. 7:13); ‘When the Son of man shall come in his majesty and all the angels with him, then shall he sit upon the seat of his majesty’ (Mt. 25:3). Then he continues: ‘Then shall the king say to them that shall be on his right hand: ‘Come, you blessed of my father’ (Mt. 25:34). The second implication is the stability of the one sitting: ‘Stay you in the city till you be endued with power from on high’ (Lk. 24:49; ‘His power is an everlasting power’ (Dan. 7:14); ‘Jesus Christ, yesterday and today and the same for ever’ (Heb. 13:8). Furthermore, sitting sometimes implies humility, because the person seated is below those who stand: ‘Thou hast known my sitting down’ (Ps. 138:2). But that is not the sense in which it is taken here, but in the first two.

42. – But on the other hand, it says in Ac. (7:55): ‘I see the heavens opened and the Son of man standing on the right hand of God.’ The answer is that sitting and standing and all such postures are said of God metaphorically. Consequently, there are various reasons why He is said to be standing and sitting. He is seated because of His immortality, but standing because that posture is best for resisting firmly. Hence, He stood as though prepared to help Stephen in his agony.

43. – But the Apostle continues, that he sits **at the right hand**. If this is referred to the divine nature, the sense is this: **at the right hand**, i.e., on a par with the Father; but if it is referred to the human nature, the sense is **at the right hand**, i.e., in the more excellent goods of the Father: ‘He sits on the right hand of God’ (Mk 16:19); ‘The Lord said to my Lord, sit thou on my right hand’ (Ps. 109:1). But among those who have assistants some are simply greater, as the king and emperor; others are not absolutely greater, but only in some sense, as overseers and bailiffs. But Christ is not seated on the right of any of His inferior judges, as though He were a bailiff, but on the right of one absolutely great, because He sits on the right hand majesty’ (Pr. 25:27). But Christ, even though He is seated **on the right hand of majesty**, has a majesty of His own, because He has the same majesty as the Father: ‘When the Son of man comes in his majesty’ (Mt. 25:31): ‘Of him the Son of man shall be ashamed, when he comes in his majesty and that of the Father’ (Lk. 9:26).

44. – But he does not say of his majesty alone, but **on high**, i.e., above every creature: ‘I dwell in the highest places’ (Sir. 24:7); therefore, He sits on high, because He is raised above all creatures: ‘For your magnificence is elevated above the heavens’ (Ps. 8:2). According to Chrysostom, the Apostle is speaking here after the manner of one who is teaching a child, who cannot bear to have everything proposed to him, but must be led gradually, now saying difficult things, now proposing easy things. So here, he says divine things, when he says, by a Son, and human things when he says, whom he has appointed heir of all things (v.2).

1-3

Heb 1:4-7

⁴ **having become as much superior to angels as the name he has obtained is more excellent than theirs.** ⁵For to what angel did God ever say, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”? Or again, “I will be to him a father, and he shall be to me a son”? ⁶And again, when he brings the first-born into the world, he says, “Let all God’s angels worship him.” ⁷Of the angels he says, “Who makes his angels winds, and his servants flames of fire.”

45. – As mentioned above, the Apostle devotes this entire first chapter to extolling Christ over the angels by reason of His excellence; hence he lists four things pertaining to Christ’s excellence: first, His origin, because He is the Son; secondly, His dominion, because He is the heir; thirdly, His power, because He made the world; fourthly, His honor, because He sits on the right hand of majesty. But now the Apostle shows that Christ exceeds the angels in these four points: first, in His sonship; secondly, in His dominion (v.6); thirdly, in the work of creation (v.10); fourthly, in regard to the Father’s confession (v.13). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states his proposition; secondly, he proves it (v.5).

46. – He says, therefore: [**Being made**] **having become as much superior to the angels**, i.e., holier and nearer to God. In these words he suggests Christ’s excellence as compared with the angels: ‘Setting him on his right hand in the heavenly places above all principality and power’ (Eph. 1:20).

But here a question arises. How does the Apostle mean this? Is it according to the divine nature or the human: because according to the divine it does not seem to be true, for according to that nature he was begotten, not made; whereas according to the human nature He is not better than the angels: ‘But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels’ (Heb. 2:9). The answer is that Christ had two things according to the human nature in this life, namely, the infirmity of the flesh; and in this way He was lower than the angels: but He also had fullness of grace, so that even in His human nature he was greater than the angels in grace and glory: ‘We have seen him as it were the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth’ (Jn. 1:14). But this is not how the Apostle understood it, for he does not mean that He was made better in regard to grace, but by reason of the union of human nature with the divine; so He is said to be made, inasmuch as by effecting that union He became better than the angels, and should be called and really be the son of God.

47. – Hence, he continues, **as he has obtained a more excellent name than they**. In regard to this name he discloses three differences: first, as to the signification of the name, because the proper name of angels is that they are called angels, which is the name of a messenger. For an angel is a messenger. But the proper name of Christ is that He is called the Son of God; and this name is vastly different from ‘angel’, because no matter how great a difference you might imagine, there would still remain a greater difference,

because they are infinitely apart: ‘What is his name, and what is the name of his son, if thou knowest?’ (Pr. 30:4). For the name of the Son, as that of the Father, is incomprehensible: ‘He gave him a name which is above every name’ (Phil. 2:9).

But one might say that even the angels are called sons of God: ‘On a certain day when the sons of God came to stand before the Lord’ (Jb. 1:6). I answer that if they are called sons of God, they are not so essentially and by nature, but by a certain participation. But He is essentially the Son of God and, therefore, has a name more excellent than the others. And this is the second difference, because they differ as to mode: ‘Who among the sons of God shall be like to God?’ (Ps. 88:7). As if to say: No one by nature.

As to the third he says that He inherited that name; for inheritance follows upon origin. Hence, Christ is the Son by origin and by nature, but the angels by a gift of grace: ‘Here is the heir:’ (Mt. 21:38). Hence, He inherited that name, but not so the angels: and this is the third difference.

48. – Then (v.5) he proves what he has said: first, he discusses the name inasmuch as it belongs to Christ according to His divinity; secondly, inasmuch as it belongs to Him according to His human nature (v. 5b).

49. – In regard to the first he adduces the authority of Ps. 2 (v.7): ‘The Lord said to me: You are my son; this day have I begotten you.’ And this in answer to the question: **To what angel has God ever said, You are my son?** As if to say: He never said these words to any of the angels, but to Christ alone.

Here three things are to be noted: first, the manner of His origin, in the word, **said**; secondly, the uniqueness of His sonship, in the words, **You are my son**; thirdly, its eternity when he says, **This day have I begotten you**. But the manner of His origin is not carnal, but spiritual and intellectual: ‘For God is spirit’ (Jn. 4:29); consequently, He does not engender in a carnal way, but in a spiritual and intellectual way. But the intellect, when it speaks, engenders a word, which is its concept; therefore, it is significant that he says that the Lord said to me, i.e., that the Father said to the Son. Consequently, for the Father’s intellect to speak is to conceive the Word in His heart: ‘My heart has uttered a good word’ (Ps. 44:1); ‘God speaks once, and repeats not the selfsame thing the second time’ (Jb. 33:14); ‘I came out of the mouth of the Most High’ (Sir. 24:5). But if many others are called sons, nevertheless, it is His unique property to be the natural Son of God; but others are called sons of God, because they partake of the word of God: ‘He called gods those who heard the word of God’ (Jn. 10:35). But in regard to the third, that generation is not temporal, but eternal, because this day I have begotten you. Now time differs from eternity, because time varies as the motions whose measure it is; therefore, it is named by the succession of past and future. But eternity is the measure of an unchangeable thing; consequently, in eternity there is not variation due to succession of past and future, but there is only the present. Therefore, it is signified by an adverb of the present tense: this day, i.e., in eternity.

But that which is coming to be, because it does not yet exist, is incomplete; and that which has come to be is complete and, therefore, perfect. Consequently, He does not say, ‘I begot you’, but **I have begotten**, because He is perfect. Yet, lest it be supposed that His entire engendering took place in the

past, he adds, **today**, and joins the past to the present, saying, **I have begotten you today**. This teaches us that this engendering is always going on and is always complete. Consequently, in the word, **today**, permanence is designated; but in **I have begotten**, perfection. As if to say: You are perfect, Son; and yet your generation is eternal and you are always being engendered by me, as light is perfect in the air and yet is always proceeding from the sun: ‘His going forth is from the beginning, from the days of eternity’ (Mic. 5:2): ‘From the womb before the day star I have begotten you’ (Ps. 109:3). But this could be explained also of temporal generation. As if to say: **today**, i.e., in time **I have begotten you**.

50. – Then (v. 5b) he clarifies his conclusion that this belongs to Christ according to His human nature. And he does this by another authority. According to a Gloss, Isaiah says: ‘I will be to him a Father’, yet nothing like this is to be found in Isaiah, except the statement: ‘A son has been given to us’ (Is. 9:6). But in 2 Sam. (7:14) and (1 Chr. 28) we find these very words spoken by the Lord to David in regard to Solomon, through whom Christ was prefigured.

51. – Yet it should be noted that in the Old Testament some things are said of figures not insofar as they are things, but insofar as they are figures; and then they do not apply to Christ, except insofar as He is prefigured. For example in Ps. 71 certain things are said of David or of Solomon, only inasmuch as they prefigured; but other things are said of them, inasmuch as they are men. Such things can then be considered as applying to them as well as to Christ. Thus, ‘and he will rule from sea to sea’ can never be verified of Solomon. So, in the present instance, although certain things are said of Solomon, they can also be said of Christ, Who was prefigured by him.

52. – He says, therefore, **I will be**, which is in the future tense, to denote that the Incarnation of the Son was to occur at some future time: ‘But when the fullness of time was come, God sent his Son made of a woman’ (Gal. 4:4). But above, when He spoke of the eternal generation, He said, **You are**, without implying any movement; but here, when He speaks of the temporal, He says, **unto me a Son**, which denotes the terminus of some motion. For assumption implies a movement toward sonship. And because every movement occurs through the action of something heading toward a definite effect, he first mentions the action of the maker, because the assumption was not made in virtue of the human but of the divine, when he says, **I will be to you a Father**, i.e., I will assume him into a union with the person of the Son.

Then he mentions the effect which resulted, because he was assumed into a personal union with the Son: **He shall be to me a Son**. Luke says of he first: ‘The power of the Most High’, i.e., of the One making the assumption, ‘will over-shadow you’ (Lk. 1:35). Of the second it says in Rom. (1:3): ‘Who was made to him of the seed of David.’

53. – Again, **I will be to him**, i.e., I will glorify him to his honor and profit: ‘Glorify me, Father’ (Jn. 17:5). And **he will be to me**, i.e., to my honor, by manifesting my name to men: ‘I have manifested your name to the men’ (Jn. 17:6).

54. – Then (v.6) he speaks of Christ’s dominion, whereby He is heir of all things. Here he does three things: first, he describes His dominion, particularly over the angels; secondly, the nature of that dominion on the part of the angels (v.7); thirdly, on the part of Christ (v.8).

55. – In regard to the first he adduces the authority of a psalm when he says, **And let all God’s angels worship him**. This is from Ps. 96: ‘The Lord has reigned, let the earth rejoice.’ For worship is paid only to the Lord; therefore, if the angels worship Him, He is their Lord. The Apostle, when he adduces this authority, first touches on the Psalmist’s intention when he says, **and again, when he brings the first-born into the world**. Thus the Psalmist is speaking of Christ’s coming into the world; consequently, he says, and when the Scripture brings in, i.e., was to bring in the first-born into the world. As if to say: ‘We have already said that Christ is a Son above the angels; therefore, He is principally begotten by the Father. Hence, He deserves to be called the first-born: ‘That he might be the first-born among many brethren’ (Rom. 8:29). But this first-born would have to be introduced into the world. And note how precisely the Apostle speaks: for he first says that He is from the Father, **I will be to him a Father**; secondly, that He was assumed into a unity of person, **and he will be to me a Son**.

56. – But now he brings Him to the notice of men, calling the Incarnation His introduction to the world.

But on the other hand, Christ calls it a departure: ‘I have come out of the Father, and am come into the world’ (Jn. 16:28). The answer is that His going out is also an introduction, for if a person seeks to be reconciled to a prince, a mediator first goes out to him and later introduces him. A like situation is found in 1 Sam. (20:42) between David and Jonathan. Thus, Christ, the mediator of God and men, first went to the men and then brought them back reconciled: ‘For it became him who had brought many children into glory’ (inf. 2:10). Or He introduces Him to men’s hearts, because the Scripture, speaking of Christ’s coming, says that he must be acceptable to men’s hearts. But this acceptance takes place by faith: ‘That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17): ‘Declare his glory among the Gentiles’ (Ps. 95:3). For when Scripture says that the Gentiles should believe, it says that Christ is about to enter their hearts.

57. – The use of the word, **again**, is explained in a number of ways. Chrysostom says that the Scripture speaks of the Incarnation of the Word, which is an introduction, not once but again and again. Or another way: He was first in the world invisibly by the power of His divinity, but He introduces Him into the world again according to a visible presence of His humanity. Or another way: because he had said above, to him a Father, i.e., I will assume Him to my personal unity; and when He introduced Him again, namely, the first-born, He is introduced to the unity of person, because it is not enough to say that He is

introduced, unless mention is made how He is introduced, because He is not introduced as though belonging to the world or as the angels, but above all: ‘The host of heaven adored you’ (Neh 9:5); ‘All the angels stood round about the throne, and the ancients fell down before the throne and adored God’ (Rev. 7:11).

58. – Then (v. 7) the reason is given on the part of the angels, why they adore Him. As if to say: It is just that they adore, because they are ministers; hence, he says, **he makes his angels winds [spirits] and his servants flames of fire [ministers]**. For God sometimes acts by enlightening the intellect: ‘He enlightens every man coming into the world’ (Jn. 1:9); but sometimes he moves a man to His work: ‘You have worked our works in us’ (Is. 26:9). God does the first of these by means of His angels: ‘You enlighten wonderfully from the everlasting hills’ (Ps. 75:5). He also does the second in us through His angels, as Dionysius said. Inasmuch as he enlightens through them, they are called messengers; for it is the office of a messenger to declare the things which are in his master’s heart. But inasmuch as they are mediators of divine works, they are both messengers and ministers. But what sort they are is described by bodily things best suited for this: one is air, whose properties are well, suited to a messenger, although the property of fire best suits a minister. For air is receptive of light and of impressions; it gives a true picture of what it receives, and it moves rapidly. These are the characteristics that a good messenger should have, namely, that he receive the news well, report it accurately and do so swiftly. And these characteristics are found in angels: for they receive divine illuminations well, since they are clean mirrors, according to Dionysius: ‘Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father who is in heaven’ (Mt. 18:10). Furthermore, they best transmit what they receive: ‘God signified the things which must shortly come to pass, sending by his angel to his servant, John’ (Rev. 1:1). And they are swift: ‘Go, you swift angels, to a nation rent and torn to pieces’ (Is. 18:2). But they are called spirits, because every invisible substance is called a spirit; hence, even the air is called a spirit. Furthermore, they are fire, inasmuch as they are ministers. But of all the elements fire is the most active and most efficacious for acting; hence in Ps. 103 (v. 5) it says of angels: ‘You make your ministers a burning fire. Fire also causes heat, by which charity is signified: ‘The lamps thereof are fire and flames’ (S of S 8:6). Again, fire always moves upward; so, too, the angels and good ministers always refer what they do to God’s glory, as is clear of Tobias’ angel: ‘Bless the God of heaven’ (Tob. 12:6). He does not say, ‘Bless me’, but ‘bless the God of heaven.’ Not so the evil angel who says: ‘All these will I give you, if falling down you will adore me’ (Mt. 4:9). But the good angel, as a good minister, says: ‘See you do it not’ (Rev. 22:9); and he continues: ‘Adore God’ (Rev. 22:9).

Heb 1:8-9

⁸But of the Son he says, “Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom. ⁹You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; therefore God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness beyond your comrades.”

59. – Having proved by scriptural authority that the angels are spirits, the Apostle now proves this with a reason taken on the part of Christ. Hence, he intends here to prove Christ’s royal dignity. He does two things: first, he commends Christ’s royal dignity; secondly, he shows His fitness for it (v. 9b). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he commends Christ’s royal dignity; secondly, the equity of His rule (v. 8b); thirdly, the goodness of His rule (v. 9a).

60. – He says, therefore, **But of the Son he says: Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever.** These are the words of the Father speaking through the tongue of a prophet as by a writer’s pen. He says, therefore: ‘O God, the Son, your throne is for ever and ever’. In this is denoted the royal majesty; for a throne is the king’s seat, a chair is the teacher’s seat and a tribunal the judge’s seat. All of these belong to Christ, because He is our king: ‘He will reign in the house of Jacob’ (Lk. 1:32) and, therefore, deserves a throne: ‘His throne is as the sun’ (Ps. 88:38). He is a teacher and, therefore, needs a chair: ‘We know that you have been sent a teacher from God’ (Jn. 3:2). He is also our judge: ‘The Lord, our judge, the Lord our lawgiver’ (Is. 33:22). Therefore, he deserves a tribunal: ‘All of us must be manifested before the tribunal of Christ’ (2 Cor. 5:10).

The throne belongs to Him according to His divine nature, inasmuch as He is God: ‘The king of the whole earth is God’ (Ps. 46:8). But as man it belongs to Him as a result of His Passion, victory and resurrection: ‘To him that shall overcome I will give to sit with me in my throne; as I also have overcome and am set down with my Father in His throne’ (Rev. 3:21). This throne is eternal: ‘And of his kingdom there shall be no end’ (Lk. 1:33); ‘His power is an eternal power, which shall not be taken away’ (Dan. 7:14). But it is clear that that kingdom is eternal and that it belongs to Him, because He is God: ‘Your kingdom is a kingdom of all ages’ (Ps. 144:13). It also belongs to Him as man, and this for two reasons: one, because that kingdom is not ordained to temporal affairs, but to eternal: ‘My kingdom is not of this world’ (Jn. 18:36). For He reigns in order to direct men to eternal life. But this is not so of human kingdoms; hence, their kingdoms end with the present life. Another reason is that the Church, which is His kingdom, will last until the end of the world, when Christ will deliver the kingdom to God and to the Father to be consummated and made perfect.

61. – Then he commends his kingdom on its equity when he says, **a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom.** And this kingdom is fittingly described by the scepter: for a tyrannical kingdom differs

from that of a king, because the former exists for the tyrant's benefit with great harm to the subjects; but a kingdom is particularly ordained to the benefit of the subjects. Consequently, the king is father and shepherd: for a shepherd does not correct with a sword but with a scepter: 'I will visit their iniquities with a rod' (Ps. 88:33). Furthermore, a shepherd uses a rod to direct his flock: 'Feed your people with your rod' (Mic. 7:14). For a rod sustains the infirm: 'your rod and your staff have strengthened me' (Ps. 22:2). Furthermore, it troubles the enemy: 'A scepter shall spring up from Israel and shall strike the chiefs of Moab' (Num. 24:17). But this is the scepter of justice: 'He shall reprove with equity for the meek of the earth' (Is. 11:4).

But it should be noted that sometimes a person rules according to the rigor of the law, as when he observes things that according to themselves are just. But it happens that something is just according to itself, but when compared to something else, it causes suffering, if it is observed; consequently, it is necessary that the common law be applied, and if this is done, then there is a rule of equity. But the kingdom of the Old Testament was ruled according to the rigor of justice: 'A yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear' (Ac. 15:10). But the kingdom of Christ is a kingdom of equity and justice, because in it only sweet observance is imposed: 'My yoke is sweet and my burden is light' (Mt. 11:30); 'He shall judge the world with justice' (Ps. 95:13).

62. – Then (v. 9) he commends the goodness of the ruler. For some observe equity not for the love of justice but from fear or for glory. And such a kingdom does not last. But He observes equity for the love of justice. He says, therefore, **You have loved justice**. As if to say: Your scepter is just, because you have loved justice: 'Love Justice, you that judge the earth' (Wis. 1:1). But one who does not love justice is not just: 'Blessed are they that hunger and thirst after justice' (Mt. 5:6). Yet some love justice but are lax in correcting injustice. However, Christ hates, i.e., reproves justice: 'I have hated the unjust' (Ps. 118:113). Similarly, He hates the wicked and his wickedness: 'The highest hates sinners, and has mercy on the penitent' (Sir. 12:3). Therefore, he says, **you have hated iniquity**.

63. – Then (v. 9b) he shows Christ's fitness for accomplishing and governing. But a question arises here concerning the statement, **Therefore, God your God has anointed you**. In those words He is speaking of a spiritual anointing, whereby Christ is filled with the Holy Spirit. But is He so filled, because He loved justice? Then He merited grace. But this is contrary to Rom. (11:6): 'If from works, then not from grace.' And this is a general reason, because Christ in His conception was filled with the Holy Spirit: 'Full of grace and truth' (Jn. 1:14). Therefore, He did not merit. I answer that here one must avoid Origen's error. For he wished all spiritual creatures, and even the soul of Christ, to have been created from the beginning, and according as they have clung to God more or less, or withdrew from Him in the freedom of their judgment, a distinction exists between them and souls. Hence, in the *Periarchon* he says that the soul of Christ, because it adhered more strongly to God by loving justice and hating iniquity, merited a greater fullness of grace than other spiritual substances. But it is heretical to say that any soul, even Christ's soul,

was created before its body. And this is especially true of Christ, because His soul was created and His body formed in the same instant. And the totality was assumed by the Son of God.

Why, then, does he say, therefore? One Gloss seems to feel with Origen. But if we would save it, we must say that in Scripture something is said to come to be, when it is being made known; as when it is stated in Phil (2:8): ‘He was made obedient unto death, even to the death of the cross. Wherefore, God has exalted Him and given Him a name which is above every name.’

Did Christ, then, merit to be God by the merit of His Passion? Not at all. For this is Photinus’ error. Therefore, it should be said that Christ, being God, exceeds all merit; but by the Passion He merited to be manifested everywhere as God, and that God gave Him such a name that would be above every name. Therefore, the fact that he says here, **therefore, God has anointed you**, has the following sense: Since you have loved justice, you deserve to have this matter known. Or, another way and better, he therefore does not refer to a meritorious case, but to a final cause. As if to say: In order that you might have these things, namely, a perpetual throne, a scepter of justice, and the other things mentioned, God has anointed you with the oil of holiness, which the Lord commanded to be done, when the vessels and priests were anointed, as well as the kings, as is clear in regard to Solomon and the prophets, namely, Elisha.

64. – But why was that sanctification brought about by anointing? The reason is literal. For oriental men were anointed before celebrations to prevent exhaustion, because they live in a very warm climate. But poor people were anointed at festivities: ‘I, thy handmaid, have nothing in my house, but a little oil to anoint me’ (1 Kg 4:2). But in the Scripture men were anointed either for the celebration of a feast or for a celebrated person: then to show Christ’s excellence, he says that He was anointed with the oil of gladness. For He is a king: ‘Behold the king shall reign in justice’ (Is. 32:1); ‘For the Lord is our judge, the Lord is our lawgiver, and he shall save us’ (Is. 33:32). He is also a priest: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedech’ (Ps. 109:4). He was also a prophet: ‘The Lord, your God, will raise up to you a prophet of your nation and of your brethren like unto me’ (Dt. 18:15). It also befits Him to be anointed with the oil of holiness and gladness: for the sacraments, which are vessels of grace, were instituted by Him: ‘And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, diverse kind of vessels’ (Is. 22:24). This anointing also befits Christians, for they are kings and priests: ‘You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood’ (1 Pt. 2:9); ‘You have made us a kingdom and priests for our God’ (Rev. 3:10). Furthermore, He has the Holy Spirit, Who is the spirit of prophecy: ‘I will pour out my spirit upon all flesh; and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy’ (Jl 2:28). Therefore, all are anointed with an invisible anointing: ‘Now he that has confirmed us with you in Christ and that has anointed us is God: who has also sealed us and given the pledge of the Spirit in our hearts’ (2 Cor. 1:21); ‘But you have the unction from the Holy One and know all things’ (1 Jn. 2:20).

65. – But what comparison is there between the anointed Christ and anointed Christians? This comparison, namely, that He has it principally and first, but we and others have it from Him: ‘Like the

precious ointment on the head that ran down upon the beard, the beard of Aaron' (Ps. 132:2). And, therefore, he says, beyond thy comrades: 'Of his fullness we have all received' (Jn. 1:16). Hence, others are called holy, but He is the Holy of holies; for He is the root of all holiness.

But he says, **with the oil of gladness**, because spiritual gladness proceeds from that anointing: 'The kingdom of God on not meat and drink, but justice and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit' (Rom. 14:17); 'The fruit of the Spirit is charity, joy, peace...' (Gal. 5:22); 'That he may make the face cheerful with oil' (Ps. 103:15); 'The oil of joy for mourning' (Is. 61:3).

66. – The fact that he says, **God, your God**, is explained in two ways: in one way as being a repetition of the nominative case. As if to say: God has anointed you with God Himself, but we through you, the mediator of God and men, the man Christ: 'By whom he has given us most gracious promises' (2 Pt. 1:4). In another way according to Augustine, so that one is in the nominative case and the other in the vocative. As if to say: O God Who art God the Son, God the Father has anointed you with the oil of gladness. But since Christ was not anointed as God, (for as God it is not fitting that He receive the Holy Spirit, but rather should give Him), the second explanation does not seem to be true. I answer that He is the same person, both God and man: but He was anointed as man. And when it is said, **God, your God, has anointed you with the oil of gladness**, the one anointing is God and man, and the one anointed is God and man, and one with Him in person.

1-5

Heb 1:10-12

¹⁰And, “**You, Lord, founded the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of your hands; ¹¹they will perish, but you remain; they will all grow old like a garment, ¹²like a mantle you will roll them up, and they will be changed. But you are the same, and your years will never end.**”

67. – Above, the Apostle mentioned four things in which Christ excelled the angels, and he proved two of them, namely, that He excels them, because He is the Son and because He is the heir. Now he proves the third, namely, that He excels them in His power of acting, because through Him the Father made the world. But the Apostle proves this on the authority of the same prophet. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows the power of His activity inasmuch as he is Creator; secondly, inasmuch as there is a difference between Creator and creature. In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes the creation of earth; secondly, of the heavens (v. 10b).

68. – It should be noted in regard to the first that this can be interpreted in two ways: in one way, so that it is taken to be a word of the prophet directed to the Father. As if to say: **You, Lord**, namely God the Father, **founded the earth in the beginning**, i.e., in your Son, Who is the beginning: ‘I am the beginning who also speak to you’ (Jn. 8:25). And this is the same as saying: You founded the earth through the Son: ‘You have made all things in your wisdom’ (Ps. 103:24). But the Son is Wisdom begotten: hence, above he called him the splendor of His glory. And what he says here corresponds to what he had said above: by whom also he made the earth. In another way, so that it is a word directed to the Son. As if to say: **And you, O Lord, founded the earth in the beginning**, namely of time. This is to exclude the opinion of those who say that the world is eternal; or in the beginning, namely, of the production of things, to exclude the opinion of those who say that bodily things were not created with spiritual things, but after: ‘In the beginning God created heaven and earth’ (Gen. 1:1); ‘He that lives forever created all things together’ (Sir. 18:1).

69. – But it should be noted that the earth can be distinguished from heaven in three ways: in one way, so that by the earth is understood the element earth, and by heaven the higher bodies; so that just as Moses made not mention of the air, because it exists with water, so here he understood by heaven the very heaven and the other two elements, namely, air and fire, which most resemble the nature of the heavens and which is clear from their place. And this is the way Moses took it (Gen. 1:1). And he says, **you didst found**, to show that three things pertain to the earth: first, the earth’s rest, for all other things partake of motion, but the earth alone according to its totality remains motionless. As if to say: **You have founded**, i.e., firmly established: ‘Who has founded the earth upon its own bases’ (Ps. 103:5). Secondly, to show the perpetuity of the world, for the foundation of a building is its most enduring part: ‘But the earth

remains for ever' (Ec. 1:4). And according to this he says, **You have founded**, i.e., established for ever. Thirdly, to show the order of the earth; because, just as the foundation, which is the first part of a building, is below, so earth holds the lowest place among the elements: 'My hand also has founded the earth' (Is. 48:13); 'His hands formed the dry land' (Ps. 94:5). He does not say, 'You made the heavens', but **the works of your hands are the heavens**, because that which a person makes with his hands, he seems to make with greater care. Consequently, he speaks this way to signify their nobility and beauty: 'My right hand measured the heavens' (Is. 48:13).

70^a. – In another way, so that by earth he understands every bodily nature; then you founded, because matter is the place and foundation of forms; but by heavens, spiritual substances: 'Praise him, you heavens of heavens' (Ps. 148:5). And these are the works of His hands, because He made them to His own image and likeness. Or, by earth those who are imperfect in the Church and are the foundation of the others (for if there were no active life in the Church, the contemplative life could not exist), and by heavens, the contemplatives. And these were made in the Church in the beginning, i.e., by the Son: 'I have placed my words in your mouth, that you might found the earth, i.e., the imperfect, and plant the heavens' (Is. 51:16).

70^b. – But in regard to the heavens, he says, **the works of your hands are the heavens**. He says, **the works of your hands**, and not simply, **you made the heavens**, for four reasons: first, to exclude the error of those who say that God is the soul of the world and, consequently, what the whole earth and its parts should be worshipped as God, as idolaters did. But he excludes this when he says, **the works of your hands are the heavens**. As if to say: They are not proportioned to you as the body is to the soul, but they are subject and proportioned to your power and will: 'Lest perhaps, lifting up your eyes to heaven, you see the sun and the moon and all the stars of heaven, and being deceived by error, you adore them' (Dt. 4:19). Secondly, to designate the dignity and beauty of the heavens, because we say that we make that with our hands which we make carefully. Therefore, to show that the heavens were made by divine wisdom in a more excellent way than the other bodily creatures, he says, **the works of your hands are the heavens**, and this is clear; because the diversity in those lower things can be reduced to the disposition of the matter, but the diversity of heavenly bodies can be reduced only to divine wisdom. That is why, whenever mention is made of the creation of the heavens, prudence and understanding or something of that sort are also mentioned: 'The Lord has established the heavens by prudence' (Pr. 3:19); 'Who made the heavens in understanding' (Ps. 135:5). Thirdly, to show that in the heavens the divine power of the Creator is more striking; for there is nothing in creatures in whose condition so much of God's power appears; and this is because of their magnitude and order: 'For by the greatness of the beauty and of the creature, the Creator of them may be seen' (Wis. 13:5). Fourthly, to show that of all bodies the heavenly body receives God's influence more directly: 'Do you know the order of heaven, and can you set down the reason thereof on the earth' (Jb. 38:33)? As if to say: 'If you consider carefully the disposition of the heavens, you cannot attribute the cause of its order to any earthly thing, but to God.'

70^c. – It can be explained in another way, so that by earth is meant all bodily matter, and by heavens, spiritual substances. Then the sense is this: In the beginning of time you founded the earth, i.e., corporeal matter, i.e., you have established it as the foundation of forms. This is the way to understand the statement of Ps. 148 (v. 7): ‘Praise the Lord from the earth, you dragons and all you deeps.’ **But the heavens**, i.e., spiritual substances: ‘Praise him, you heavens of heavens’ (Ps. 148:4) **are the works of your hands**, because you made them to your image likeness.

70^d. – It can be explained a third way, so that by earth are understood the lowly ones in the Church. And they are said to be founded, because they are, as it were, the foundation of the others: for unless there were actives in the Church, the contemplatives would have no subsistence; **but the heavens**, the contemplatives and more perfect, **are the work of your hands**, i.e., endowed with a more outstanding excellence: ‘The heavens published the glory of God’ (Ps. 18:2); ‘Hear, O you heavens, and give ear’ (Is. 1:2).

71. – Then (v. 11) he shows the difference between Creator and creature, and this in regard to two things which are proper to the Creator; the first is eternity; the second is immutability (v. 11c). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he puts a limitation on the creature; secondly, no limitation on God (v. 11b).

72. – He says, therefore: **they**, i.e., the heavens, **shall perish**. But Ec. (1:4) says that ‘the earth stands forever’. Therefore, it seems that it will last longer than the heavens. I answer according to Augustine and the Philosopher that in every change there is a coming into existence and a ceasing to exist. Therefore, when he says that the heavens shall perish, this is not to be understood of their substance, concerning which Jb. (37:18) says: ‘The heavens are most strong, as if they were of molten brass’, but of their state which they now have: ‘I saw a new heaven and a new earth’ (Rev. 21:1); ‘The fashion of this world passes away’ (1 Cor. 7:31).

But how will they change their state? In various ways, because the higher heavens are moving in regard to place, but are not altered, whereas the lower heaven, namely, fire and air, are moved and altered and subject to corruption. Therefore, the state of all the heavens is changeable; but then, movement will cease in the higher heavens and corruption in the lower heavens, because the air will be purged by fire: ‘But the heavens and the earth which exist now, by the same word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men’ (Ps. 101:13).

73. – Here he shows the permanence of the Creator. As if to say: ‘In you there is no change nor shadow of change’ (Jas. 1:17). This can be understood of Christ as man: ‘Jesus Christ, yesterday and today and forever’ (Heb. 13:8).

74. – Then (v. 11b) he shows the difference between God and creature so far as immutability is concerned. In regard to this he does two things: first, he mentions the mutability of the creature; secondly, the immutability of God (v. 12b). In regard to the first he does two things: first he describes the nature of the creature’s mutability; secondly, he mentions that mutability (v. 12).

75. – In regard to the first it should be noted that old and new follow upon time. Hence only that can grow old which is somehow measured by time, whereas the mobile thing is measured by the ‘now’ of time. Therefore, newness and oldness can be found in the heavens. But the heavens do not grow old as though their substance shrank or were changed into something else, but only in regard to the length of time by which they will no longer be measured. Therefore, he says, **as a garment shall you change them**, not as though the cause of their change will be the loss of their power; for if the motion of the heavens ceased from a lack of power, that cessation would have a natural cause and could be isolated by natural reason, the contrary of which is stated in Mt. (24:36): ‘Of that day and hour no one knows, no not the angels of heaven, but the Father alone.’ Therefore, it will be due to some end that this motion will cease, because all bodily creatures are ordained to spiritual creatures, and all changed which serve generation and ceasing-to-be are ordained to the generation of man. Therefore, when the generation of men ceases, i.e., when the number of the elect and predestined is filled, that motion will cease; hence, it is called a garment, which is put on to be used and cast off, when it can be used no more. Thus, a man removes a warm garment in summer and a cool one with the coming of winter. Thus, therefore, the state of the world, which is now adjusted to that end, will no longer be adjusted, when the number of the elect is filled. Then it will be cast aside as a garment: ‘Heaven and earth shall pass away’ (Lk. 21:33).

76. – Then he posits that mutability when he says, **and as a garment shall you change them**, i.e., the heavens. Well does he say, **you shall change them**, because it will not be by their own power, nor of themselves, but by God’s power that they will be changed from motion, as a garment which is put on to be used, and after it is used, is put off, as the seasons require. He says, **a garment**, because man’s glory is both disclosed and hidden by a garment. So, too, God is both revealed and hidden by creatures: ‘The invisible things of God from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood’ (Rom. 1:20); ‘For by the glory of the beauty and of the creature, and the Creator of them may be seen’ (Wis. 13:5). He says, **they shall be changed**, because they will remain changed for ever. The same is true of the spiritual heavens, which will perish from the present life through the death of the body: ‘We all die and like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth’ (2 Sam. 14:14); ‘The just perishes, and no man lays it to heart’ (Is. 57:1). Likewise, they shall fail, because as it says below (8:13): ‘That which decays and grows old is near its end.’ And you shall change, namely, their bodies, when this bodily thing puts on incorruption (1 Cor. 15:53); and **they shall be changed**, namely, as to their mind, when they pass from seeing in a dark manner to seeing face to face: ‘All the days in which I am now in warfare I expect until my change come’ (Jb. 14:14).

77. – Then he mentions God’s immutability when he says, **but you are the same**. Here he does two things: first, he states his intention; secondly, he shows this by a sign; **and your years will never end**. He says, therefore, **they shall perish**, but you, namely, the Son of God, **are the same**, i.e., you continue the same and are never changed: ‘I am the Lord and I change not’ (Mal 3:6); ‘With whom there is no change nor shadow of alteration’ (Jas. 1:17). He gives the sign of this immutability when he says, your years never end.

Here it should be noted that God’s years are His duration, just as a man’s years are. But a man’s duration fails in two ways: first, in its parts, because, since he is temporal, one part succeeds another, and when one succeeds, the predecessor fails; secondly, as a whole, because it ceases altogether. But neither of these failures is found in God’s duration, because He continues for ever, and the parts of His duration are eternal, and all exist together without succession: ‘The number of his years cannot be computed’ (Jb. 36:26).

78. – But if His duration is one and unchangeable, why say years in the plural and not year in the singular? The reason is that our intellect takes its knowledge of intelligible through the sensible, because all our knowledge is drawn from the senses; hence even God, Who is absolutely simple, is described under a likeness of bodily things: ‘I say the Lord sitting upon a throne lofty and elevated’ (Is. 6:1). So, too, His duration is described by us in terms of what is familiar, even though it is uniform and simple. Hence, it is sometimes called a year, and sometimes a day or a month, because it includes all of time’s differences.

1-6

Heb 1:13-14

¹³But to what angel has he ever said, “Sit at my right hand, till I make your enemies a stool for your feet”? ¹⁴Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to serve, for the sake of those who are to obtain salvation?

79. – Above, the Apostle proved three things in which Christ excels the angels; here he proves a fourth, namely, that He sits on the right hand of majesty, which pertains to His dignity. In regard to this he does two things: first, he adduces David’s authority to show this; secondly, he shows that the angels lack this dignity (v. 14). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he describes Christ’s dignity; secondly, he manifests this with a sign (v. 13b).

80. – He says, therefore: **to what angel has he**, namely, God, **ever said?** As if to say: It is not found that God said this to an angel, but He said it to Christ. And Christ Himself claims that this was said of Him. But what He says, namely, **sit at my right hand**, can be referred to the divine nature in which Christ is equal to the Father, because He has judiciary and royal power equal to the Father: ‘All that the Father has are mine’ (Jn. 16:15). Indeed, the Father Himself said this from eternity, because He engendered the Son by speaking, and by engendering gave Him equality with the Father. It can also be referred to the human nature, according to which He sits near the transcendent goods of the Father. In this case the Father spoke, when He joined His Word to a human nature.

81. – Then (v. 13b) he shows Christ’s dignity with a sign. But two questions arise here: first of all, because from all eternity all things are subject to the Son inasmuch as He is God; secondly, because in the resurrection Christ said: ‘All power is given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18), what does He expect shall be subjected to His footstool?

But it should be noted that something can be in someone’s power in two ways: in one way in regard to his authority, and then all things have been subject to the Son of God from all eternity, inasmuch as they were decreed to be done, and in the time they existed, they were subject to the Son of God as God, but to Him as man they were subject from the time of His conception as man. In another way, in regard to the exercise of His power; and then all things are not yet subject to Him, but only at the end of the world, because He does not yet exercise His power over all things by subjecting them to Him: ‘According to the operation whereby also he is able to subdue all things to Himself’ (Phil. 3:21).

But why does he say, **footstool**? Perhaps because that word signifies nothing more than full and perfect subjection, for that is said to be perfectly subject to someone which he can tread under foot; or because just as God is the head of Christ, as it says in 1 Cor. (11:3), so Christ’s feet would be His

humanity: ‘We shall adore in the place where his feet stood’ (Ps. 131:7). I will make them your footstool, i.e., not only will I subject you enemies to your divinity, but even to your humanity.

82. – Origen erred on this point, for he understood only one type of subjection, saying that just as being subject to the light is nothing more than being enlightened, so, since Christ is truth, justice and goodness and whatever else He can be called, to be subjected to the Savior is nothing less than to be saved. Therefore, he desired that in the end all things, including the devils, would be saved, because otherwise all things would not be subjected to Christ. But this is contrary to what is stated in Mt. (25:41): ‘Depart, you accursed, into everlasting fire.’

Hence, it should be noted that there are two types of subjection: one by the will of the subjects, as good ministers are subject to their master, as to their king; in this way, only the good are subject to Christ. The other is by the will of the master, so that some force is exerted on the subjects. This is how the wicked are subject to Christ, not that they desire His dominion, but because Christ will accomplish His will in their regard by punishing them, who refused to do His will here. And this is what is designated by the footstool, because whatever is tread upon is crushed: ‘Heaven is my throne and the earth my footstool’ (Is. 66:1).

83. – Another question concerns the statement, **until I make your enemies your footstool**, because if He sit *until* they are made his footstool, then when they are made his footstool, He will no longer sit. I answer that words as until or as long as are sometimes used finitely, namely, when they designate the end of that to which they are joined, as when I say, ‘Sit here till I come’; but sometimes they are used infinitely, when no end is mentioned, as when I say: ‘He did not repent as long as he lived’, because he did not repent even after death. For, as Jerome says, that would be designated about which there might be doubt, but that which is not in doubt is left to the one understanding. But there is doubt whether a person will repent in this life, but not so after death. So, too, in the present case: for since many now attack and blaspheme Christ, there is doubt whether He is sitting now, but there is not doubt that He will sit, when all things are subject to Him; therefore, it is not expressed.

84. – Then he shows that this dignity does not belong to the angels, when he says, **Are they not all ministering spirits?** Here he does three things: first, he indicated their function; secondly, the performance of that function (v. 14b); thirdly, the fruit of that performance (v. 14c).

85. – He says, therefore: **Are they not all ministering spirits?** ‘His ministers who do his will’ (Ps. 102:21). But Dan. (7:10) says: ‘Thousands of thousands ministered to him, and ten thousand times a hundred thousand stood before him.’ Therefore, there are some who minister and some who stand about. Consequently, not all minister.

I answer that just as in the case of artifacts there are two kinds of artisans (for some work with their hands, and others do not, but oversee and direct what is to be done), so, too, with the angels, because

some carry out the divine commands, while others oversee and direct their performance. Therefore, if we take ministers in a broad sense to include both the executors and the directors, than all are ministers, inasmuch as the higher ones carry out God's will in regard the middle ones, and these in regard to the lower, and the lower in regard to us. But if those who perform are called ministers, while those who are immediately enlightened by God are called assistants, then some minister and some assist and direct the others.

86. – Therefore, the assistants are those who receive God's illumination directly from God Himself, and they receives names related to God, such as Seraphim, i.e., those who love God, Cherubim, those who know God, and Thrones, who carry. But the ministering spirits are those who receive from them and deliver to the others.

But this seems to be contrary to Gregory's statement that those who stand about are the ones who enjoy the beatific vision. Therefore, since all the angels see God's essence, according to Mt. (18:10): 'Their angels always see the face of my Father in heaven', it seems that all assist. I answer that one of the first scholars to study Dionysius' books strove to preserve both the Apostle's and Gregory's opinions and said that the lower angels do not see God fact to face, since they are not standing near. But this opinion is heretical, because, since happiness is made complete in the vision, it would follow that since the lower angels do not see God, they are not happy. Furthermore, the Lord Himself said: 'Their angels in heaven always see the face of my Father' (Mt. 18:10). Therefore, it must be admitted that all see God's essence; just as God by knowing His essence also knows Himself and all things not Himself, so, too, the angels, seeing the essence of God, know it and all things in it. In this vision they are happy only because they see Him; not because they see other things in Him. Hence, Augustine says in the *Confessions*: 'Blessed is he that sees you, even if he does not see others. But he that sees you and other things in not any the happier for seeing the other things, but only for seeing you.' But the vision by which they see God's essence is common to the beatified. In the vision by which they know all other things in God one angel is above another, for the higher angels, being of a higher nature and intellect, see more in God than the intermediate do, and these more than the lowest. Hence, they see everything which pertains to their office and which are to be accomplished by the others. These things the lower angels do not see as perfectly; therefore, some apprise the others of their duties, and they alone stand about. Nevertheless, all see God. The sign of this, according to Dionysius is that to some angels who ask, God answers: 'I that speak justice'; but to the question: 'Who is king of glory'? The angels and not God answer: 'the Lord of hosts, he is the king of glory'. Thus, the function of the angels is clear.

87. – But this seems to be a description of the function they perform, when he says, **sent forth to serve**. Therefore, it seems that all are performers: 'The angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear him: and shall deliver them' (Ps. 33:8; Is 6:6): 'One of the seraphim flew to me.' But the seraphim belong to the highest order. Therefore, is they are sent, then *a fortiori* so are the others. But this is

contrary to Dionysius, who repeats what he received from the Apostle, namely, that only the lower angels are sent.

I answer that some say that the higher are sent and they depart when certain cases arise. But it seems to me that the four highest orders, namely, the Seraphim, Cherubim, Thrones and Dominations are never sent, but the lower are sent. This is obvious from their names: for the Virtues are sent to work wonders; the Powers to restrain the ethereal powers. But the Dominations are so called, because they ordain all these lower ones. But the other three orders receive their name from the action they immediately perform in regard to God, and they dispense it to the others. Hence, if they are said to be sent, it is because there are two kinds of mission: one implies local motion, and this is the way the lower angels are sent; the other is the mission which involves the application and direction of a new effect in the creature, and this is the way the Son and the Holy Spirit are sent. It is also the way the higher angels are sent, because their power is sent to the lower ones to be sent to others. And if he says: ‘One of the seraphim flew to me’ (Is. 6:6), it is because the lower angels use the names of those by whose power and authority they act, and they attribute their actions to them. And because that lower angel performed his office in virtue of the Seraphim, he was called by the name of Seraphim, even though he was not by nature a seraph.

88. – Then he mentions the fruit of their activity when he says, **for the sake of those who are to receive [the inheritance of] salvation**. And although all are called, not all receive the inheritance. Therefore, the ones who do receive, obtain the fruit of the mission: ‘We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed’ (Jer. 51:9). Or again when he says, for them that **shall receive [the inheritance of] salvation**, the fruit of their performance is mentioned, which is that men receive the inheritance of salvation. For the purpose of their actions toward men is that the number of the elect be filled. And he says, for them, and not for all, because, although all are called, few are chosen, as it says in Mt. (22:14). He says, the inheritance, because only the sons obtain it: ‘But if sons, then heirs also’ (Rom. 8:17). He says, receive, because the kingdom of God is obtained by labor and sweat and solicitude: ‘The kingdom of God suffers violence’ (Mt. 11:12).

Therefore, they will be saved, who take care to guard the divine illuminations and inspirations impressed by the good angels and to make them fructify; otherwise, they will hear what said in Jer (51:9): ‘We would have cured Babylon, but she is not healed.’

2-1

Heb 2:1-4

¹Therefore we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it. ²For if the message declared by angels was valid and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution, ³how shall we escape if we neglect such a great salvation? It was declared at first by the Lord, and it was attested to us by those who heard him, ⁴while God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will.

89. – After showing in a number of ways Christ’s superiority over the angels, the Apostle here concludes that Christ’s doctrine, namely, the New Testament, deserves more obedience than the Old Testament. In regard to this he does three things: first, he states the conclusion intended; secondly, he supports this conclusion with a reason (v. 2); thirdly, he confirms the consequence (v. 5).

90. – In regard to the first it should be noted that after giving the judicial and moral precepts of the Law in Ex. (chap. 25), He continues in verse 20: ‘Behold, I shall send my angel, who shall go before you and shall bring you into the land;’ and then adds, ‘Take notice of him and hear his voice, and do not think him one to be condemned’ (Ex. 23:21). Therefore, if the commandment of an angel, through whom the Law was delivered, is obeyed, they will enter heaven. Hence, it says in Mt. (19:17): ‘If you will enter into life, keep the commandments.’ Therefore it is necessary to keep those commandments of the Law; but much more to obey the commandments of Him Who is higher than the angels, through whom the Law was delivered. And this what he says, **therefore, we must pay the closer attention to what we have heard:** ‘We have heard a rumor from the Lord’ (Ob. 1:1); ‘O Lord, I have heard your hearing and was afraid’ (Heb. 3:1). Therefore, we ought to observe more closely for three reasons: first, because of the authority of the one speaking, for He is the Creator and the Son of God and not a creature of God’s minister: ‘We ought to obey God rather than men’ (Ac. 5:29); secondly, because of the usefulness of the commands, for they are the words of eternal life: ‘Lord, to whom shall go, you have the words of eternal life’ (Jn. 6:69); others are words of temporal goods: ‘If you would hear me, you would eat the good things of the earth’ (Is. 1:19); thirdly, because of the sweetness of their observance, for they are sweet: ‘His commandments are not heavy’ (1 Jn. 5:3); ‘My yoke is sweet and my burden light’ (Mt. 11:30); ‘This is a yoke which neither we nor our fathers have been able to bear’ (Ac. 15:10).

91. – Secondly, he shows the same thing from the threatening danger when he says, **lest we drift away from it**, i.e., be eternally damned. Here it should be noted that someone drifts away by bodily punishments: ‘Like waters that return no more, we fall down into the earth’ (2 Sam. 14:14). He drifts away worse through guilt; but he drifts away worst by eternal damnation, because not a shard remains:

‘And it shall be broken small as the potter’s vessel, broken all to pieces with a mighty breaking, and there shall not a shard be found of the pieces thereof’ (Is. 30:14).

92. – Then he adduces the reason, which contains a conditional sentence with a comparison between the New and Old Testaments. In the antecedent is mentioned the condition of the Old Testament, and in the consequent the condition of the New Testament. In regard to the Old he mentions three things: first, the authority of the Law; secondly, the solidity of truth (v. 2b); thirdly, the necessity of obeying (v. 2c).

93. – First, he mentions the authority, because the Law was not delivered by human authority but by angels: ‘Being ordained by angels through the hand of a mediator’ (Gal. 2:19); This is he that was in the Church in the wilderness, with the angel who spoke to him on mount Sion and with our fathers’ (Ac. 7:38). Nor is this strange, because, as Dionysius proves, the revelation of divine illuminations reach us through the medium of angels.

94. – He shows the firmness of the truth when he says, **was valid**, because everything foretold in the Old Law has been fulfilled: (Pr. 12:19) ‘The lip of truth shall be steadfast for ever;’ ‘Not one dot or one iota of the law shall pass away until all be fulfilled’ (Mt. 5:18); ‘The words that proceed from my mouth, I will not make void’ (Ps. 88:35). Therefore, it was made valid, because it was not made void.

95. – Then he shows the necessity of obeying, because the disobedient are punished: **and every transgression or disobedience received a just retribution**. Here he mentions one thing which corresponds to a double guilt, namely, to the sin of omission and of transgression. The first corresponds to affirmative precepts; the other to negative precepts. The first is identified by the name, disobedience. But is disobedience a general sin? It seems so: for a sin is specific, because it has a special end. Hence, when someone does not obey a precept with the intention of scorning it, it is a special sin; but when there is another reason, say, concupiscence, then it is a condition following the sin, but it is not a special sin.

The other is called a transgression: ‘I have counted all the sinners of the earth prevaricators’ (Ps. 118:119). Then he mentions something on the part of the punishment: **received a just retribution**. For retribution depends on the amount of guilt, so that one who sins more gravely receives a greater punishment; but the wages depend on the quality, so that one who sins from the fires of lust will be punished with fire. There, he will receive a good wage for good acts and an evil wage for wicked actions. Consequently, retribution is received for good and for evil, inasmuch as it implies distributive justice. It is called just because of the equality of punishment, so that according to the amount of sin there is a certain amount of punishment.

96. – Then (v. 3) he places the consequent of his conditional, in which he describes the condition of the New Testament. Here he does three things: first, he shows the need to obey; secondly, the origin of the New Testament (v. 3b); thirdly, the firmness of its truth (v. 4).

97. – He says, therefore: **If the word spoken by angels punishes transgressors, how shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation?** In this he denotes the danger which threatens those who do not obey. But above he called the Old Testament salvation. The reason for this is that a word is ordained to knowledge only; for this is what the Old Testament did, since by it there came knowledge of sin: ‘By the law is the knowledge of sin’ (Rom. 3:20). Also the knowledge of God: ‘He has not done in like manner to every nation’ (Ps. 75:2). But it did not confer grace, for grace is conferred in the New Testament: ‘Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ’ (Jn. 1:17), which leads to eternal salvation: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life’ (Jn. 6:69); ‘Your word is exceedingly refined’ (Ps. 118:140). Then he commends salvation, because it is so great. And certainly it is very great, if you consider the danger from which it frees us, because it frees us not only from the dangers of bodily death but of spiritual: ‘He will save his people from their sins’ (Mt. 1:21). It is also great, because it is universal, i.e., not confined to one nation or to one danger, but it is for all men and from all enemies: ‘He is the savior of all men, but especially of the faithful’ (1 Tim. 4:10); ‘That being delivered from the hand of our enemies, we may serve him without fear’ (Lk. 1:74). It is also great, because it is eternal: ‘Israel is saved in the Lord with an eternal salvation’ (Is. 45:17). Therefore, it should not be neglected, but we should be careful to obtain it: ‘We have seen the land which is exceedingly rich and fruitful’ (Jg. 18:9); then he continues: ‘Neglect not; lose no time; let us go and possess it: there will be no difficulty’ (Jg. 18:9) And of course we should not neglect it, because if we are negligent, we shall be punished not only by losing what is good but also by incurring evil, namely, eternal damnation, which we shall not be able to escape.’ Hence, he said, How shall we escape? ‘Who has shown you to flee the wrath to come’ (Mt. 3:7)? ‘The way to escape shall fail them’ (Jb. 11:20); ‘Wither shall I go from your spirit; or whither shall I flee from your face’ (Ps. 138:7)?

98. – Then (v. 3b) he shows the origin of the doctrine of the New Testament. Here he mentions a double origin: first of all, that it came not by angels but by Christ: ‘He has spoken to us in his Son’ (Heb. 1:2); ‘The only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’ (Jn. 1:18). Hence, he says, **it was declared at first by the Lord**, because it has two beginnings: one is absolute and from all eternity; and this is through the Word: ‘He chose us in him before the foundation of the world’ (Eph. 1:4). The other is the beginning of the declaration, and this occurs in time through the Incarnate Word. The second origin was through the apostles, who head from Christ; hence, he says, **was attested to us by them that heard him**, i.e., by its preachers: ‘That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen, we declare unto you’ (1 Jn. 1:1); ‘Who from the beginning were eyewitnesses’ (Lk. 1:2).

99. – Then he mentions its solidity, which is greater than that of the Old Testament, as God testifies, Who cannot lie; hence he says, **while God also bore witness by signs and wonders**. But it should be noted that testimony is made by speech, which is a sense-perceptible sign. But God gave testimony with two sense-perceptible signs, namely, by miracles and by the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In regard to the first he says, **while God bore witness by signs** as to lesser miracles, such as healing a fever or curing a lame

person (Ac. 3) **and wonders**, as to greater miracles, such as the raising of the dead: ‘Tabitha, arise’ (Ac. 9:40). But the greatest wonder was that God became man: ‘Behold, I and my children whom the Lord has given me for a sign’ (Is. 8:18), namely, that I who am a man and my children should believe this. For it was a marvel that the human heart should believe this. He said, **by various miracles**, so that signs and wonders refer to acts which exceed the power of nature, namely, a sign would be something beyond and above nature, though not contrary to it; while a wonder is something contrary to nature, as the raising of the dead.

In regard to the second, i.e., the gifts, he says, **and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will**. This seems to be contrary to Wis. (7:27): ‘The spirit is one’ how is he distributed. The answer is that He is not distributed as to His essence, but as to His gifts: ‘There are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit’ (1 Cor. 12:4). For all gifts are attributed to the Holy Spirit, because they proceed from love, which is appropriated to the Holy Spirit, as Gregory says: ‘Truly the Holy Spirit is love.’

Heb 2:5-8

⁵For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. ⁶It has been testified somewhere, “What is man that you are mindful of him, or the son of man, that you care for him? ⁷You made him for a little while lower than the angels, you have crowned him with glory and honor, ⁸putting everything in subjection under his feet.” Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him.

100. – Having made a comparison to show that it is more necessary to observe the commandments of Christ than those of the Law delivered by angels, the Apostle now confirms the consequence. First, he confirms this consequence by showing that Christ’s power is greater than that of the angels; secondly, he proves this on the authority of Scripture (v. 6).

101. – He says, therefore, that they will undergo severer punishments who act against Christ’s commandments than those who act against the commandments of angels, because Christ is Lord, and a person who offends his Lord is punished more than one who sins against a servant. That Christ is Lord is shown by the fact that God has not subjected the earth to angels but to Christ. He does two things: first, he shows that the earth is not subject to angels; secondly, he shows which earth he means (v. 5c).

102. – The earth is not subject to angels: ‘What other has he appointed over the earth, or whom has he set over the world he made’ (Jb. 34:13)? But Daniel (chap. 10) says that an angel was the prince of the Greeks and of the Persians, and in Dt. (32:8) it says: ‘He appointed the bounds of people according to the number of the children of Israel.’ But it should be noted that they are not subject to them as to a lord, but as to a vicegerent: for all visible creation is administered by angels: ‘His ministers who do his will’ (Ps. 102:21).

Or, **it was not to angels that God has subjected the world to come**, i.e., that world which is to come, because in Scripture something is described as coming, not in relation to us but in relation to that to which it is compared, as the Apostle says of Adam in relation to Christ: ‘Who is the form of the future’, (Rom. 5:14), for Christ is not future in relation to Himself, but in relation to Adam. So, here, this earth is said to come not in relation to us but in relation to Christ, Who exists from all eternity, whereas the earth exists in time.

103. – And because the Manicheans say that the earth is subject to an evil god and not to the good God, he adds, **of which we speak**, namely not of some other world, but of this one; or because he had said above, they shall perish, namely, the heavens, and they shall be changed, which, as was explained there,

is understood of the state but not of the substance of the world Hence, there are two states of the world: one is its present state: ‘But the heavens and the earth which are not, by the same Word are kept in store, reserved unto fire against the day of judgment’ (2 Pt. 3:7); the other is its future state. But in the world which now exists not all things are subject to Him as far as the execution of His power is concerned, although they are subject to His authority; but in that future state the earth will be subject to Him; hence, he says, of which we speak.

104. – Then he proves by an authority, when he says, **it has been testified somewhere**. Here he does three things: first, he commends the value of the testimony to be adduced; secondly, he adduces it (v. 6b); thirdly, he explains the meaning of the testimony (v. 8b).

105. – In regard to the testimony he states first that the words of the Old Testament are witnesses to Christ: ‘Search the Scriptures: the same are they that give testimony of me’ (Jn. 5:39). Therefore, he says, **for it has been testified somewhere**. Secondly, because among the Jews there were some writings less known and some better known, the Scriptures of the Psalms are of greater value than those they used in all their sacrifices; hence, he says, somewhere, known and manifest. Thirdly, he gives the authority of the speaker, namely, David, who enjoyed the greatest authority: ‘The man to whom it was appointed concerning the Christ of the God of Jacob, the excellent Psalmist of Israel said’ (2 Sam. 23:1).

106. – Then he adduces the authority (v. 6b). Here he does three things: first, he hints at the mystery of the Incarnation; secondly, of the Passion (v. 7); thirdly, the mystery of the exaltation (v. 7b). In regard to the first he touches on two things: first, the cause of the Incarnation; secondly, the Incarnation itself (v. 6c).

107. – But the cause of the Incarnation is God’s care of man. Therefore, he says: **What is man?** as though in contempt. As if to say: Man is so unimportant when compared to God: ‘All nations are before him as if they had no being at all, and are counted to him as nothing and vanity’ (Is. 40:17). For if a person loves another and leaves him in wretchedness for a long time, he seems to have forgotten. But God loved the human race, both because He made it according to His own image and because He placed man in the midst of paradise. But after sin, because He did not come to his aid immediately, He seems to have forgotten. But later he seems to have become mindful of him, when He sends a Redeemer: ‘Remember us, O Lord, in the favor of your people; visit us with your salvation’ (Ps. 105:4). Therefore, he says, **What is man that you are mindful of him?** As if to say: If we consider man’s vileness, it is strange that You should be mindful of him who is so vile and so small. I say vile and small in nature, especially in regard to his substance: ‘God formed man from the slime of the earth (Gen. 2:7); ‘And now, O Lord, you are our Father and we are clay’ (Is. 64:8).

Vile in his sins; hence, Augustine says on John: ‘Men accomplish nothing when they sin;’ ‘Behold, I have made you small among the nations, you are exceedingly contemptible’ (Ob 1:2). Vile and

weak in his punishment: ‘Man born of a woman, living for a time is filled with many miseries’ (Jb. 14:1); ‘Who shall raise up Jacob, for he is very little’ (Am 7:5).

108. – Secondly, he mentions the Incarnation when he says, **the son of man**. Here it should be noted that in Sacred Scripture Christ is called the Son of man, as is clear from Daniel and from the Gospel. The reason for this is that others are sons of men: ‘O you sons of men, how long will you be dull of heart?’ (Ps. 4:3); but Christ alone is the son of man, namely, of the Blessed Virgin, and He is visited by God. Sometimes in Scripture a visitation refers to a benefit, as when ‘the Lord visited Sarah as He had promised and fulfilled what He spoke’ (Gen. 21:1). Sometimes it refers to a punishment: ‘I will visit their iniquities with a rod’ (Ps. 88:33). But here it refers to the benefit: You care for [visit] i.e., confer a most excellent gift on man, because you make him a son of God, when His humanity is assumed by the Word. Or he says this because of Christ’s fullness: ‘Full of grace and truth’ (Jn. 1:14). Or both can be referred to Christ, so that the sense is this: You were mindful of him in the Incarnation, when humanity was assumed by Christ, but you visit him in the resurrection. Or both should be referred to the human race. But every son of man is a man, although not every man is a son of a man. For Adam was not a son of man. A man, therefore, is one who bears the image of the earthly man, namely, of Adam; and this man is called a sinner; but a son of man is one who bears the image of the heavenly man, namely Christ, Who is called the Son of man: ‘Therefore, as we have borne the image of the earthly, let us bear also the image of the heavenly’ (1 Cor. 15:49). Man, therefore, is called a sinner; and because he is far from God, ‘for salvation is far from sinners’ (Ps. 118:155), God is said to be mindful of him, as a man is mindful of one far away. But when he is changed from sinner to just, the son of man is visited by grace: ‘Your visitation has guarded my spirit’ (Jb. 10:12).

109. – Then (v. 7) he mentions the mystery of the Passion. Here it should be noted that in the order of nature corruptible things are lower than incorruptible things. But angels are incorruptible and immortal according to their nature; hence, when Christ deigned to suffer and undergo death He was made a little less than they: not that He had lost His fullness or was diminished in any way, but because He joined our smallness to Him self. This was signified in Lk. (22:4): ‘There appeared to him an angel from heaven, strengthening him’, not because He needed him, but to show that He was less than they by suffering. He says, **little less**, for two reasons: first because every bodily creature is slight when compared with the rational, because bodily things are confined within the fixed limits of their quantity, but not rational things, which can grow and grown in intelligence. But Christ was made less than the angels, not in regard to his divinity nor in regard to His soul, but in regard to His body. Therefore, he said, **a little less**, i.e., quantitatively. Secondly, he is a little less according to duration, because He lasted a short time: ‘For a small moment have I forsaken you’ (Is. 54:7).

110. – Nor is it strange, if He was made less than the angels in his suffering body, since in this respect He was made less than man: ‘I am a worm and not a man’ (Ps. 21:7), and this because of His shameful death:

‘Let us condemn him to a most shameful death’ (Wis. 2:20). But if the question, **What is man that you are mindful of him?** is referred to man, then man is said to be a little less not in regard to the kind of knowledge, because both man and angel share the same kind of knowledge, but according to the manner, because the angels know in a more excellent way than men. Secondly, as to the body, because, although an angel and a soul are of one nature, namely, intellectual, nevertheless, the soul is united to a body; but even in this he is a little less, because the dignity of the soul is not destroyed by this union, but it is dulled and impeded from higher contemplation: ‘The corruptible body is a load upon the soul’ (Wis. 9:15). Thirdly, as to gifts; and in this respect man is a little less not as to gratuitous gifts, in which ‘they will be as the angels in heaven’ (Mt. 22:30), but as to natural gifts.

111. – Then (v. 7b) he presents the mystery of exaltation. Here he does three things: first, he shows its glory; secondly, the honor (v. 7c); thirdly, the power (v. 8).

‘The lamb that was slain is worthy to receive power and divinity and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and benediction; and every creature which is in heaven and on the earth and under the earth, and such as are in the sea’ (Rev. 5:12).

112. – He says, therefore, **You have crowned him with glory**, i.e., with brightness: for glory implies brightness. But Christ was crowned with a double glory, namely, with the glory of the body: ‘Who will reform the body of our lowliness, made like to the body of his glory’ (Phil. 3:2). This glory is promised Him in Jn (12:18): ‘I have both glorified it, namely, your soul, by filling it with the splendors of grace, and will glorify it again’, namely, the body with the glory of immortality.’ Another brightness comes from the confession of all people: ‘Every tongue should confess that the Lord Jesus Christ is in the glory of God the Father’ (Phil. 2:11); ‘Glory and great beauty shall you lay upon him’ (Ps. 20:6).

113. – Then (v. 7b) he shows His honor. Now honor differs from glory as effect from cause: for honor is reverence shown in view of some excellence; hence, it is a testification of one’s goodness. But that honor consists in every creature’s revering Him as the Father is revered: ‘That all men may honor the Son as they honor the Father’ (Jn. 5:23). he says, **crowned**, namely, as a sign of victory, because a crown is given to a victor: ‘They, indeed, that they may receive a perishable crown: but we an imperishable one’ (1 Cor. 9:25); ‘He is not crowned, except he strive lawfully’ (2 Tim. 2:5). But Christ won this crown by the struggle of His Passion: ‘He was made obedient unto death: for which cause God also has exalted him and given him a name which is above every name’ (Phil. 2:8). But things which belong to Christ as God are not a reward but are natural to Him; yet inasmuch as He is man, they are the reward for the victory of his Passion.

114. – Then he shows His power: first, as to its authority; secondly, as to its effect (v. 8).

115. – In regard to the first he says: **You have set him over the works of your hands**. This can be taken in three ways: in one way, as meaning that He was set over all places; and this in the Ascension: ‘He ascended above all the heavens’ (Eph. 4:10); secondly, over all dignities: ‘Setting him on his right hand above all principality and power and virtue and dominion’ (Eph. 1:21); thirdly, over all power, because He is set above every creature: ‘all power is given to me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18). But Christ as God is not appointed but born; yet He is appointed as man: Whom he appointed heir of all things (above 1:2).

116. – The effect of His power is that all things are subject to him [under his feet]. The prophet uses the past for the future because of His authority, for it has already taken place in God’s eternal predestination. He says, **under his feet**, i.e., under His humanity or with all subjection: ‘Till I make your enemies your footstool’ (Ps. 109:1).

117^a. – That is, under His humanity: for just as the head of Christ is God, so by the feet of Christ is understood his humanity: ‘We shall adore in the place where his feet stood’ (Ps. 131:7).

117^b. – But if it is understood that way, then man is said to be crowned with glory as to intellectual knowledge, in which he excels the other animals: ‘The man, indeed, ought not to cover his head, because he is the image and glory of God’ (1 Cor. 11:7); ‘Who teaches us more than the beasts of the earth’ (Jb. 35:11). He is crowned with honor, inasmuch as he along of all the animals is master of his own actions and is not subject to the necessity of changeable things in regard to his soul, because he has free will. He is crowned with power, because you have set him over all your works: ‘Let him have dominion over the fishes of the sea and the fowls of the air and the beasts and the whole earth’ (Gen. 1:26).

118. – Then (v. 8) he explains the meaning of the testimony. Here he does two things: first, he explains it as to His sublimity; secondly, as to His diminution (v. 9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows how the prophet’s statement is to be understood; secondly, that it has not yet been fulfilled (v. 8b).

119. – Therefore, (v. 8a) he shows how the statement is to be understood. For since Scripture says that all things have been subjected to Christ, there is nothing outside his control. Hence, the all is not limited to certain genera, but applies absolutely to all, because all are generally and universally subject to Him.

But then Arius argues: The Father has subjected all things to the Son; therefore, the Son is inferior to the Father. I answer that it is true that the Father subjected all things to the Son according to His human nature, in which He is inferior to the Father: ‘The Father is greater than I (Jn. 14:28); but according to the divine nature Christ Himself subjected all things to Himself.

120. – Then when he says, **as it is, we do not yet see all things subject to Him**, he shows that this has not yet been fulfilled, because unbelievers, sinners and devils are not yet subject to Him: ‘But not all obey

the Gospel' (Rom. 10:16); 'How long do you refuse to submit to me?' (Ex. 10:3). Consequently, sinners are not subject to Christ by reason of their rebellious wills; but in regard to his power all are subject to Him: now in regard to its authority, but later in regard to obedience.

Hence, this is an explanation of the phrase, the world to come (v. 5).

2-3

Heb 2:9-13

⁹But we see Jesus, who for a little while was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for every one. ¹⁰For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation perfect through suffering. ¹¹For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified have all one origin. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brethren, ¹²saying, “I will proclaim your name to my brethren, in the midst of the congregation I will praise you.” ¹³And again, “I will put my trust in him.” And again, “Here am I, and the children God has given me.”

121. – Above, the Apostle, desiring to prove Christ’s eminence over the angels, relied on the authority of a prophet who said something pertaining to Christ’s dignity, such as, ‘you put everything in subjection under his feet’, and something pertaining to His Passion, namely, ‘you have made him a little less than the angels’. But this seems to militate against his chief intention, which is to prefer Christ over the angels. Consequently, he explains this more fully in this section, where he does three things: first, he shows in what sense that lessening is to be understood; secondly, he describes the suitability of the Passion (v. 10). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he explains a statement he made; secondly, he describes the Passion (v. 9b).

122. – He said therefore: **What is man that you are mindful of him? You have crowned him with glory and honor. You have subjected all things under his feet. You have made him a little lower than the angels.** These are the things the prophet predicted of Christ, and already we see many of them fulfilled. Hence, it is certain that the rest will be fulfilled, namely, that all things will be subjected under his feet. ‘The accomplishments of the past give assurance for the future’ (Gregory). Then he continues, **but we see Jesus, who for a little while, was made lower than the angels, crowned with glory and honor for suffering death**, which was the cause of His exaltation: ‘For which cause God also exalted him’ (Phil. 2:9). He says, **of death**, because He did not endure just any death, but the bitterest and most shameful: ‘Let us condemn him to a most shameful death’ (Wis. 2:20). Or, another way: **We see Jesus**, and when asked Who He is, answers: He Who by suffering death was made a little lower than the angels and then crowned with honor and glory. This lessening was due only to His suffering of death. Nor is this strange, because in this respect He is not only lower than the angels, but lower than men: ‘Despised and the most abject of men’ (Is. 53:2). A Gloss of Augustine against Maximus says that Christ was made a little lower than the angels, not because of a condition of His nature but because of the Passion. For as to the nature of the human mind, which Christ assumed without sin, nothing is greater but the Trinity alone. In body He is less than the angels, because He suffered in his body.

But this seems to be contrary to Dionysius, who says that angels are greater than men by reason of their natural participation in light. The answer is that we can speak two ways about the nature of the human mind and the angelic mind: in one way, according to what is natural, and then the angelic mind is more excellent and more noble than the nature of the human mind, because an angel receives knowledge of divine truth in a more excellent and fuller intellectual light, but man from creatures. In another way, we can consider the nature of each without sin in relation to happiness; they are then equal: 'They will be as the angels in heaven' (Mt. 22:30). Yet by reason of His excellent grace Christ in His human nature is greater than the angels. Consequently, His lessening is not in relation to the nature of His divinity nor absolutely according to His human nature, but in the sense that He suffered according to it. But we can say that Christ was crowned with a triple glory, namely, with the glory of holiness, which He had in the first instant of His conception; secondly, with the glory of the beatific vision, because from the first instant of His conception He possessed it; thirdly, with the glory of incorruptibility, which He merited after the Passion.

123. – Then (v. 9b) he describes Christ's Passion from three viewpoints: first, from its cause; secondly, from its utility; thirdly from the manner.

124. – Only God's grace was the cause, for that alone led Him to give His only begotten Son: 'God so loved the world as to give his only begotten Son' (Jn. 3:16); 'But God commends his charity toward us, when as yet we were sinners according to the time Christ died for us' (Rom. 5:8). Or, according to a Gloss of Augustine, that the grace of God, i.e., Christ Himself, Who is the grace of God, might taste death for all. Here grace is in the nominative case. But Christ is called grace because He is the author of grace: 'Grace and truth came by Jesus Christ' (Jn. 1:17). Or, because He is given freely: 'A son has been given to us' (Is. 9:6). Then the sense is this: He was made a little lower in order that He Who is the grace of God might taste death for all.

125. – **For all**: behold the usefulness. But **for all** can be understood in two ways: first, as applying to all the predestined, since it is only in the predestined that it is efficacious. Secondly, as applying absolutely to all so far as sufficiency is concerned; for of itself it is sufficient for all: 'Who is the savior of all, but especially of the faithful' (1 Tim. 4:10); 'He died for all in general, because the price was sufficient for all. And if all do not believe, he nevertheless fulfilled His part' (Chrysostom).

126. – **Might taste**: behold the manner. For a person who has not eaten or drunk much is said to have tasted. Therefore, because Christ did not continue in death but rose at once, He tasted death: 'He shall drink of the torrent in the way' (Ps. 109:7). One who is on the way hurries. Furthermore, taste is a discernor of flavor; hence one who tastes discerns more than one who drinks. Therefore, to indicate that He tasted death and pain, and that His death was not imaginary, as Mani and Apollinaris claim, he says, that he might taste death: 'O, all you that pass by the way, attend and see, if there be any sorrow like to

my sorrow' (Lam. 1:12). But the manner is mentioned when he says, **taste**. Matthew (26:39) says the same thing: 'If it be possible, let this chalice pass from me.' He says this for two reasons: first, to express the bitterness of death, which is experienced by taste: 'O, all you that pass by the way, attend and see if there be any sorrow like to my sorrow' (Lam 1:12); 'The drink shall be bitter to them that drink it' (Is. 24:9); secondly, because just as tasting or not tasting lie in the power of the taster, so also the Passion of Christ was voluntary: 'I have the power to lay down my life' (Jn. 10:18).

127. – Then (v. 10) he shows the suitability from its usefulness. For God the Father is the cause of Christ's death, since He is the One by whom all things exist as by an efficient cause, and for whom all things exist, as for a final cause. All things are for Him, because they are for communicating His goodness: and this was the cause inducing Him to produce things, and thus all things are finally for God: 'The Lord has made all things for himself' (Pr. 16:4). But effectively, all things are by Him: 'Who made heaven and the sea and all things in it' (Ps. 145:6); 'I am the alpha and the omega, the beginning and the end' (Rev. 1:8). 'Of him and by him and in him are all things' (Rom. 11:36). Therefore, it became Him as the author of all things to provide for all: 'He has equally cared for all' (Wis. 6:8). Secondly, it was fitting on the part of the cause, which, as has been stated, was the grace of God. But grace is ordained to glory: 'The grace of God, life everlasting' (Rom. 6:23). But God from all eternity predestined those whom He would lead to glory, i.e., all those who are adopted sons of God, because 'if sons, heirs also' (Rom. 8:17). Therefore, he says, **who had brought many sons to glory**. As if to say: He has one perfect Son naturally: 'Therefore, having yet one son most dear to him' (Mk 12:6); but the others are adopted and, therefore, must be brought into glory. Hence, he says: **who had brought**, i.e., foreordained them to be brought.

128. – And what was fitting for Him? This, namely, that he **should make perfect the pioneer of their salvation**, which consists in two things, namely, that they become sons and be brought into their inheritance. That they are sons they owe to the natural Son: 'Whom he foreknew he also predestined to be made conformable to the image of his son' (Rom. 8:29). But they obtain glory and the inheritance only through Him Whose inheritance it is by right and Who is the brightness of glory. Therefore, because we obtain those two things through the Son, He is fittingly called the pioneer of salvation: 'He will save his people from their sins' (Mt. 1:21); 'Looking on Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith' (Heb. 12:12). Therefore it was fitting that the Father send the author of salvation, namely, His Son, Who had brought many sons into glory.

To be perfected through suffering, i.e., by merit. For He, as the natural Son, is altogether perfect, but because He was lessened in the Passion He had to be made perfect by the merit of the Passion: 'Ought not Christ to have suffered these things and so to enter into his glory' (Lk. 24:26)?

129. – Then (v. 11) he proves what he had said. Here he does two things: first, he proves his conclusion on the part of the Father sanctifying; secondly, on the part of the Son sanctified (v. 14). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he states his conclusion; secondly, he proves it by an authority (v. 11b).

130. – He says, therefore: **For both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified have one origin.** But it should be noted that the Apostle had said three things above: first, that Christ is the cause of salvation, in which he shows that we depend on Him as on a Savior; secondly, he shows that the Father is the finisher of Christ by the merit of the Passion, so that in this, Christ depends on the Father; thirdly, that the Father brings us into glory, which also shows that we depend on God. Accordingly, the Apostle does three things here: first he shows that we depend on Christ, for the one sanctified depends on the sanctifier: ‘Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people by his own blood, suffered without the gate’ (Heb. 13:12). Therefore, it has been well said that because He is the author and sanctifier, we depend on him; but He depends on the Father, from Whom He has power to sanctify; which is the second. But all, namely, He that sanctifies and we who are sanctified, have one origin, namely, of the Father; this is the third: ‘Heirs of God; co-heirs with Christ’ (Rom. 8:17).

131. – Then he proves there points with three authorities: first, that Christ, as the mediator and author of salvation, brings God’s gifts to us; hence, he says, **that is why**, namely, because He and we depend on the Father, **he is not ashamed to call them brethren**, because all are of the same Father: ‘Have we not all one Father’ (Mal 2:10); ‘That he might be the firstborn among many brethren’ (Rom. 8:29). Therefore, it is stated in Ps. 21 (v. 23): ‘I will declare your name to my brethren;’ ‘Go to my brethren’ (Jn. 20:17).

But note that he says, **he is not ashamed to call them brethren**, because some born of an ignoble race are ashamed to recognize their brethren, if they are promoted: ‘The brethren of a poor man hate him’ (Pr. 19:7). But not Christ, for He says, **I will proclaim your name to my brethren**: ‘Father, I have manifested your name to the men whom you have given me’ (Jn. 17:6); ‘The only begotten who is in the bosom of the Father, he has declared him’ (Jn. 1:18).

132. – Then he shows the fruit of this manifestation when he says, **in the midst of the congregation will I praise you.** As if to say: This forms a great Church in the midst of which I will praise you. He says, **in the midst**, because just as a pillar in the midst of a house supports it and a lamp in the midst of a house gives light and the heart in the midst of the body gives life, so Christ is in the midst of the Church. Furthermore, **in the midst**, because He was not sent to one people, as Moses was: ‘In Judea God is known; his name is great in Israel’ (Ps. 75:2), but He was sent for the salvation of all: ‘He has wrought salvation in the midst of the earth’ (Ps. 73:12). Therefore, it is stated in Lk (24:36) that Jesus stood in the midst of His disciples.

On this point it should be noted that before the Law it was the custom that all the firstborn were priests, and this pertained to the right of primogeniture. But Christ is a brother and firstborn; therefore, He is a priest. But a priest who sanctifies the people is a mediator between God and the people: ‘I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you at that time’ (Dt. 5:5). Therefore, it pertains to him to announce the things of God to the people and to bring the things of the people to God. He does the first by preaching; hence, he says, **I will proclaim your name to my brethren**, i.e., I will bring them to know

you, and this to sanctify them: ‘Sanctify them in the truth’ (Jn. 17:17). The second He accomplishes by doing, when He makes men burst forth in praise of God. Hence, he says, **in the midst of the congregation will I praise you.**

133. – Then when he says, **and again**, he shows that Christ Himself depends on the Father by the fact that He says, **I will put my trust in him**: ‘In you, Lord, have I hoped; let me never be confounded’ (Ps. 30:2). But he shows the kind of hope He has, namely, firm hope, which is called trust: for hope, even though it is not concerned with the impossible, sometimes has fear joined to it, and then it is properly called hope. But sometimes hope is firm and without fear; then it is called trust. This is the hope Christ had.

134. – He says, therefore, **I will put my trust in him**, i.e., I will have confidence in His help.

But the saints say that in Christ there is neither faith nor hope, but only charity. I answer that hope is one thing and trust another: for hope is the expectation of future happiness; and this was not in Christ, because He was happy from the instant of His conception. But trust is the expectation of help, and in regard to this there was hope in Christ, inasmuch as He awaited help from the Father during His Passion. Therefore, whenever we read that Christ had hope, this is not to be understood as referring to its principal, which is happiness, but as referring to the glory of the resurrection and of the glory conferred on His body.

135. – Then when he repeats, **and again**, he shows that we depend on the Father: **Here am I and the children whom God has given me**: ‘Yours they were and to me you gave them’ (Jn. 17:6); ‘Children, have you any fish’ (Jn. 21:5)? They are called children on account of their purity: ‘If the young men be clean especially from women’ (1 Sam. 21:4); and a bit later he continues: ‘The vessels of the young men were holy.’ They are called children because of their purity: ‘Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are signs and portents in Israel from the Lord of hosts’ (Is. 8:18). Also on account of their simplicity: ‘Brethren do not become children in sense: but in malice be children’ (1 Cor. 14:20); also because of their humility: ‘unless you be converted and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 18:3). He shows that not only is He from God, but also the children; hence he continues, **whom God has given me**. This shows that **both he that sanctifies and they that are sanctified have all one origin**, because it says in Jn (6:44): ‘No one can come to me, unless the Father who sent me draw him.’

Heb 2:14-18

¹⁴Since therefore the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature, that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, ¹⁵and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage. ¹⁶For surely it is not with angels that he is concerned but with the descendants of Abraham. ¹⁷Therefore he had to be made like his brethren in every respect, so that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in the service of God, to make expiation for the sins of the people. ¹⁸For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted.

136. – Having shown the suitability of Christ's death from the standpoint of the Father causing it, the Apostle now shows the same thing from the standpoint of Christ enduring it. Therefore, he intends to show how He was made the author of salvation by his Passion: first, he shows the condition of the nature through which He could suffer and die; secondly, the benefits He obtained by dying (v. 14b); thirdly, he proves what he had proposed (v. 16).

137. – He says, therefore, I have said that He and the children have all one origin and that He called them brethren. Consequently, it was fitting that He be like them, not only because He confers on them a participation in the divine nature, which is from grace, but also because He assumed their nature. Hence, he says, therefore, **because the children share in flesh and blood, he himself likewise partook of the same nature.**

138. – Here it should be noted that by the name **flesh and blood** is sometimes understood the nature of flesh and blood: 'This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh' (Gen. 2:23); then by flesh is understood the body: 'You have clothed me with skin and flesh' (Jb. 10:11) and by blood the soul: not as though the soul were blood, but because it is not preserved in the body without blood. Sometimes by flesh and blood are understood the vices of flesh and blood: 'Flesh and blood have not revealed it to you' (Mt. 16:17). But sometimes they signify the corruptibility of flesh and blood: 'Flesh and blood shall not possess the kingdom of God, not corruption incorruption' (1 Cor. 15:50). But here it does not refer to vices, for Christ assumed a nature without sin, but with the possibility of suffering, because He assumed a flesh similar to the sinner: 'In the likeness of sinful flesh' (Rom. 8:3). Therefore, like the children, He is partaker of flesh and blood, and all in the same way: for it was not imaginary flesh, as the Manicheans say, not was it assumed in the accidental way, as Nestorius said. But true flesh and blood, such as children have, were assumed into the unity of the person.

139. – That Christ is a partaker of flesh and blood is not to be understood as referring to the vices of flesh and blood, because He did not take on sin or commit any; but as referring to the very substance of animated flesh, because He assumed flesh and soul. It also included the possibility of suffering, because He assumed our nature capable of suffering. Therefore, the sense is: **Because the children**, i.e., the faithful, has a nature capable of suffering, Christ Himself partook of the same, i.e., of flesh and blood. But we partake of them through our person; and Christ in like manner assumed them to His person: ‘The Word was made flesh’ (Jn. 1:14). By flesh and blood can also be understood the flesh and blood of Christ according to the statement: ‘He that eats my flesh and drinks my blood’ (Jn. 6:55), of which the children, i.e., the apostles, partook at the last supper and of which Christ partook: ‘He drank His own blood’, as Chrysostom says.

140. – Then (v. 14b) he shows the benefits His death brought. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows its usefulness on the part of the devil, who had the power; secondly, on our part who were held (v. 15).

141. – He says, therefore: **He partook** of flesh and blood, i.e., He assumed a nature in which He could suffer and die, which he could not do in the divine nature, that through death he might destroy him who had the power of death, i.e., the devil. But how does the devil have the power of death? For this is God’s prerogative: ‘The Lord kills and makes alive’ (1 Sam. 2:6); ‘I will kill and I will make to live’ (Dt. 32:39). I answer that a judge has the power of death in one way, because he inflicts death, when he punishes with death; but a thief has it another way in the sense of deserving death because of demerit. God has the power of death in the first way: For in what day you shall eat of it, you shall die the death’ (Gen. 2:17). But the devil in the second way, because by persuading men to sin, he yielded him over to death: ‘by the envy of the devil, death came into the world’ (Wis. 2:24).

But he says, **that he might destroy him**, not as to his substance, which is indestructible, nor as to his malice, so that the devil would become good at some time, but as to his power: ‘Despoiling the principalities and powers’ (Col. 2:15).

142. – This was accomplished by the death of Christ in three ways: first, on the part of Christ, for the true nature of justice is that the victor subject the vanquished to himself: ‘For by whom a man is overcome, of the same is he the slave’ (2 Pt. 2:19). But Christ overcame the devil: ‘The Lion of the tribe of Judah has prevailed’ (Rev. 5:5). Therefore, it is just that the devil be subject to Him: ‘When a strong man armed keeps his court, those things are in peace which he possesses (Lk. 11:21). Secondly, on the part of the devil: for justice requires that a person who unjustly uses power granted him should lose it. But the devil has been given power over the sinners he seduced, but not over the good. Therefore, because he presumed to extend this power even to Christ, Who did not sin: ‘The prince of this world comes, and in me he has nothing’ (Jn. 14:30), he deserved to lose it. The third reason is on our part: for it is just that the vanquished be the servants of the victor. But man by sin was the servant of the devil: ‘Whoever commits

sin is the servant of sin' (Jn. 8:34); consequently, he was subject to the devil and liable to sin. But Christ paid the price for our sin: 'Then did I pay that which I took not away' (Ps. 68:5). Therefore, when the cause of servitude was taken away, man was set free by Christ.

143. – But it should be noted that another satisfaction was suitable. For man was in debt; but one man can satisfy for another out of charity, although no one can satisfy for the entire human race, because he does not have power over it, nor could the entire human race satisfy sufficiently, because it was entirely subject to sin; nor could an angel, because this satisfaction was unto glory, which exceeds the power of an angel. Therefore, it was necessary that the one who satisfied be man and God, Who alone has power over the whole human race. By the death of God and man, therefore, He destroyed him who had the empire of death.

144. – Then (v. 15) another advantage on our part is mentioned. In regard to this it should be noted that a man is a servant of sin to the extent that he is induced to sin. But the most effective inducements to sin are the love of transitory goods and the fear of present punishments: 'Things set on fire, as to the first and dug down as to the second, shall perish at the rebuke of your countenance' (Ps. 79:17). But these two amount to the same thing, because the more a person loves something, the more he fears its evil contrary. Hence, we see that savage beasts are kept from the greatest pleasures through fear of punishment; thus fear makes cowards of us all. Hence, if a man overcomes his fears, he overcomes everything; and when fear is overcome, all disordered love of the world is overcome. Thus Christ by His death broke this fear, because He removed the fear of death, and, consequently the love of the present life. For when a person considers that the Son of God, the Lord of death, willed to die, he no longer fears death. That is why before the death of Christ, it was said: 'O death, how bitter is the remembrance of you' (Sir. 41:1); but after Christ's death the Apostle expresses a desire to be dissolved and be with Christ: Hence, we are told: 'Fear not them that kill the body' (Mt. 10:28).

He says, therefore, **and deliver all those who through the fear of death were subject to lifelong service**, namely, the servitude of sin.

145. – But Christ freed us from a double servitude, namely, that of the Law and that of sin, since the law is called a yoke which neither we nor our fathers were able to bear (Ac. 15:10). Now the difference between the Old and the New Law is fear and love. In the New there is love: 'If you love me, keep my commandments' (Jn. 14:15). But the Old was the law of fear: 'You have not received the spirit of servitude again in fear' (Rom. 8:15). Therefore, he sways, and deliver them who through the fear of bodily death, which the Law inflicted, were all subject to lifelong servitude.

146. – But why did He not free us at once from death but only from the fear of death? I answer that He freed us immediately from the cause of death, but not from death itself, although He freed us from the fear of death. The reason for this was that if he had freed us from bodily death, men would serve Christ

only for their bodily good, and then the merit of faith and hope would be destroyed. Furthermore, bodily evils enable us to merit eternal life: ‘Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God’ (Ac. 14:21).

It should be noted that He freed us from the fear of death, first of all, by showing the immortality that awaited us. As a result, man could scorn temporal death: Christ is risen from the dead, the first-fruits of them that sleep’ (1 Cor. 15:20); secondly, by giving us a foretaste of death He made us more ready to undergo death for Christ: ‘Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example’ (1 Pt. 2:2). Thirdly, by opening the gate to glory, which was closed before His death; as a result, we not only do not fear death, but we desire it: ‘Having a desire to be dissolved and to be with Christ, which is much better’ (Phil. 1:23).

147. – Then (v. 16) the Apostle proves the benefits which Christ’s death obtained. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that by His death Christ freed us by reason of the condition of the nature he assumed; secondly, he concludes a likeness (v. 17); thirdly, he shows the benefit of the likeness (v. 17b).

148. – He says, therefore: So I have stated that Christ by His death freed us from sin and death. Nor is there any doubt that in regard to the condition of its nature an angel is greater than man; but because the angels were not subject to servitude or deserving of death, He did not assume an angel. But if he had, this would have been on account of the dignity of its nature. But we have never read that he assumed an angel, but only of the seed of Abraham, i.e., a human nature, not in the abstract but in an individual, and from the seed of Abraham. He adds this in order that the Jews, who glory in being of the seed of Abraham, might venerate Christ more. But he says significantly [take hold of], because that is properly said to be taken hold of, which flees. But not only the human nature fled from God, but also the children of Abraham: ‘But they would not hearken, and they turned away the shoulder to depart; and they stopped their ears not to hear’ (Zech. 7:11). This taking hold of human nature unto the unity of the person of the Son of God exalts our nature beyond measure. Hence, Chrysostom says: ‘It is a great and marvelous thing for our flesh to be seated above and to be adorned by angels and archangels. As I turn this over in my mind, I experience excessive joy, imagining great things about the human race.’

149. – But it would have seemed better to assume an angelic nature than a human nature. For likeness is the reason making the Incarnation of a divine person becoming. But a more express likeness of God is found in the angelic nature than in the human, because the former is the seal of resemblance. Therefore, it would seem more fitting to take hold of an angel than of the seed of Abraham. Furthermore, sin is found in the angelic nature as in the human nature. Therefore, if he took hold of human nature to free it from sin, it seems there was more reason to take hold of the angelic. I answer that a nature is assumable by the Son of God depending on its fitness to be united to the person of the Word. But this fitness depends on the dignity, so that the nature is assumable which is likely to attain to the Word Himself by knowing and loving Him; and also depending on the need, in the sense that it is subject to a reparable sin, although the

first is found in the angelic nature, the second is not found. But the first and second are found in human nature, which is capable of knowing and loving God, and which has a reparable sin; consequently, it is assumable. But although the first is found in an angelic nature, it lacks the second: for a sin is irreparable not by reason of its gravity, but by reason of the condition of the nature. But what death was to men, the fall was to the angels. But it is clear that all the sins of man, whether they be small or great, are reparable before death; after death they are irreparable and remain for ever. Therefore, the angelic nature is not assumable.

150. – Then (v. 17) he concludes to a likeness. As if to say: Therefore, because He did not assume an angel but the seed of Abraham, it behooved him in all things to become like unto his brethren. In all things, I say, in which they are brethren, not in guilt but in punishment. Therefore, it behooved Him to have a nature that could suffer; hence ‘one tempted in all things as we are, without sin’ (Heb. 4:15). Likewise, they are brethren as to grace: ‘Behold, what love God showed to us: that we should be called and be sons of God (1 Jn. 3:1); ‘Those whom he foreknew and predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son’ (Rom. 8:29).

151. – Then he shows the usefulness of that resemblance when he says, **that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest**. Here he does two things: First, he mentions the likeness; secondly, he explains it (v. 18).

152. – Christ as mediator has two functions: one sets Him over the whole human race as judge: ‘He gave him power to do judgment, because He is the Son of man’ (Jn. 5:27); the other is in relation to God, before Whom He intercedes for us as our advocate. In a judge mercy is desired particularly by the guilty; but in an advocate fidelity. Now both of these qualities were exhibited by Christ during His Passion. Hence, in regard to the first, he says that by His Passion He was made like unto his brethren, that he might become merciful.

153. – But wasn’t He merciful from all eternity? It seems so, because ‘his mercies are above all his works’ (Ps. 144:9). For mercy consists in having a heart grieved at another’s misfortune: in one way, by merely recognizing the misfortune, which is the way God recognized our wretchedness without suffering; in another way, by experiencing our misfortune, which is how Christ experienced our misery, especially during the Passion.

In addition He is a faithful advocate; hence, he is called a faithful high priest. ‘But Christ, being come a high priest of the good things to come’ (Heb. 9:11); and it is required that He be faithful: ‘Here now it is required among the dispensers that a man be found faithful’ (1 Cor. 4:2); and all this that He might be a propitiation for the sins of the people, for whom He willed to die.

154. – Then when he says, For in that wherein he himself has suffered and been tempted, he shows its utility. As if to say: I do not speak of Christ as God, but as man. Therefore, in that, i.e., in that nature which He assumed, in order to experience in Himself that our cause is His own. Hence he says, **he suffered and was tempted; therefore, he is able to succor them also that are tempted.** Or, another way: He became merciful and faithful, because in suffering and being tempted He has a kinship to mercy. He says, **tempted**, not by the flesh but by the enemy: ‘Jesus was led by the spirit into the desert to be tempted by the devil’ (Mt. 4:1). For in Christ there was no rebellion of the lower powers against the higher, but He suffered for us in the flesh: ‘Christ suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow in his footsteps’ (1 Pt. 2:21); ‘Christ, therefore, having suffered in the flesh, be you also armed with the same thought’ (1 Pt. 4:1).

3-1

Heb 3:1-6

¹Therefore, holy brethren, who share in a heavenly call, consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession. ²He was faithful to him who appointed him, just as Moses also was faithful in God's house. ³Yet Jesus has been counted worthy of as much more glory than Moses as the builder of a house has more honor than the house. ⁴(For every house is built by some one, but the builder of all things is God.) ⁵Now Moses was faithful in all God's house as a servant, to testify to the things that were to be spoken later, ⁶but Christ was faithful over God's house as a son. And we are his house if we hold fast our confidence and pride in our hope.

155. – As was said above, the Old Law derived its authority from three sources, namely, from angels, from Moses, and from Aaron, the high priest. But the Apostle preferred Christ, the Author of the New Testament, to the angels through whom the Law was given. Here he intends to prefer Him to Moses, who was the promulgator and, as it were, the lawgiver of the Old Testament. In regard to this he does two things: first, he prefers Christ to Moses; secondly, he concludes from this that Christ is most deserving of obedience (v. 7). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions Christ's dignity; secondly, he shows what is common to Christ and Moses (v. 3). In regard to the first he does two things: First, he describes the condition of those to whom he speaks; secondly, of the one of whom he speaks (v. 3b).

156. – He describes those to whom he speaks, first, from their charity; hence, he says, **brethren**, as if to say: Because you are brothers of Christ and of one another: 'All you are brothers' (Mt. 23:8); 'He is not ashamed to call them brethren' (above 2:11). But charity causes this brotherhood: 'Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity' (Ps. 132:1). Secondly, he describes them from their sanctity when he says, **holy**; and this because they receive the sacraments by which we are made holy: 'But you are washed, but you are sanctified' (1 Cor. 6:11). Thirdly, he describes them from their vocation when he says, **who share in a heavenly call**. Now this call can be understood to be heavenly in two ways: by reason of its end or by reason of its source. By reason of the end, because they are not called to an earthly reward as in the Old Testament, but to a heavenly kingdom: 'He has called you to his kingdom and glory' (1 Th. 2:12); 'Who called us from darkness into his marvelous light' (1 Pt. 2:9). By reason of its source, because it is not due to our merits but to grace: 'He called us by his grace' (Gal. 1:15); 'Who has raised up the just one from the east, has called him to follow him' (Is. 41:2).

But he says, who share in, because not only the Jews have been called to the faith and the New Testament, but also the Gentiles: 'who has made us worthy to be partakers of the lot of the saints in light' (Col. 1:12). Therefore, because you have charity and are saints and called to heavenly things, you should gladly hear one speak of Him through Whom those things come to you.

157. – Then he describes Him of Whom he speaks when he says, **consider Jesus, the apostle and high priest of our confession**: ‘Look on Jesus, the author and finisher of faith’ (Heb. 12:2). For the Apostle prefers Christ to Moses and Aaron and, therefore, ascribes to Him the dignity of both: of Moses, because He was sent by God: ‘He sent Moses, his servant’ (Ps. 104:26); of Aaron, because he was a high priest: ‘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). But Christ was sent in a more excellent manner than Moses: ‘I beseech the Lord, send whom you will send’ (Ex. 4:13). As if to say: You will send one more worthy. He will be a high priest and a prophet: ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedech’ (Ps. 104:4). No need to consider that apostle, i.e., Moses, and the high priest Aaron; **but consider the apostle and high priest of our confession**, i.e., Him Whom we confess. For it is necessary to salvation to confess Him: ‘With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation’ (Rom. 10:10). Or **of confession**, i.e., of the spiritual sacrifice. For every priest is ordained to offer sacrifice. But there are two kinds of sacrifice, namely, the corporal or temporal, for which Aaron was appointed; the other is spiritual, which consists in the confession of faith: ‘A sacrifice of praise will honor me’ (Ps. 49:25). For this sacrifice Christ was appointed: ‘I desire not holocausts of rams and fat of fatlings and blood of calves and lambs and buck goats’ (Is. 1:11). Then he continues: ‘Offer sacrifice no more in vain.’

158. – Then (v. 2) he compares Christ to Moses; first, he mentions that in which they agree; secondly, that in which Christ excels Moses (v. 3).

159. – What is common to Christ and Moses is fidelity to God; hence he says, **He was faithful to him who appointed him**. Here it should be noted that everything said here of Moses is based on the statement found in Num. (12:7), where the Lord shows the excellence of Moses, after Aaron and Miriam spoke against him. We find these words, which the Apostle cites here: ‘If there be among you a prophet of the Lord, I will appear to him in a vision or I will speak to him in a dream. But it is not so with my servant Moses, who is most faithful in all my house’ (Num. 12:7). Here we find Moses commended more highly than in any other place in the Bible. Therefore, the Apostle accepts this as the highest commendation of Moses. But this can apply to Christ and to Moses: that it is true of Moses is clear from history. But it is true of Christ, because as man He is faithful to Him Who appointed Him, namely, to God the Father, Who made him an apostle and high priest, not, of course, according to His divine nature, because in that way He was not made or created, but begotten; but according to the human: ‘Who was made of the seed of David according to the flesh’ (Rom. 1:3). But He was faithful to God the Father, first, by not attributing to Himself what He had, but to the Father: ‘My doctrine is not mine’ (Jn. 6:16). Secondly, He sought the Father’s glory and not His own: ‘He that seeks the glory of him that sent him, he is true, and there is no injustice in him’ (Jn. 7:18). Thirdly, because He obeyed the Father perfectly: ‘He was made obedient unto death’ (Phil. 2:8). Therefore, Christ is faithful to Him Who made Him, as Moses was, and this is God’s house—this house being the totality of the faithful: ‘Holiness becomes your house, O Lord, unto length of

days' (Ps. 93:5). Or, **in all of God's house**, i.e., in the whole world and not only in Judea, as Moses: 'I have given you to be the light of the Gentiles, that you may be my salvation even to the farthest part of the earth' (Is. 49:6).

160. – Then (v. 3) he prefers Christ to Moses in two respects; first, as to power; secondly, as to condition (v. 3b). But in commending Christ, he commends Him as having honor in all His house, as Moses had: Yet Christ excels him: first, he gives the reason; secondly, he explains it (v. 4).

161. – But the Apostle's reason is that more glory is due Him Who built the house, than to him that dwells in it. But Christ built the house: 'You have made the morning light and the sun' (Ps. 73:16); 'Wisdom has built herself a house', i.e., the Church (Pr. 9:1). For Christ by Whom grace and truth came, built the Church, as legislator; but Moses, as promulgator of the Law: therefore, it is only as promulgator that glory is due Moses. Hence, his face became bright: 'So that the children of Israel could not steadfastly behold the face of Moses for the glory of his countenance' (2 Cor. 3:7).

Therefore, the sequence of thought is this: You say that Christ is faithful as Moses was. Why then overlook Him? Certainly this man was counted worthy of greater glory than Moses, by so much as he that has built the house has greater honor than the house. As if to say: Even though Moses deserves mention, Christ is more honorable, because He is the builder of the house and the chief lawgiver: 'Behold, God is high in his strength, and none is like him among the lawgivers' (Jb. 36:22). Therefore, if Moses is deserving of glory, Christ is more deserving: 'For is the ministration of condemnation be in glory, much more the ministration of justice abounds in glory' (2 Cor. 3:9).

162. – Then he proves the minor premise of his reason when he says: **For every house is built by some man**. But the minor is that Christ built that house. He proves this, first, because every house needs a builder; secondly, because the house of which he speaks was built by Christ, **the builder of all things is God**.

163. – First, therefore, he proves that this house, as any other, needs a builder, because its various parts are put together by someone. This is obvious in a structure in which the wood and stones, of which it is composed, are united by someone. But the assembly of the faithful, which is the Church and the house of God, is composed of various elements, namely, Jews and Gentiles, slaves and free. Therefore, the church, as any other house, is put together by someone. He gives only the conclusion of this syllogism, supposing the truth of the premises as evident: 'Be you also as living stones built up, a spiritual house, a holy priesthood' (1 Pt. 2:5); 'Built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone' (Eph. 2:20).

164. – Then (v. 4b) he proves that Christ is the builder of that house, for He is God, the builder of all things. And if this is understood of the whole world, it is plain: 'He spoke and they were made; he

commanded and they were created' (Ps. 32:9) But there is another spiritual creation, which is made by the Spirit: 'Send forth your spirit, and they shall be created, and you shall renew the face of the earth' (Ps. 104:30). This is brought about by God through Christ: 'Of his own will has he begotten us by the word of truth, that we might be some beginning of his creature' (Jas. 1:18); 'We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus in good works' (Eph. 2:10). Therefore, God created that house, namely, the Church, from nothing, namely, from the state of sin to the state of grace. Therefore, Christ, by Whom He made all things, 'by whom also he made the world' (Heb. 1:2), is more excellent (since He has the power to make) than Moses, who was only the announcer.

165. – Then (v. 5) he prefers Christ to Moses in regard to their state. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his reason; secondly, he explains it (v. 6b).

166. – His reasoning is this: It is obvious that the master is of more value in his own house than a servant in the master's house. But Moses was faithful as a servant in the house of his master, but Christ as the master in His own house, therefore, etc.

Here it should be noted how carefully the Apostle notes the words written of Moses, in which things are said of him: for he is called a servant and he is called faithful, not in his own house, but in the house of our Lord. And in regard to those two things he prefers Christ to Moses: first, he shows what is true of Moses; secondly, of Christ (v. 6).

167. – He says, therefore, that **Moses was faithful as a servant**, i.e., as a faithful dispenser: 'Well done, good and faithful servant: because you have been faithful over a few things, I will place you over many things' (Mt. 25:21). But Christ is a servant in a sense, namely, according to the flesh: 'Taking the form of a servant' (Phil. 2:7).

But Moses was God's servant in proposing God's words to the children of Israel. From this it is clear that because he was a faithful servant, the things he said were ordained to another, namely, to Christ: to testify to the things which were to be spoken later: 'If you did believe Moses, you would perhaps believe me also; for he wrote of me' (Jn. 5:46). Therefore, because he was a servant, he was not in his own house but in another's house, and because of the things he said were a testimony of those things which were to be said of Christ, Moses was in respects lower than Christ.

168. – Then (v. 6), **But Christ was faithful over God's house as a son**, he shows what belongs to Christ, namely, that Christ is not as a servant but as a Son in His Father's house and, consequently, in His own, because He is the natural heir: 'Whom he has appointed heir of all things, by Whom also he made the world' (Heb. 1:2). For the Church is Christ's house: 'A wise woman builds her house' (Pr. 14:1); 'The Lord has said to me: You are my son, this day have I begotten you' (Ps. 2:7); 'My beloved son in whom I am well pleased' (Mt. 3:17). Therefore, He is not a servant but a Son, and in His own house, whereas Moses is a servant in another's house: 'The son abides forever' (Jn. 8:55).

169. – Then when he says, **We are his house**, he shows what that house is; for that house is the faithful, who are the house of Christ, because they believe in Christ: ‘In the house of God which is the Church’ (1 Tim. 3:15) and also because Christ dwells in them: ‘That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17). Therefore, this house is we, the faithful.

But in order that we be the house of God four things are required, which are necessary in a house and are not in a tent: first, that our hope and faith be firm and permanent; but a tent, even though it be firm, can be quickly moved and signifies those who believe for a while, but in time of temptation fall away. But they are the house who retain the word of God. Therefore, he says, **if we hold fast our confidence**. For it has been stated above that confidence is hope with firm expectation and without fear: ‘And such confidence we have through Christ towards God’ (2 Cor. 3:4). Secondly, that it be properly ordained; therefore, he says, **and pride in our hope**, i.e., ordained to the glory of God, so that scorning all else, we may take pride in the hope of glory: ‘Let him who glories, glory in knowing and having known me’ (Jer. 9:14). Thirdly, that it be preserving; hence, he says, **unto the end**: ‘He that perseveres to the end, he shall be saved’ (Mt. 10:22). Fourthly, that it be firm and not dislodged by any adversity; hence, he says, **hold fast**: ‘Who 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).

3-2

Heb 3:7-11

⁷Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says, “Today, when you hear his voice, ⁸do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, on the day of testing in the wilderness, ⁹where your fathers put me to the test and saw my works for forty years. ¹⁰Therefore I was provoked with that generation, and said, ‘They always go astray in their hearts; they have not known my ways.’ ¹¹As I swore in my wrath, ‘They shall never enter my rest.’”

170. – Having proved that Christ is greater than Moses, the Apostle now concludes that Christ is more deserving of our obedience. He does this by the authority of David the prophet in Psalm 94. He does three things: first, he proposes the authority which contains an exhortation; secondly, he explains it (v. 12); thirdly, he argues from the authority and the explanation (chap. 4). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he hints at the authority of the following words; secondly, he makes the exhortation which is the authority (v. 7b); thirdly, he presents a similitude (v. 8b).

171. – The authority of the words consists in the fact that they were not uttered by human lips, but by the Holy Spirit; hence, he says, **Wherefore, as the Holy Spirit says**. As if to say: Christ has more grace than Moses. Therefore, if we hearken to Moses, we ought not harden our hearts against hearing Christ. But he cites the words of the Old Testament for the New, lest anyone suppose that they refer only to the Old Testament; for they should be referred also to the New and to another time. They are the words of the Holy Spirit, because, as it says in 2 Pt. (1:21): ‘Prophecy came not by the will of man at any time, but the holy men of God spoke, inspired by the Holy Spirit.’ For David himself says of himself: ‘The spirit of the Lord spoke through me’ (2 Sam. 23: 2). Therefore, in this he shows that the authority is true, because it is from the Holy Spirit—against the Manicheans.

172. – Then (v. 7b) he gives the admonition in which he does three things: first, he describes the time; secondly, he mentions the benefit (v. 7b) thirdly, the admonition (v. 8).

173. – The time is **today**, i.e., day time. For the time of the Old Law was called night, because it was a time of shadows: ‘For the law, having a shadow of the good things to come’ (below 10:1). But the time of the New Testament, because it repels the shadow of the night of the Law, is called day: ‘The night is passed, the day is at hand’ (Rom. 13:12). That time is called day, because it witnessed the rising of the sun of justice: ‘But unto you that fear my name, the Sun of justice shall arise’ (Mal 4:2). This day is not succeeded by night, but by a clearer day, namely, when we shall see the Sun of justice with His face revealed, when we shall see Him by His essence.

174. – And in this day a benefit will be given to us. For he continues, when you hear his voice, because we hear His voice, which was not true of the Old Testament, in which the words of the prophets were heard: ‘In times past God spoke to the Son’ (Heb. 1:1); ‘Therefore, my people shall know my name in that day, because it was I myself that spoke, behold, I am here’ (Is. 52:6); ‘Let your voice sound on my ears’ (S of S 2:14). For in this the benefit so long desired is shown to us: ‘If you had known and in this your day, the things that are to your peace’ (Lk. 19:42).

175. – Therefore, if that is the benefit, here is the admonition, **harden not your hearts**. For a hard heart smacks of evil. That is hard which does not yield, but resists and does not receive an impression. Therefore, man’s heart is hard, when it does not yield to God’s command nor easily receive divine impressions: ‘A hard heart shall fear evil at the last’ (Sir. 3:27); But according to your hardness and impenitent heart, you treasure up to yourself wrath against the day of wrath’ (Rom. 2:5). But this hardening is caused by two things: first, by God not offering grace: ‘He has mercy on whom he will, and whom he wills, he hardens’ (Rom. 9:18); secondly, by the sinner hardening himself by not obeying God and by not opening his heart to grace: ‘And they made their heart as the adamant stone, lest they should hear the law and the words which the Lord of hosts sent in his spirit by the hand of the former prophets’ (Zech 7:12). Therefore, **harden not your hearts** i.e., do not close your hearts to the Holy Spirit: ‘You always resist the Holy Spirit’ (Ac. 7:51).

176. – Then he presents the resemblance when he says, **as in the rebellion**. This is a resemblance based on a past event: for the faithful are instructed about the things to be done in the New Testament from the things that occurred in the past, as Rom. (15:4) testifies: ‘What things soever were written, were written for our learning.’ In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives an example in general by citing their guilt; secondly, he gives specific examples (v. 9).

177. – If we are to follow the Apostle’s explanation, we must use the senses which fit the explanation. Thus we read that among others there were two sins committed by the Jews which were severely punished: one was the disobedience of the spies mentioned in Num. (13 & 14), for which the Lord wished to wipe out the people. Hence, He swore that no one but Caleb and Joshua would enter the promised land. He calls this a rebellion, because, although they had offended God in other ways, this sin was particularly bitter; for just as bitter fruit, not being ripe, is not suitable for eating, so then God’s anger was inflexible: ‘How often did they provoke him in the desert, and move him to wrath in the place without water’ (Ps. 77:40)? ‘You have provoked him who made you’ (Bar. 4:7). The other sin was that of tempting God. For they frequently tempted Him, sometimes for water, sometimes for meat, and sometimes for bread, so that they tempted Him ten times: ‘They have tempted me now ten times’ (Num. 14:22); ‘Behold, these ten times you confound me’ (Jb. 19:2). Hence he says, **in the day of testing**.

But someone might suppose the signs of rebellion and testing are the same, and that the Apostle should say: ‘Harden not your hearts as in the rebellion, which occurred in the day of testing.’ But this

does not agree with the Apostle's explanation. Therefore, we should say, **Harden not your hearts as in the rebellion**, and again, **as in the day of testing**, so that there are two sins; hence, Ps. 77 (v. 41) says: 'And they turned back and tempted God; and grieved the Holy One of Israel.'

178. – Then (v. 9) he considers their specific sins. In regard to this he does two things: first, he mentions the sin of testing; secondly, the sin of rebellion (v. 10b). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he mentions the sin of testing; secondly, he shows its gravity (v. 9b); thirdly, the punishment (v. 10).

179. – He says, therefore, that they were guilty of the sin of testing Him in the desert, because your fathers tempted me there; and I speak in the Lord's person. Here it should be noted that temptation is an act of testing about something one does not know. Hence, it is from unbelief that a person tempts God, yet it should be noted that sometimes one tempts God, not with the intention of trying and testing, although it is done after the manner of testing. For one who uses an object of his own, because it is useful, is not, properly speaking, testing it; for example, if someone fleeing were to ride on his own horse he would be testing it, but not with the intention of testing; but when his action is useless, then he is testing. Likewise, if someone were to expose himself to danger, compelled by necessity in the hope of divine help, he would not be tempting God; but if without necessity, he would be tempting God; hence the Lord says in Mt. (4:7): 'You shall not tempt the Lord, your God', because there was not need to cast Himself down. So, they tempted the Lord, because they doubted His power, complaining against Moses, as if the Lord could not give them food, even though they had witnessed His power in greater matters; therefore, they were guilty of the sin of unbelief, which is the greatest.

180. – Then he mentions the gravity of their sin when he says, **they proved and saw my works**. For the greater the benefits one receives from God and the greater the certitude he has of God's power, if he later doubts, he sins more gravely. But they had seen signs and wonders in the land of Egypt, the dividing of the sea, and other miracles, and yet they did not believe; hence, it is stated in Num. (14:22): 'Yet all the men that have seen my majesty and the signs that I have done in Egypt and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now ten times, have not obeyed my voice'. Hence he said, **proved**, i.e., wished to experience, and **saw**, i.e., experienced my works, i.e., effects which not have taken place, unless they had been performed by one with infinite power. And all this not for one day, but for forty years, during which they remained in the desert, because they always had manna and the pillar of fire and the cloud. Or, they proved and saw me, because He never failed them.

181. – Then (v. 10b) he describes the punishment for their sin. For which cause, i.e., for which sin, **I was provoked**, i.e., outraged: not that there is anger in God except metaphorically, because He punishes as one in anger does. This punishment is frequently mentioned in Exodus and Numbers, for they were often prostrated. Hence in 1 Cor. (10:5) he speaks of the punishment of that sin. Or I was near, namely, by punishing them. For when the Lord helps the good and punishes the wicked, He is near them; but when

He conceals men's sins because they repent, and dissembles the affliction of the just in order that their merit may increase, then He seems to be far away: 'The clouds are his covert, and he does not consider our things, and he walks about the poles of heaven' (Jb. 22:14). Or, near, in regard to divine mercy, because the fact that he punishes them in this life is a sign of great mercy: 'Here burn, here cut, but spare me in eternity' (Augustine).

182. – Then (v. 10c) he describes the sin of provocation in detail. And this is clear from (v. 11). In regard to this he does two things: first, he mentions the sin; secondly, he adds the punishment (v. 11). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he mentions their persistence in evil; secondly, their departure from the good (v. 10d).

183. – He says, therefore, I was always near them, namely, by punishing them, and I said, namely, in the eternal plan: **They always go astray in heart**: 'You have always been rebellious against the Lord' (Dt. 31:27); 'If the Ethiopian can change his skin, or the leopard his spots: you also may do well, when you have learned evil' (Jer. 13:23). Thus, therefore, a person provokes God in one way, when he obstinately clings to evil; in another way when he scorns the good. Hence, he says, **They have not known my ways**, i.e. not with simple ignorance, but affected. The sin, therefore, is this: **they have not known**, i.e., they refused to know: 'We desire not the knowledge of your ways' (Jb. 21:14); 'He would not understand that he might do well' (Ps. 34:4). Or, **they have not known**, i.e., they have not approved, as the Apostle says: 'The Lord knows who are his' (2 Tim. 2:19).

184. – Then he shows the punishment when he says: **As I have sworn in my wrath: they shall never enter my rest**. In these words he suggests immutability; for when God or an angel swears, it is a sign of the unchangeableness of that concerning which He swears: 'The Lord has sworn and he will not repent' (Ps. 110:4). Yet at times He swears only conditionally, because if He did not repent, these evils would come upon them. Then he suggests that that punishment is not given as a threat but is aimed at their destruction, because he says, in his wrath: 'Lord, chastise me not in your wrath' (Ps. 6:2). Therefore, He swore in His wrath, **they shall never enter my rest**. Now there is threefold rest: one is temporal: 'You have much goods laid up for many years: take your rest; eat, drink, make good cheer' (Lk. 12:19). The second is the rest of conscience: 'I have labored a little and have found much rest to myself' (Sir. 51:35). The third is the rest of eternal glory: 'In peace in the self-same. I will sleep and I will rest' (Ps. 4:9). Therefore, what is stated here can be explained in each of these ways, namely, they have not entered the rest of the promised land or the rest of conscience or the rest of eternal happiness.

3-3

Heb 3:12-19

¹²Take care, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil, unbelieving heart, leading you to fall away from the living God. ¹³But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called “today,” that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin. ¹⁴For we share in Christ, if only we hold our first confidence firm to the end, ¹⁵while it is said, “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.” ¹⁶Who were they that heard and yet were rebellious? Was it not all those who left Egypt under the leadership of Moses? ¹⁷And with whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose bodies fell in the wilderness? ¹⁸And to whom did he swear that they should never enter his rest, but to those who were disobedient? ¹⁹So we see that they were unable to enter because of unbelief.

185. – Above, the Apostle showed on the authority of the Psalmist that Christ must be obeyed strictly. In that authority he found three things, namely, the exhortation, the guilt, and the punishment. These he now explains in that order: first, the exhortation; secondly, the guilt (v. 16); thirdly, the punishment (v. 18). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he exhorts them to be carefully attentive; secondly, to mutual exhortation (v. 12).

186. – He says, therefore, **take care**. For every man should consider the state in which he is: ‘Let everyone prove his own work’ (Gal. 6:4); ‘See your ways in the valley’ (Jer. 2:23). **Take care therefore, brethren**, each one to himself, because each is part of the assembly, and ‘to each one God gave commandment concerning his neighbor’ (Sir. 19:12): **take care**, i.e., let one prove the other, lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart leading you to fall away from the living God. As if to say: many of you are in a perfect state, yet because of weakness and free will, there could be evil in some of you: ‘Behold, they that serve him are not steadfast; and in his angels he found wickedness. How much more shall they that dwell in houses of clay, who have an earthly foundation’ (Jb. 4:18-19)? ‘Have I not chosen you twelve and one of you is a devil’ (Jn. 6:71). Therefore no one should be solicitous for himself only, but also for each member of his group. But why? **Lest there be in any of you an evil unbelieving heart**. This is the evil about which the Apostle speaks, namely, an unbelieving heart, i.e., not firm in faith. In this does wickedness consist, because just as the soul’s good consists in clinging to God, ‘It is good for me to adhere to my God’ (Ps. 72:27), through faith, so man’s evil consists in withdrawing from God: ‘Know and see that it is an evil and a bitter thing for you to have left the Lord, your God’ (Jer. 2:19). And again he says, of falling away, because one departs by unbelief, from the living God: ‘They have forsaken me, the fountain of living water’ (Jer. 2:15). But he says, **from the living God**, because He is life in Himself and is the life of the soul: ‘In him was life’ (Jn. 1:4). He says this to show that by withdrawing from God, man incurs spiritual death.

187. – But if that evil should be found in anyone, should he despair? No; he should be admonished all the more. Therefore, he says, but **exhort one another every day**, i.e., continually, namely, by discussing your conscience and by exhorting to good, **as long as it is called today**, i.e., while the present time of grace lasts: ‘I must work the works of him that sent me, whilst it is day’ (Jn. 9:4). And this in order that none of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For, as has been stated above, the heart is hardened by persisting in evil. But a person clings to sin because he is deceived. Or, it is natural for the appetite to cling to the good; but it withdraws from good, because it is deceived: ‘They err who work evil’ (Pr. 14:22); ‘I have strayed from the path of truth’ (Wis. 5:6).

188. – Then (v. 14) he explains their condition. As if to say: That condition is more powerful than the other, because they only hear, but we share in Christ. And he speaks properly, because in the Old Testament, there was only hearing, and grace was not conferred *ex opere operato*; but in the New Testament there are both the hearing of faith and the grace given to the very one acting. Hence, we are partakers of grace, first, by accepting the faith: ‘That Christ by faith may dwell in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17); secondly, by the sacraments of faith: ‘As many of you as have been baptized in Christ have put on Christ’ (Gal. 3:27); thirdly, by partaking of the body of Christ: ‘The bread which we break, is it not the partaking of the body of Christ’ (1 Cor. 10:16)?

189. – But it should be noted that there are two ways of sharing in Christ: one is imperfect through the faith and the sacraments; the other is perfect through the presence and vision of the reality. But the first we already possess in reality; the second we possess in hope. But because hope has this condition, namely, that we persevere, he says, **if only we hold our first confidence firm unto the end**. For whoever is baptized in Christ receives a new nature and Christ is somehow formed in him: ‘My little children, of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you’ (Gal. 4:19). This will be truly completed in us in heaven, but here it is only the beginning; and this by formed faith, because unformed faith is dead: ‘Faith without works is dead’ (Jas. 2:26). Hence, unformed faith is not a beginning of partaking of Christ, but formed faith: ‘Faith is the substance of things to be hoped for’, i.e., the foundation and the beginning.

190. – He says, therefore, we are partakers of Christ; yet so, if **we hold our first confidence firm unto the end**.

But it seems that fear is the beginning, because it says in Ps. 110: ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.’ I answer that faith is formed by charity; but charity does not exist without chaste fear. Therefore, formed faith always has charity annexed to it. Hence, faith and fear are the beginning.

191. – Then when he says, **who were they that heard**, he explains what he had said about their sin. As if to say: ‘You are made partakers of Christ, if you do not harden your hearts, as they who have heard and yet were rebellious. Was it not all? No, not all; for two, namely, Caleb and Joshua remained and consoled

the others. And by this we are given to understand that, since not the whole Church falls but only some, the wicked are punished, but not the good, as in those two: ‘And I will leave me seven thousand men in Israel, whose knees have not been bowed before Baal’ (1 Kg 19:18); ‘There is a remnant saved according to the election of grace’ (Rom. 11:5).

192. – Then (v. 17) he explains what he had said about the punishment.

193. – He says, therefore: **With whom was he provoked forty years? Was it not with them that sinned?** From this it is clear that forty years, refers to the statement, **I was provoked**. Hence, he says that he was offended through those forty years. Here it should be noted that all who left Egypt died in the desert, as it is stated in Jos. (5:4), but not all were laid low, but only some: either by God, as when the earth opened and swallowed Dathan and Abiram: (Ps. 77); but others were laid low by Moses, as in the construction of the golden calf (Ex. 32); still others were killed by enemies, and some died a natural death. Therefore, not all were laid low. Hence, it was not a general punishment, although it was general enough so that only two should enter the promised land.

194. – And he says of that land, **and to whom did he swear**, i.e., firmly decree, **that they should never enter into his rest**, but to them that were incredulous. Hence, it is clear that they could not enter into His rest because of their unbelief. Therefore, he says, **we see**, because we have experienced **that they could not enter because of their unbelief**. Or we see by their punishment that they could not enter because of unbelief.

4-1

Heb 4:1-8

¹Therefore, while the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it. ²For good news came to us just as to them; but the message which they heard did not benefit them, because it did not meet with faith in the hearers. ³For we who have believed enter that rest, as he has said, “As I swore in my wrath, “They shall never enter my rest,”” although his works were finished from the foundation of the world. ⁴For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, “And God rested on the seventh day from all his works.” ⁵And again in this place he said, “They shall never enter my rest.” ⁶Since therefore it remains for some to enter it, and those who formerly received the good news failed to enter because of disobedience, ⁷again he sets a certain day, “Today,” saying through David so long afterward, in the words already quoted, “Today, when you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.” ⁸For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not speak later of another day.

195. – Having cited the authority and explained it, the Apostle now argues from it. In regard to this he does two things: first, he urges them to be anxious to enter; secondly, he advises them to hasten to enter (v. 11). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he inspires them with fear; secondly, he shows that anxiety should press them (v. 2).

196. – He says, therefore: It has been stated that He was offended by those who would not believe, so that He swore that they will not enter into His rest. Therefore, **let us fear**, namely, with a chaste fear and with anxiety: ‘Blessed is the man that is always fearful’ (Pr. 28:14); ‘He that thinks himself to stand, let him take heed lest he fall’ (1 Cor. 10:12). For such fear is a useful admonition to give, and it is the companion of three spiritual virtues, namely, of hope, faith, and charity: ‘I am the mother of fair love and of fear and of knowledge and of holy hope’ (Sir. 24:24). But what should we fear? **While the promise of entering his rest remains, let us fear lest any of you be judged to have failed to reach it.** For happiness or felicity consists in a man’s entering it: ‘Happy shall I be if there shall remain of my seed to see the glory of Jerusalem’ (Tob. 13:20); ‘Looking diligently, lest any man be wanting to the grace of God’ (Heb. 12:15), because, as Chrysostom says: ‘The punishment of not seeing God is greater than other punishments inflicted on the damned.’ And he says, **lest any of you be judged** according to God’s judgment: ‘Depart, you accursed, into everlasting fire’ (Mt. 25:41). Or be judged according to human opinion: ‘For know you this and understand that no fornicator or unclean or covetous person (which is a serving of idols) has inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God’ (Eph. 5:5). Therefore, they should fear lest any of them be judged to have failed to reach it, because the promise of entering was made to them: ‘And my people shall sit in the beauty of peace and in the tabernacles of confidence and in wealthy rest’ (Is. 32:18); ‘From henceforth now says the Spirit, that they rest from their labors’ (Rev. 14:13). One

should fear, therefore, that on account of his own guilt, he fails to enter, because he abandoned the promise, which we abandon by deserting faith, hope, and charity, through which we can enter. And this is done by mortal sin.

197. – Then he shows what anxiety should press us. In regard to this he does two things: first, he states his intention; secondly, he proves it (v. 3). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that this promise has been made to us; secondly, that that promise is not enough (v. 2b).

198. – He says, therefore: **for good news came to us as to them**. Here it should be noted that the things promised in the Old Testament should be understood spiritually: ‘All things happened to them in a figure’ (1 Cor. 10:11); ‘What things soever were written, were written for our learning’ (Rom. 13:4).

199. – Then when he says, **but the message did not benefit them**, he shows that the promise is not enough, but that we should be solicitous; hence, he says that the message, which was heard and not believed, profited them nothing: ‘For not the hearers but the doers of the law will be justified’ (Rom. 2:13). And he says, **not being met [mixed] with faith**, because just as the union of intellect and thing understood make one thing, so the believer’s heart and formed faith make one thing: ‘He who is joined to the Lord is one spirit’ (1 Cor. 6:17). For the words of God are so efficacious that they should be believed as soon as they are heard: ‘your testimonies are become exceedingly credible’ (Ps. 92:5).

200. – Then when he says, **for we who have believed enter that rest**, he proves his conclusion. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that it is necessary for us to believe, just as it was for them; secondly, he cites two authorities to prove his proposition (v. 3c); thirdly, he argues from them (v. 6).

201. – He says, therefore: The word was spoken to us as it was to them that we shall enter into rest: ‘In peace in the selfsame, I will sleep and be at rest’ (Ps. 4:9); ‘You shall rest and there shall be none to make you afraid’ (Jb. 11:19). But there is a twofold rest: one in external goods, and a man passes to it from peace of mind; the other is in spiritual good, which is within, and to it a man enters: ‘Enter into the joy of your lord’ (Mt. 25:21); ‘The kind has brought me into his storerooms’ (S of S 1:3). Then he cites the authority: **As I have sworn I my wrath: they shall never enter my rest**.

202. – Then (v. 3b) he cites two authorities: one is from the Law in Genesis (chap. 2) and the other from Ps. 94. He says, therefore, in regard to the first: **although his works from the foundation of the world were finished. For he has spoken somewhere of the seventh day**. This can be read in two ways: in one way by omitting the **for**. Then the sense is this: they shall enter into the rest which was prefigured by the seventh day from the foundation of the world. And God rested the seventh day from all his works. Or the Holy Spirit spoke in a certain place of the seventh day. And he spoke after describing the works of the six days, when the works from the foundation of the world were finished. Bu he says, **from the foundation**

of the world, because the world was first established, and after six days it was made perfect in all its parts.

203. – In regard to the distinction of the days the saints speak in different ways: for Augustine treats the matter differently from the other saints. Yet no matter how they are treated, it is clear that those works were perfect. For they contain a twofold perfection: one is according to the parts of the world which are heaven and the four elements; and this was wrought by the work of creation, which occurred on the first day, and by the work of distinction, which occurred on the second and third day. In this, Augustine agrees with the others. The other perfection is according to the individual parts. And this pertains to the work of ornamentation which occurred on the fourth day in regard to the higher things, on the fifth day in regard to the intermediate elements, namely, air and water, and on the sixth day in regard to earth, which is the lowest element.

204. – But if he rested on the seventh day, who made it, if it is not a work of God? ‘My father works until now and I work’ (Jn. 5:17). I answer that ‘rest’ is not taken as the opposite of labor, but as the opposition of motion. For even when He creates He is not being moved; yet, because we speak of him only in terms of sensible things in which there is no activity without motion; therefore, every action, broadly speaking, is called a motion, and He is said to have rested because He ceased producing new species. So God rested from producing works, because all in some sense preceded. And so, God made the seventh day as every other day, because something was added then, for that was the time when the state of purgation began. For every addition varied the state of the world, and made one day.

It should be noted with Augustine that he does not say simply that He rested, but that he rested from his works. For He rested in Himself from all eternity, but when He rested, it was not in His works, but from His works. For God works in a different manner from other artisans: for an artisan acts because of a need, as a house builder makes a house to rest in it, and a cutlerer a knife for gain; hence, the desire of every artisan comes to rest in his work. But not so with God, because He does not act out of need but to communicate His goodness; hence, he does not rest in His work, but from producing a work; and He rests only in His goodness.

205. – Then he cites the authority of David, which has already been explained. But when he says, **since, then, it remains for some to enter it**, he argues from the premises. In regard to this he does two things: first he accepts the sense of the second authority; secondly, he argues from the first (v. 9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he extracts two things from the second authority; secondly, he shows that those two things are understood in it (v. 8).

206. – Therefore, he extracts two things: one is well known, namely, that the ancestral fathers did not enter; the other is that during the time of David there remained another rest to be given. For although the promised rest was to be obtained in the promised land, yet by the fact David so long afterward says,

Today, if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts, he shows that another rest remains. Otherwise, he would have made no mention of the rest, saying, **Today if you hear his voice, harden not your hearts**. There is, therefore, a rest into which we are to enter, but which they did not enter because of unbelief. Therefore, because they did not enter, others to whom the promise was made must enter, because they to whom it was first preached, did not enter. Therefore, it remains for others to enter. The reason for this is that if God created man for eternal happiness, for he created him according to His own image and likeness, He prepared a rest for him. Therefore, although someone might be excluded because of his sin, God does not wish that preparation to have been made in vain. Therefore, some will enter, as is clear from those invited to the marriage feast: ‘The marriage, indeed, is ready, but they that were invited are not worthy. Go, therefore, into the highways and as many as you shall find, call to the marriage’ (Mt. 22:8).

207. – Then when he says, **For if Joshua had given them rest, God would never have afterwards spoken of another day**, he proves that it remains for others to enter, because if Jesus Nave, i.e., Joshua, had given the children of Israel final rest, God would never have spoken of another day, i.e., another rest would not remain for us, nor would David have spoken of another rest after that day. Hence, it is clear that that rest was a sign of spiritual rest.

4-2

Heb 4:9-13

⁹So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God; ¹⁰for whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his labors as God did from his. ¹¹Let us therefore strive to enter that rest, that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience. ¹²For the word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing to the division of soul and spirit, of joints and marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart. ¹³And before him no creature is hidden, but all are open and laid bare to the eyes of him with whom we have to do.

208. – Having cited two authorities: one from Genesis (2) and the other from Ps. 94, and drawn his conclusion from the second authority, the Psalm, the Apostle now concludes the same from the first. In regard to this he does two things: first, he gives the conclusion; secondly, he gives the reason for the consequence (v. 10).

209. – In regard to the first it should be noted that the Apostle has so far mentioned a triple rest: the first is God's rest from His works, the second is a temporal rest, which the children of Israel had in the promised land; the third is eternal rest, which is designated by the first two. But the Apostle, before mentioning eternal rest, says that after the earthly rest **there remains a day of rest for the people of God**. This was represented in the Old Law by the Sabbath, namely, eternal rest: 'If you call the Sabbath delightful, and the holy of the Lord glorious' (Is. 58:13); 'And there shall be month after month and Sabbath after Sabbath' (Is. 66:23), i.e., eternal rest. And he says, a Sabbath rest, because just as in the Old Law the Sabbath represented God's rest from His works, so that rest will be that of the saints from their labors' (Rev. 14:13).

210. – Hence, he adds, **For whoever enters God's rest also ceases from his works**: because just as God worked six days and rested on the seventh, so by the six days the present time is signified, because it is a perfect number. Therefore, one who works perfectly, rests from his works on the seventh day, as God did from His; but not from all works, because there are certain works, for example, to see, to love and to praise: 'And they rested not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty' (Rev. 4:8), but from laborious works: 'But they who hope in the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall take wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall work and not faint' (Is. 40:31).

211. – Then (v. 11) he exhorts us to hurry. In regard to this he does two things: first, he give the advice; secondly, the reason for entering that rest (v. 12). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he urges us to hurry; secondly, he shows the danger in delay (v. 11b).

212. – He says, therefore, **Because there remains a Sabbath rest for the people of God, let us strive [hurry] to enter that rest.** He says, **enter**, because it does not consist in external goods, to which one goes out, but in internal goods: ‘You shall bring them in, and plant them in the mountain of your inheritance’ (Ex. 15:17); ‘Enter into the joy of the Lord’ (Mt. 25:21). Therefore, there are many reasons for striving to enter: one is that the way is long: ‘A certain nobleman went into a far country’ (Lk. 19:12). It is said to be long because of the difference of condition, because the fullness of all good and immunity from all evil is there, and also perfect vision and possession, whereas here we find the opposite. Furthermore, we must hurry, because the time is very short: ‘The days of man are short’ (Jb. 14:5), and because that time, besides being short and brief, is uncertain: ‘Man knows not his own end’ (Ec. 9:12) and because the call is urgent: for an inner call drives us with the goad of charity: ‘When he shall come as violent stream, which the spirit of the Lord drives on’ (Is. 59:19); The charity of Christ presses us’ (2 Cor. 5:14); ‘I have run the way of your commandments’ (Ps. 118:32), and because there is a danger in delay, as is clear from the foolish virgins who arrived late and could not enter.

213. – Therefore, he says, **that no one fall by the same sort of disobedience.** As if to say: the ancients could not enter because of unbelief. Hence, we must beware of the example set by another’s sin, lest we become incredulous, or by another’s punishment, lest we be excluded as they were: ‘she went into the hill country with haste’ (Lk. 1:39). For the punishment of others is brought to our notice as a warning: ‘The wicked man being scourged, the fool shall be wiser’ (Pr. 19:25).

214. – From this it seems that a person who is not corrected by another’s punishment will be punished more severely. But this would mean that the sin of Adam, who did not sin by following another’s example, would be less grave. I answer that these sayings are always to be understood, when other things are equal. For it sometimes happens that one is not graver than another; yet, because of some attendant circumstance, one becomes graver and not another. For example, two adulteries are of themselves equal; yet one which is committed with malice aforethought is graver than one which is committed through passion or weakness. In like manner, an idle word is more grievous when it is spoken from malice.

215. – But how we are to strive is taught by the Apostle in 1 Cor. (9:25), because ‘every one that strives for the mastery refrains himself from all things.’ Therefore, one must strive by putting off impediments, not only refraining from all sin, but also avoiding the occasions of sin: ‘I will lead you by the paths of equity’ (Pr. 4:11).

But we are warned against hurrying: ‘He that is hasty with his feet shall stumble’ (Pr. 19:2). I answer that there are two ways of hurrying: one is by being headlong and this I reprehensible; the other is by being energetic, and this is praiseworthy. For, as the Philosopher says: All men should take a long time to consider, but be quick to carry out their decisions. Therefore, when hurry destroys counsel, it is precipitate and vicious. In this sense the objection is valid; but hurry in executing one’s decision is virtuous and praiseworthy. This is the type of hurry to which the Apostle exhorts us here.

216. – Then (v. 11) he gives the reason for this advice, and especially in regard to the danger. But this reason is taken on the part of Christ in Whom there are two natures: one is the divine according to which he is the Word of the Father; the other is the human according to which He is the high priest offering Himself on the Cross. First, therefore, he gives the reason based on the divinity; secondly, the reason based on the humanity (v. 14); He says three things about the Son of God: first, he describes His power; secondly, His knowledge (v. 12); thirdly, his authority (v. 13b) But he shows his power in three ways: first, its nature, secondly, its vigor (v. 12b); thirdly its action (v. 12c).

217. – He says, therefore, **The word of God is living**. This text is difficult, although it is clearer than another text: for where we have *sermo* the Greek has *logos*, which is the same as *verbum*, ‘word’; hence a saying, i.e., a word. This is the way Augustine explains John’s statement: ‘The word that I have spoken’, i.e., I who am the Word: ‘Your almighty word leapt down from heaven from the royal throne’ (Wis. 18:15). Similarly here, the word (*sermo*) of God is living, i.e., the living Word (*Verbum*) of God. For the Word of God conceived from all eternity in the intellect of the Father is the primordial Word of which Sirach (1:5) says: ‘The word of God on high is the fountain of wisdom.’ And because it is primordial, all other words are derived from it; these words being nothing more than certain conceptions expressed in the angelic mind or ours, hence, that Word is the expression of all words, being their font. And what is said of that Word is somehow applied to the other words according to their mode. But it is said of that Word that it is living. But a thing is called living, when it has its own movement and activity. For as a gushing fountain is called living, so, too, that Word has eternal vigor: ‘For ever, O Lord, your word stands firm in heaven’ (Ps. 118:89); ‘For as the Father has life in himself, so he has given to the Son also have life in himself’ (Jn. 5:24). Or it can be referred to His human nature, for it is living, although others may regard it as dead; because it rose no more to die: ‘I was dead, and behold, I am living for ever and ever’ (Rev. 1:18). Similarly, the word of Scripture is living and unfailing: ‘Not as though the word of God had miscarried’ (Rom. 9:6).

218. – Then when he says, **and active** [effectual], he shows its vigor. But the word is said to be effectual because of its supreme power and the infinite force it has: for all such things were made by it: ‘By the word of the Lord the heavens were established’ (Ps. 32:6); it is also effectual, because all the words uttered by God and delivered by angels or man draw there efficacy from it: ‘His word is full of power’ (Ec. 8:4); ‘The word which shall go forth shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and it shall prosper in the things for which I sent it (Is. 55:11).

219. – Then (v. 12b) he shows its action. In regard to this he does two things: first, he describes its action; secondly, he explains this (v. 12c).

220. – He says, therefore: **And more piercing than any two-edged sword**. But this is said to pierce which enters the depths of a thing. But this can take place in two ways: in one way, because it acts on the inmost recesses of a thing: ‘You have wrought all our works for us’ (Is. 26:12); in another way, because it knows the innermost parts of a thing: ‘He needed not that any should give testimony of man: for he knew what was in man (Jn. 2:25); ‘I will penetrate to all the lower parts of the earth’ (Sir. 24:43). For God’s action and knowledge reach into the inmost parts of a thing; hence, he says, **than any two-edged sword**. For a sword is more penetrating, because it is sharp; and this I especially true of a two-edged sword, which is sharp at both ends. And because the word of God is sharp in its action and its knowledge, it is compared to a two-edged sword: ‘And the sword of the spirit which is the word of God’ (Eph. 6:17); ‘In that day the Lord with his hard and great and strong sword shall visit Leviathan’ (Is. 27:1). Or it is called two-edged in regard to its activity, because it is sharp enough to promote good and destroy evil: ‘From his mouth came out a sharp two-edged sword’ (Rev. 1:16). Or in regard to its knowledge, and it is said to be more piercing than any two-edged sword, i.e., than any human intellect, which is called two-edged, because it is open to either part of a conclusion, until it comes to the end of its scrutiny and fixed its point there, namely, in the truth. For in the ordering of causes we see that a prior cause works at a greater depth than a subsequent one. Hence, that which nature produces is more profound than that which is produced by art. Therefore, because God is the first cause, by His action is produced that which is most inward in a thing, namely, its being.

221. – Then when he says, **and piercing the division of the soul and of the spirit**, he manifests what he had said above about its action. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows this in regard to spiritual things; secondly, in regard to material things (v. 12d)

222. – According to the Apostle there are three things in man: body, soul, and spirit: ‘That you wholly spirit and soul and body may be preserved blameless in the coming of our Lord’ (1 Th. 5:23). For we know what the body is. But the soul is that which gives life to the body; whereas the spirit in bodily things is something subtle and signifies immaterial substance: ‘Egypt is man and not God: and their horses, flesh, and not spirit’ (Is. 31:3). Therefore, the spirit in us is that by which we are akin to spiritual substances; but the soul is that through which we are akin to the brutes. Consequently, the spirit is the human mind, namely, the intellect and will.

This has led some to assert that there are different souls in us: one which perfects and vivifies the body and is called a soul in the proper sense; another is the spirit, having an intellect by which we understand and a will by which we will. Consequently, those two are called substances rather than souls. But this opinion was condemned in the book, *The Dogmas of the Church*. Therefore, we must say that the essence of the soul is one and the same, and by its essence it vivifies the body, and by its power, which is called the intellect, it is the principle of understanding eternal things. How this is possible will be clear. For the more perfect a form is, the less its activity depends on matter. Thus the forms of the elements, because they are most imperfect, do not extend beyond matter. Therefore, since the soul is the most noble

of forms, it should have an action which altogether transcends the power of matter. That action is called understanding, on which follows its natural inclination, namely, willing. But there is a triple difference among the actions of the soul: first of all, the soul is that to which pertain the powers by which the soul acts in conjunction with the body; whereas the spirit is that to which pertain the powers by which it acts without the body. But the first difference between those powers and the actions proceeding therefrom is the difference between reason and sensibility, which is a power through which the soul acts with the body; because reason apprehends universals, but the sensibility material and sensible things. The second difference is between the parts of the sensibility, because the sensibility has one state insofar as it tends to its proper object according to its nature, and another state insofar as it is regulated by reason. For the concupiscible appetite is considered one way when it is regarded as a force relative to its object, and another way when it is regarded as partaking of reason. The third difference is between the parts of reason itself relative to its different objects: because it either tends to God, and this is supreme in it; or to spiritual effects, or to temporal effects. The Word of God effects and distinguishes between all those divisions and species, namely, how the sensibility is distinguished from reason; also, the species of the same sensibility in itself; also, the species of the function of reason, and what arises in the rational soul from the consideration of spiritual and earthly things. Or it can be explained according to a Gloss in two ways: so that the soul refers to carnal sins which involve bodily pleasures, such as lust and gluttony; but the spirit refers to spiritual sins, which involve an act of the mind, such as pride, vain glory, and the like. Or by soul is understood evil thoughts, and by spirit good thoughts. Then the sense is this: reaching, i.e., discerning, unto the division of the soul and the spirit, i.e., between carnal and spiritual sins, or between good and evil thoughts.

224. – Then when he says, **of joints and of marrow**, he declares what he had said about God’s activity in regard to temporal things. But it should be noted that something fails to penetrate something else for two reasons: one is due to juncture and the other to concealment. But neither of these can impede the word of God. There are in us, of course, certain joints, namely, of nerves and arteries; and there are parts which are enclosed and hidden, such as the marrow enclosed in the bones. But all these are open to the divine gaze; consequently, there is nothing too difficult for Him to penetrate. Or by joints can be understood the union of the soul’s parts to one another, as soul to spirit. As if to say: Not only does He reach to a knowledge of the difference and division of the soul and spirit, but to a knowledge of how they are joined. For he knows how the sensibility is ruled by reason. But marrow can be taken to mean that which is concealed in the reason and sensibility: ‘Fear him that can send both body and soul to hell’ (Mt. 10:28).

225. – Then (v. 12d) he treats of the Word’s knowledge. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that all things are subject to His knowledge; secondly, how He knows (v. 13b).

226. – There are two reasons why a thing is not known: either because it is concealed within something; this is the way the secrets of the heart are concealed, because it is very deep and inscrutable: ‘The heart is

perverse above all things and inscrutable' (Jer. 17:9). In the heart thoughts are concealed, but the Word of God knows them: 'Take away the evil of your devices from my eyes' (Is. 1:16). Therefore, in regard to this he says, **a discerner of thoughts**. In another way, something is not known, because it is altogether unknown and invisible; which is the way the things of the will are unknown. But in the will is one's intention, which is invisible of its very nature. For what a man does or thinks is revealed in his work, but the intention for which does it is utterly uncertain. But not even these are hidden from God; hence, he continues, **and intentions of the heart**: 'The searcher of hearts and reins', i.e., of thoughts and intentions (Ps. 7:11).

227. – But it should be noted that word, penetrating, can refer to an action, as has been said: then penetrator and discerner differ: but if it refers to thought, then the phrase, discerner of thoughts, explains it. As if to say: You say that it is more penetrating than any two-edged sword; this is true, because it is a discerner of the joints and the marrow, i.e., of thoughts and intentions. For joints are junctures, and, thus, thought in which there is a juncture of terms can be called a joint, when it passes from one thing to another: 'Loose the bands of wickedness' (Is. 58:6); 'Woe to you that draw iniquity with cords of vanity and sin as the rope of a cart' (Is. 5:18). Also, marrow is something that lies within and is concealed in the bones: 'His bones are moistened with marrow' (Jb. 21:24).

228. – Then when he says, **before him no creature is hidden**, he shows that anything invisible according to its nature is not hidden from God. For if something is not seen by us, it is because it is more simple and more subtle than our bodily or intellectual eyes, such as separated substances, which we cannot see in this life. But nothing is simpler and subtler than the divine intellect. Therefore, no creature is invisible in His sight.

229. – But does He know things in a merely general way, as some claim? No; but all things are naked and open to His eyes. By the eye we mean the cognitive power; for spiritual things are understood through sensible things. But it is significant that he says, **eyes**, because of the variety of things He understands: for He does not know one thing only, but a multitude of things. He says, **naked and open**, for something is known in two ways: in one way, superficially, in another way, in depth. Thus a naked man is seen superficially, but not one who is clothed. but all things are manifest to God, which are seen superficially; for there is nothing covering man to impede God's knowledge, as clothing might: 'Hell is naked before him' (Jb. 26:6). But he says, **open**, because nothing is so concealed that it can escape God's knowledge.

230. – Yet this seems to be contrary to what is stated in Hab (1:13): 'Your eyes are too pure to behold evil, and you cannot look on iniquity.' Therefore, not all things are naked. I answer that in God is knowledge of simple understanding and knowledge of approbation. In the first way He knows all things, even wicked things and things that are not; but in the second way He knows good thing insofar as they exist.

231. – Then when he says, **with whom we have to do**, he shows the perfection of his authority. But this authority is the authority to judge: ‘It is he who was appointed by God to be judge of the living and of the dead’ (Ac. 10:42). To Him, therefore, is our speech, when we render an account of our works: ‘For we must all be manifested before the judgment seat of Christ, that everyone may receive the proper things of the body, according as he has done, whether it be good or evil’ (2 Cor. 5:10). Therefore, because He is so powerful, so knowing and so great, let us hasten to enter into that rest.

232. – For three things are required for passing judgment: first, the power to coerce subjects: ‘Seek not to be made a judge, unless you have strength enough to extirpate iniquities’ (Sir. 7:6). And this belongs to Christ: ‘All power is given me in heaven and in earth’ (Mt. 28:18). Secondly, zeal for the right is required, in order that judgment be pronounced not from hatred or spite, but from love of justice: ‘Whom the Lord loves he chastises; and as a father in the son he pleases himself’ (Pr. 3:12). This love of justice is especially evident in Christ: ‘And justice shall be the girdle of his loins’ (Is. 11:5). Thirdly, there is required wisdom, according to which a judgment is formed: ‘A wise man shall judge his people’ (Sir. 10:1). But Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God (1 Cor. 1:24). Now this power to judge belongs to Christ as man: ‘He gave him power to do judgment, because he is the Son of man’ (Jn. 5:27), not, of course, because of the condition of the nature, according to Augustine, because then all men would have such power, but because of the capital grace, which Christ received in His human nature. But this power to judge belongs to Christ according to His human nature for three reasons: first, by reason of His affinity to men. For just as God works through intermediate causes, as being closer to their effects, so He judges through a man in order that the judgment may be gentler. For we have not a high priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities, as has been said. Secondly, because in the final judgment, as Augustine says, there will be a resurrection of dead bodies, which God quickens through the Son of man, just as through the same Christ He quickens souls, inasmuch as He is the Son of God. Thirdly, because, as Augustine says in the book, *The Words of the Lord*, it was proper that those to be judged should see their judge. But the good and the wicked are to be judged. Therefore, in the judgment the form of man will be visible to the good and the wicked, the form of God being reserved for the good. But this power suits Christ both on account of His divine personality, on account of His dignity as head, and on account of the fullness of His sanctifying grace. Furthermore, He obtained it by His merits. hence, it was fitting that according to God’s justice the judge should be one who fought for God’s justice and overcame; and that the one unjustly judged should condemn the guilty: ‘I have overcome and I am set down with my Father on his throne’ (Rev. 3:21); ‘You have sat on the throne who judge justice’ (Ps. 9:5); ‘The judge will sit who stood before a judge, and He will condemn the guilty who was falsely judged guilty’ (Augustine, *The Words of the Lord*).

4-3

Heb 4:14-16

¹⁴Since then we have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. ¹⁵For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but one who in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin. ¹⁶Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

233. – Having exhorted them to hasten to enter into God’s rest, and as an inducement citing Christ’s greatness according to His divine nature, the Apostle here does the same in regard to His human nature. He does three things: first, he states His dignity; secondly, he shows his piety (v. 15); thirdly, he urges us to have confidence in Him (v. 16).

234. – He says, therefore: Thus we have said that we can speak to Him, Who is the living Word, the true judge and the high priest, **Since we have a great high priest:** ‘You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedech’ (Ps. 104:4). Nor is He just a high priest, but He is a great one: ‘and the Lord showed me Jesus the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord’ (Zech 3:1) But He is called great, because He is not a high priest of temporal goods only, but of goods to come: ‘but Christ being come a high priest of the good things to come’ (below 9:11). Now two things pertained to a great high priest: one was his office, namely, to enter once a year with blood into the Holy of Holies. But this befits Christ in a special way: for the one enters with blood into a figurative Holy of Holies; but Christ through His own blood entered into the heavenly holy of holies. Hence, he says, ‘who has passed through the heavens’, i.e., He entered by His own power. The second thing is that he should be from a certain tribe, namely, from the stock of Aaron. But this belongs to Christ, Who is of nobler origin; hence, He is called the Son of God: ‘This is my beloved Son’ (Mt. 3:17); ‘You are my son; this day have I begotten you’ (Ps. 2:7). Therefore, because we have this high priest, **let us hold fast our confession**, i.e., let us cling with all our heart, because, as it says in Rom. (10:10): ‘With the heart we believe unto justice; but with the mouth, confession is made unto salvation.’ But Christ, the greatest high priest, demands this confession: ‘Everyone that shall confess me before men, I will also confess before my Father who is in heaven’ (Mt. 10:32). But he says, **our confession**. This can be understood in two ways: in one way, that the confession, as taken here, is a confession of faith. But faith is the source of hope. But Abraham begot Isaac, i.e., faith begot hope, not as a habit but at to its order to the act. For no one can hope or should hope for anything but what he can obtain. But the fact that we can obtain eternal things is due to faith.

235. – Then when he says, **For we have not a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our infirmities**, he shows that there is mercy and compassion in Him, lest perhaps anyone suppose that He

cannot do anything but what His justice requires. Here it should be noted that Christ does not merely have the power, but is most ready to have compassion on our infirmities, because He has experienced our wretchedness, which, as God, He knew from all eternity by simple knowledge: ‘The Lord has compassion on them that fear him: for he knows our frame’ (Ps. 102:13).

236. – Hence, he adds, **but as we are, tempted**.

But there are three kinds of temptation: one is from the flesh, namely, when the flesh lusts against the spirit, as it says in Gal (5:17) and this always involves sin, because, as Augustine says, there is one sin in which the flesh lusts against the spirit. But this was not in Christ; hence, he says, without sin, i.e., without the slightest movement of sin: ‘Who did not sin, neither was guile found in His mouth’ (1 Pt. 2:22). Therefore, He is called the Lamb of God. Another is temptation either by enticing us with prosperity or by terrifying us with adversity. Now Christ was tempted in those ways: for He was enticed by prosperity. For whatever pertains to prosperity in this life, pertains either to the concupiscence of the flesh, to the concupiscence of the eyes, or to the pride of life (1 Jn. 2:16). The devil tempted Him with the first, when he tempted Him to gluttony, which is the mother of lust: ‘If you be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread’ (Mt. 4:3); also to vainglory when he said: ‘All these things will I give you, if falling down you will adore me’ (Mt. 4:9). ‘When all the temptations were over, the devil left him for a time’ (Lk. 4:13). Furthermore, He was tempted by adversity and by the snares laid by the Pharisees, because they wished to ensnare Him in his speech. And by insults: ‘You that destroy the temple of God in three days rebuild it, save your own self’ (Mt. 27:40); and by scourges and torments. Therefore, outside of being tempted without sin, he has been tempted as we are.

237. – He says, **as we are**, which can be explained in two ways: in one way, so that a final cause is designated. As if to say: He was tempted in order to give us an example how to handle temptation: ‘Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example, that you should follow his steps’ (1 Pt. 2:21). Or so that the consequent is denoted: as if to say: He was tempted in order that He might be like as we are in all things, except sin. For if he had existed without temptations, He would not have experienced them, and then He could not have compassion. But if He had sinned, He would not have been able to help us, but would need help.

238. – Then when he says, **Let us go therefore with confidence to the throne of grace**, he urges us to have confidence in him. As if to say: Since He can have compassion, let us go with confidence: ‘Behold, God is my savior; I will deal confidently and will not fear’ (Is. 12:2). Let us go, I say, to the throne. The king’s seat is called a throne. But Christ is king: ‘The king will reign and he will be wise’ (Jer. 23:5). But this throne has a twofold state: one, of justice in the future: ‘You have sat on the throne, who judge justice’ (Ps. 9:5). This will occur in the future: ‘When I shall take a time, I will judge justice’ (Ps. 74:3). The other throne is that of grace, which is meant here; hence, he adds, of his grace, namely, in the present, which is the time of mercy: ‘He shall give equal grace to the grace thereof’ (Zech 4:7). But by the grace

of Christ we are freed of all misery, because we are freed from sin, which makes people wretched; hence, he says, that we may obtain mercy. Furthermore, by the grace of Christ we are aided in doing good; hence he says, **and find grace**; ‘You have found grace with God’ (Lk. 1:30); and this to help in time of need, i.e., to do good: ‘My help is from the Lord’ (Ps. 120:2). But that help comes through grace: ‘I have labored more abundantly than all they’ (1 Cor. 15:10). But this should come at a seasonable time; hence, he says, in time of need: ‘There is a time and opportunity for every business’ (Ec. 8:6). This is the present time, which is the time of mercy.

5-1

Heb 5:1-7

¹For every high priest chosen from among men is appointed to act on behalf of men in relation to God, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins. ²He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since he himself is beset with weakness. ³Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people. ⁴And one does not take the honor upon himself, but he is called by God, just as Aaron was. ⁵So also Christ did not exalt himself to be made a high priest, but was appointed by him who said to him, “You are my Son, today I have begotten you”; ⁶as he says also in another place, “You are a priest for ever, after the order of Melchizedek.” ⁷In the days of his flesh, Jesus offered up prayers and supplications, with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard for his godly fear.

239. – As we have said at the beginning of this epistle, the Apostle’s intention is to show that Christ is more excellent than all those from whom the Law derives authority, namely, the angels, by whose ministry it was given: ‘Being ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator’ (Gal. 3:19), and Moses, who was the law-giver: ‘The law was given by Moses’ (Jn. 1:17) and the priesthood and high priesthood of Aaron, by whom the Law was administered. Having finished the first two he now deals with the third, namely, the excellence of Christ’s priesthood over that of Aaron. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that Christ is a high priest; secondly, that He is more excellent than the high priest of the Old Law (chap. 7). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that Christ is a high priest; secondly, he prepares his hearers for what follows (v. 11). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows what is required of a high priest; secondly, that these are found in Christ, and concludes that He is a high priest (v. 5). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he describes the high priest’s office; secondly, he shows the compassion necessary in a high priest (v. 2); thirdly, he shows the way of attaining the high priesthood (v. 4).

240. – Regarding the office he mentions four things: first, the loftiness of this office: chosen from among men; secondly, its usefulness: appointed to act on behalf of men; thirdly, the material: in relation to God; fourthly, the action: to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.

241. – He says, therefore: This office suits a man, but not an angel. Hence, he says that we have a great high priest and He is Christ: **For every high priest chosen from among men**, ought to be a man. But God willed that man have someone like himself to whom he might run. Hence, the Church, too, has ordained that when someone from the college is found useful, a foreigner should not be chosen: ‘I will give her vine-dressers out of the same place’ (Hos. 2:15); ‘You shall set him whom the Lord, your God, shall choose out of the number of your brethren. You may not make a man of another nation king that is

not your brother' (Dt. 17:15). But he is chosen from, because he should excel the others, as Saul did (1 Sam. 10:23). Accordingly, Christ asks Peter, whom He wished to set over the others, if he loved Him more than the others (Jn. 21:15).

242. – The end and utility is that he is appointed to act on behalf of men, i.e., for their benefit. He is not appointed for glory or for accumulating riches or for enriching his family: 'And ourselves, your servants through Jesus' (2 Cor. 4:5); 'According to the power which the Lord has given me unto edification and not unto destruction' (2 Cor. 13:10). But if he seeks his own, he is not a shepherd, but a hireling.

243. – The nature of the dignity is that the high priest is set over the others. For just as a leader or ruler is set over a city, so the high priest in the things that appertain to God: 'You shall be to him in things that pertain to God' (Ex. 4:16); 'for the weapons of our warfare are not carnal, but mighty to God unto the pulling down of fortifications' (2 Cor. 10:4). Therefore, just as the things which pertain to the worship of God transcend temporal things, so the pontifical dignity exceeds all other dignities. Therefore, high priests should not entangle themselves with secular business and neglect the things that pertain to God: 'No man being a soldier to Christ entangles himself with secular businesses' (2 Tim. 2:4).

244. – The act of the high priest is to offer gifts, i.e., voluntary oblations, not extorted: 'Of every man that offers of his own accord, you shall take them' (Ex. 25:2) and sacrifices for sins, i.e., which are offered to him to satisfy for sins: 'The priest shall pray for him and for his sin, and it shall be forgiven him' (Lev 4:26). This indicates that everything offered, whether voluntary or under vow or for satisfaction, shall be offered according to the disposition of the prelate.

245. – Then (v. 2) he shows what is required in the exercise of the high priesthood, namely, pity. In regard to this he does three things: first, he shows that for the exercise of the high priesthood mercy and compassion are required; secondly, a merciful motive (v. 2b); thirdly, the sign of mercy (v. 3).

246. – He says therefore: I say that he must be in the things that appertain to God; yet he should be mediator between man and God: 'I was the mediator and stood between the Lord and you at that time' (Dt. 5:5). Therefore, just as he should by the devotion of prayer reach God as one extreme, so by mercy and compassion he should reach man, the other extreme. Hence, he says: who can have compassion on the ignorant and wayward: 'Who is weak and I am not weak?' (2 Cor. 11:29). On the other hand: 'They are not concerned for the affliction of Joseph' (Am 6:6). But defects are of two kinds: some fail from ignorance; hence, he says, **on the ignorant**. But to be ignorant is, properly speaking, to lack knowledge of things one ought to know. Others fall from certain knowledge, and in regard to this he says, and are wayward, i.e., err.

247. – The motive for mercy is mentioned when he says, **became he himself is beset with infirmity**. That motive is infirmity, and those who are sometimes infirm: ‘But we have this treasure in earthen vessels’ (2 Cor. 4:7). The reason for this is that he may have compassion on the infirmities of others. This is the reason why the Lord permitted Peter to fall: ‘Judge of the disposition of your neighbor by yourself’ (Sir. 31:18). Therefore, he says, because he himself is beset with infirmity, namely, as to penalties and guilt: ‘Have mercy on me, O Lord, for I am weak’ (Ps. 6:3); ‘for I am a weak man and of short time and falling short of the understanding of judgment and laws’ (Wis. 9:5). And note that he says, **beset**. For carnal men have the weakness of sin within themselves, because they are not subject to sin; and they are also beset by the weakness of the flesh: ‘Therefore, I myself with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin’ (Rom. 7:25).

248. – But the sign of this is that even in the Old Law (Lev 9), as well as now, as is clear from the canon of the Mass: ‘And to us sinners’, it has been decreed that the priest offer also for himself, which he would not do, unless he were oppressed by the weakness of sins, with which he is beset. Indeed, if he is in mortal sin, he should not celebrate. And therefore, he says: **Because of this he is bound to offer sacrifice for his own sins as well as for those of the people**.

249. – Then he describes how one goes about attaining to the priesthood when he says, **And one does not take the honor upon himself**. For it is contrary to nature for anything to raise itself to a higher state than its nature, as air does not make itself fire, but is made so by something higher. Hence, God’s discipline does not allow anyone to take the honor to himself, by favor, money, or power: ‘Have we not taken unto us honors by our own strength?’ (Am 6:14); They have reigned, but not by me’ (Hos 8:4), but is called by God, as Aaron was.

Therefore, the Lord confirmed his priesthood with a rod which flowered. Hence, those should be accepted who do not impose themselves. Hence, in olden times they were indicated by a visible sign, as was St. Nicholas and many others.

250. – Then (v. 5) he shows how Christ is high priest. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows that the aforesaid belongs to Christ; secondly, from this he draws a conclusion (v. 10). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows that Christ was made a high priest not by Himself but by God; secondly, he treats of His office (v. 7); thirdly, of his mercy (v. 8). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows that Christ did not promote himself; secondly, by whom He was promoted (v. 5b).

251. – He says, therefore: **so also Christ did not exalt himself**. Here it should be noted that he does not say that He did not make Himself a priest, but that he did not exalt himself to be made a high priest. For there are some who exalt themselves to become a priest, as hypocrites who demonstrate certain qualities, in order to be chosen or to obtain prebends. Yet no one makes himself high priest. But Christ not only did not make Himself high priest, he did not exalt himself to be made high priest: ‘I seek not my own glory;

there is one that seeks and judges' (Jn. 8:50), and later: 'It is my Father that glorifies me' (Jn. 8:54). This is true, insofar as He is man, because as God He has the same glory as the Father.

252. – Then (v. 5b) he shows by whom he was promoted. First, he shows by Whom He was glorified; secondly, how He was appointed high priest (v. 8b). But He was glorified by the divine judgment, because the Lord spoke to Him in Ps. 2 (v. 7): 'You are my son: This day I have begotten you', and in Mt. (3:17): 'This is my beloved Son in whom I am well pleased.' Therefore, when He shows Him begotten from eternity, He shows His glory: 'Who, being the brightness of his glory and the figure of his substance' (above 1:3). As man He also receives the high priesthood from God: as he says also in another place: 'You are a priest for ever according to the order of Melchizedech'. But the Apostle uses the authority of the Palms as being more famous and more often consulted. He says, **priest**, because He offered Himself to God the Father: 'He loved us and gave himself for us an oblation and offering to God' (Eph. 5:2). But lest anyone suppose the priesthood of Christ is that of the Old Law, he distinguishes the former on two points: first, its authority, because it is for ever, whereas the other was temporary and passed away with the coming of the One prefigured. Likewise, its victim has the power to bring one to eternal life, and it lasts for every. Secondly, its ritual, because animals were offered in the one, but bread and wine here; hence, he says, according to the order of Melchizedech.

253. – Then (v. 7) he shows that what pertains to the priestly office belongs to Christ: first, he shows his condition; secondly, His act (v. 7b); thirdly, His efficacy (v. 7c).

254. – His condition was that He was taken from men, because, as has been stated, a high priest is taken from among men. Therefore, he says, **who in the days of his flesh**. Here flesh is taken for the entire human nature: 'The Word was made flesh' (Jn. 1:14). But are the days of His flesh no longer here? It seems that they are, for it says in Luke (24:39): 'A spirit has not flesh and bone, as you see me to have.' Why, then, is the time before His Passion and resurrection considered the time of his flesh more than now? I answer that flesh stands for the weakness of the flesh, as in 1 Cor. (15:50): 'Flesh and blood cannot possess the kingdom of God.' But before the Passion Christ had weak and corruptible flesh. Therefore, he says, **in the days of his flesh**, i.e., in which He wore flesh similar to the sinner, but not sinful.

255. – His act was to offer prayers and supplications, which is the spiritual sacrifice Christ offered. But they are called prayers, i.e., petitions: 'The continual prayer of a just man avails much' (Jas. 5:16). They are also called supplications on account of the humility of the one praying: 'He fell upon his face, praying' (Mt. 26:39). To whom? To God the Father, **who was able to save him from death**. He was able to do this in two ways: in one way, by saving Him from death: 'Father, if it be possible, let this chalice pass from me. Nevertheless, not as I will, but as you will' (Mt. 26:39). In another way, by raising Him up: 'Because you will not leave my soul in hell' (Ps. 15:10); and again: 'But you, O Lord, have mercy on me

and raise me up again' (Ps. 40:11). The priesthood of Christ is ordained to that spiritual sacrifice: hence, He was appointed to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins: 'The sacrifice of praise shall glorify me' (Ps. 49:23); 'We will render the calves of our lips' (Hos 14:3).

256. – His efficacy is shown by the way He prays. But two things are necessary in one who prays, namely, fervent love along with pain and groans. These are mentioned in Ps. 37 (v. 10): 'Lord, all my desire is before you, as to the first, and my groaning is not hidden from you', as to the second. But Christ had these two. Therefore, in regard to the first he says, **with loud cries**, i.e., with a most efficacious intention: 'And being in an agony, he prayed the longer' (Lk. 22:43). Again, in Luke (23:46): 'and crying with a loud voice, he said, 'Father, into your hands I commend my spirit.' Because of the second he says, **and tears**: for by tears the Apostle means the internal groans of the one praying. But this is not mentioned in the Gospel; but it is probably that just as He wept at the resurrection of Lazarus, so also during His Passion. For He did many things that are not written. But He did not weep for Himself, but for us whom the Passion was to benefit: although it did benefit Him, inasmuch as He merited exaltation by it: 'For which cause God has exalted him and given Him a name which is above every name' (Phil. 2:9). Therefore, **he was heard for his godly fear**, which He had toward God: 'And he filled him with the spirit of the fear of the Lord' (Is. 11:3).

257. – Nevertheless, it seems that He was not heard; first, for Himself, because the chalice did not pass from Him; secondly, for the others from whom He begged forgiveness: 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Lk. 23:34). I answer that Christ was heard in regard to everything He wished. But it was under the influence of the sensitive appetite and of the will acting as a natural appetite that He shrank from death. It was under these influences that He prayed and thus showed Himself true man. But under the influence of the will informed by reason He willed to die; hence he says: 'Not at I will, but as your will' (Mt. 26:39). Furthermore, He did not wish to forgive all of them, but only those who believed; and many were converted later.

5-2

Heb 5:8-14

⁸Although he was a Son, he learned obedience through what he suffered; ⁹and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him, ¹⁰being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedek. ¹¹About this we have much to say which is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. ¹²For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need some one to teach you again the first principles of God's word. You need milk, not solid food; ¹³for every one who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a child. ¹⁴But solid food is for the mature, for those who have their faculties trained by practice to distinguish good from evil.

258. – Having listed three things which pertain to a high priest and showed that two of them were verified, namely, the office and the proper way of attaining it, the Apostle now considers the third thing which a high priest should have, namely, mercy and compassion. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows what He suffered; secondly, what benefits accrued even to others (v. 9).

259. – He says, therefore: I have stated that a high priest should be such as to be able to have compassion. But Christ is such a high priest. For since He is the Son of God from all eternity, and, therefore, could not suffer or have compassion, He assumed a nature in which He would suffer and even have compassion. And this is what He says, namely, **although he was a Son** from all eternity, **He learned obedience** from time.

But only the ignorant can learn; whereas Christ, being God from all eternity, had fullness of knowledge from the very instant of His conception as man. Therefore, He was not ignorant of anything; consequently, He could not learn. I answer that knowledge is of two sorts: the first is that of simple recognition, according to which the objection is valid, because He was not ignorant of anything. But there is also the knowledge gained by experience, according to which He learned obedience; hence, he says, **He learned obedience through what he suffered**, i.e., experienced. And the Apostle speaks thus, because one who learns something comes voluntarily to learn it. But Christ accepted our weakness voluntarily; consequently, he says that 'he learned obedience', i.e., how difficult it is to obey, because He obeyed in the most difficult matters, even to the death of the cross (Phil. 2:8). This shows how difficult the good of obedience is, because those who have not experienced obedience and have not learned it in difficult matters, believe that obedience is very easy. But in order to know what obedience is, one must learn to obey in difficult matters, and one who has not learned to subject himself by obeying does not know how to rule others well. Therefore, although Christ knew by simple recognition what obedience is, He nevertheless learned obedience from the things He suffered, i.e., from difficult things, by suffering and dying: 'By the obedience of one many shall be made just' (Rom. 5:19).

260. – Then when he says, **and being made perfect he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him**, he mentions the fruit of His Passion, namely, in Christ and in His members. In Christ the fruit was glorification; hence, he says, and being made perfect, for from the instant of His conception He was perfectly consummated as to the happiness of His soul, inasmuch as it was drawn to God; but he still had a nature that could suffer, although after His Passion He could not suffer. Therefore, because in this respect He was altogether perfect, He could perfect others. For it is the nature of a perfect thing to be able to engender its like. Therefore, he says that He was perfect. For since He arrived at that consummation by the merit of obedience: ‘The obedient man shall speak of victory’ (Pr. 21:28), **he became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey him**, not temporal salvation but eternal: ‘Israel is saved by the Lord with an eternal salvation (Is. 45:17).

261. – Therefore he says, **being designated by God a high priest after the order of Melchizedech**.

262. – Then (v. 11) he prepares the souls of his hearers for what is to follow. In regard to this he does two things: first, he shows their slowness; secondly, his intention (chap. 6). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he shows the importance of what is to be said; secondly, their slowness to understand (v. 11b).

263. – He says, therefore: Thus I have said that He was called a high priest: **About this we have much to say**: ‘Hear, for I will speak of great things’ (Pr. 8:6). They are great, because they deal with the salvation of souls: ‘A faithful saying and worthy of all acceptance, that Jesus Christ came into the world to save sinners’ (1 Tim. 1:15). **About this we have much to say which is hard to explain**, meaning that it cannot be perfectly explained, for no words can express the things of Christ: ‘Glorify the Lord as much as you ever can, for he will yet far exceed, and his magnificence is wonderful. Blessing the Lord, exalt him as much as you can, for he is above all praise’ (Sir. 43:32). Or, **we have much to say which is hard to explain**, i.e., it needs to be interpreted because of its height and magnitude and depth: ‘He shall understand a parable and the interpretation, the words of the wise and their mysterious saying’ (Pr. 1:6). For the interpretation of Scripture is listed among the gifts of the Spirit (1 Cor. 12:10).

264. – It also needs to be interpreted because of our slowness: **you have become dull of hearing**. Those who are weak of intellect cannot understand profound things, unless they are explained in detail: ‘I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now’ (Jn. 16:12); ‘I could not speak to you as unto spiritual, but as unto carnal’ (1 Cor. 3:1).

265. – Then (v. 12) he shows that their slowness is culpable. In regard to this he does three things: first, he mentions the sin of slowness; secondly, he applies a simile (v. 12c); thirdly, he explains it (v. 13).

266. – For it is a sin, when a person has listened a long time, if he is still slow; but not if he is a recent hearer. For negligence is not without sin; hence, he says, **for though by this time you ought to be teachers**, namely, of others, for this time during which they had heard the law and the prophets: ‘Search the Scriptures, for you find in them to have life everlasting’ (Jn. 5:31); and Christ Himself and the apostles and many converted by them: ‘Have I been so long a time with you, and have you not known me?’ (Jn. 14:9), **you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God’s word**. For the principles are the first things taught in grammar, i.e., the letters themselves. Therefore, the beginnings of the words of God, the first principles and elements, are the articles of faith and the precepts of the Decalogue. If a person, therefore, had studied theology a long time and failed to learn these, time would be running against him. Therefore, he says, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of God’s word, i.e., the elements: ‘Ever learning and never attaining to the knowledge of the truth’ (2 Tim. 3:7); ‘For the child shall die one hundred years old, and the sinner being a hundred years old shall be left accursed’ (Is. 65:20).

267. – Then (v. 12b) he describes their situation with a simile. Therefore, it should be noted that sacred doctrine is, as it were, the food of the soul: ‘With the bread of life and understanding she shall feed him’ (Sir. 15:3) and in (24:29): ‘They that eat me shall yet hunger, and they that drink me shall yet thirst.’ Sacred doctrine, therefore, is food and drink, because it nourishes the soul. For the other sciences only enlighten the soul, but this one enlightens: ‘The commandment of the Lord is lightsome, enlightening the eyes’ (Ps. 18:9) and nourishes and strengthens the soul. But in bodily food there is a difference: for children make use of one food and the perfect of another. For children use milk as being thinner and more connatural and easily digestible; but adults use more solid food. So in Sacred Scripture, those who are beginners should listen to easy things, which are like milk; but the learned should hear more difficult things. Therefore, he says, **you need milk**, namely, as children: ‘As newborn babes, desire the rational milk without guile, that thereby you may grow unto salvation’ (1 Pt. 2:2); ‘I give you milk to drink, not meat’ (1 Cor. 3:2). And this is what follows, **and not solid food**, i.e., lofty doctrine, which is concerned with the mysteries and secrets of God, which strengthen and confirm.

268. – Then (v. 13) he explains the simile: first he explains what he said about milk; secondly, about solid food: (v. 14). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he gives the explanation; secondly, the reason behind the explanation (v. 13b).

269. – He says, therefore: So I say that you need milk as little children: **for everyone who lives on milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness**, i.e., everyone that must be nourished with milk is unskillful, i.e., cannot have part in understanding the words of justice perfectly: ‘unless your justice be more than that of the Scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven’ (Mt. 5:20); ‘In abundant justice there is the greatest strength’ (Pr. 15:55). But children are not partakers of such things: ‘Whom

shall he teach knowledge' and whom shall he make to understand the hearing? Them that are weaned from the milk, that are drawn away from the breasts' (Is. 28:9).

270. – But the Apostle had delivered many difficult things to them, namely, the mystery of the Trinity and the sacrament of the Incarnation, and many other lofty things. Therefore, either they were not children, or such things ought not have been delivered to children. I answer, according to Augustine, that in the teachings of faith we should not suppose that some things are taught to the perfect and other things to the imperfect, for there is not such a difference between them: for the same things should be delivered to both. But they should be merely proposed to little ones and not explained or enlarged upon, because their minds would falter instead of being elevated.

271. – According to a Gloss, an example of milk would be that the Word was made flesh. But that seems to be just as hard to understand as that the Word was with God. Hence Augustine says that the latter is found in Plato's works, but not the former. But he, said Augustine, could not have suspected something contained in the mystery of the Word made flesh. I answer that to know by simple faith that the Word was made flesh is quite easy, because it can be imagined and to a certain extent sensed; but that the Word was with God is something that transcends all sensing and can be grasped by reason alone, and that with great difficulty.

272. – Then he assigns the reason when he says, **for he is a child**, not in age but in sense: For someone is a little child in humility: 'You have revealed them to little ones' (Mt. 11:25); in age: 'As long as the heir is a child, he differs nothing from a servant' (Gal. 4:1); in sense: 'Do not become children in sense, but in malice be children and in sense be perfect' (1 Cor. 14:20). This is the way children is taken here.

273. – Then when he says, **but solid food is for the mature**, he explains what he had said about solid food. For this is evident in bodily food: when a man reaches maturity, he uses stronger and nobler and more solid food. But a spiritual man, when he has reached spiritual perfection, should have a more solid doctrine proposed to him. But perfection is of two kinds: one is perfection of intellect, when a person has the wisdom to discern and judge correctly about matters proposed to him; the other is perfection of love, which charity produces, and it is present when a person adheres entirely to God. Hence, after laying down the precepts of charity, the Lord continues: 'Be you, therefore, perfect, as your heavenly father is perfect' (Mt. 5:48). But perfection of charity, as Augustine says, is present when there is no covetousness. For the closer a person comes to God, the more he scorns temporal things: 'For what have I in heaven? and besides you what do I desire upon earth. For you my flesh and my heart have fainted away: you are the God of my heart, and the God that is my portion for ever' (Ps. 73:25-26). For the doctrine of Sacred Scripture contains matters not only for speculation, as in geometry, but also matters to be accepted by the will; hence it is stated in Matthew (5:19): 'He that shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.' Therefore, in the other sciences it is enough that they perfect man's intellect, but in

this one it is required that he be perfected in intellect and will. Therefore, lofty mysteries should be proposed to the perfect: ‘Howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect’ (1 Cor. 2:6). For a person judges things according to his condition; thus, an angry person judges things one way when he is angry, and another way when he is calm. Similarly, an incontinent person judges that something is good when he is passionate, and otherwise when the passion has subsided. Consequently, the Philosopher says that a person is, so his end appears to be. And because the things taught in Sacred Scripture pertain to the will and not only to the intellect, a person must be perfect in both. Consequently, the Apostle, desiring to show who are the mature, to whom solid food should be given, says that they are the ones **who have their faculties trained** [senses exercised].

274. – And he is speaking properly, because, as the Philosopher says, the intellect, inasmuch as it judges about things to be desired and to be done, is considered a sense, because it is related to something particular. Hence the word, sense, is not taken here as referring to an external sense. Therefore, one who senses the things of God is perfect: ‘Let us, therefore, as many as are perfect, be thus minded’ (Phil. 3:15); ‘But we have the sense of Christ’ (1 Cor. 2:16) But those who sense only carnal things cannot be pleasing to God, as is clear in Rom. (chap. 8). The second thing to be considered is the disposition of the one in whom it is, because he should be exercised: ‘Exercise yourself unto godliness’ (1 Tim. 4:7). For one who is not exercised cannot form a correct judgment, which is required for perfection: ‘A man that has much experience shall think of many things’ (Sir. 34:9); on the other hand, one who is inexperienced knows few things. Thirdly, the cause of this exercise is custom, not idleness but abundance of activity; hence, he says, **by custom**, namely, of acting properly: ‘A young man according to his way, even when he is old, he will not depart from it’ (Pr. 22:6). Therefore, if you wish to be perfect, do not give yourself to idleness, but accustom yourself to what is good from your youth. Fourthly, the end of this exercise, namely, **to distinguish good from evil**. For a person is perfect, when he discerns between good and evil, between good and better, and between evil and worse. For many things seem good but are really evil: ‘There is a way which seems just to a man: but the ends thereof lead to death’ (Pr. 14:12). It is in these matters, therefore, that correct judgment is needed.

6-1

Heb 6:1-6a

¹Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, ²with instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. ³And this we will do if God permits. ⁴For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, ⁵and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, ⁶if they then commit apostasy, since they crucify the Son of God on their own account

275. – Having mentioned the priesthood of Christ according to the order of Melchizedek and scolded the slowness of those to whom he was writing, the Apostle now returns to his theme, in regard to which he does three things: first, he discloses his intention; secondly, its difficulty (v.3); thirdly, he declares his intention (v.9). In regard to the first he does two things: first, he discloses his intention; secondly, he explains what he says (v.1b).

276. – His intention is that passing over the things which pertain to the beginning of Christian doctrine, he may go on to loftier matters; hence he says: I have stated that strong meat is for the perfect: Therefore, **let us leave the elementary doctrines of Christ**, through which Christ begins to exist in us, which is by the doctrine of faith: ‘That Christ may dwell by faith in your hearts’ (Eph. 3:17); **let us go on to maturity**, i.e., to things which look toward the perfection of Christ’s doctrine: ‘When I became a man, I put away the things of a child’ (1 Cor. 13:11). According to a Gloss this can refer to two things, namely, either to the intellect, so that as a person advances in age, he should put away childish things and devote himself to what is perfect: ‘howbeit we speak wisdom among the perfect’ (1 Cor. 2:6), or to the will, and then the sense is that one should not remain a beginner, but tend to the state of the perfect: ‘Walk before me and be perfect’ (Gen. 17:1).

277. – Here two objections arise: the first is based on his saying, **let us leave the elementary doctrines** [leaving the word of the beginning]. For the beginning should never be forsaken: ‘And I said, Now have I begun’ (Ps. 76:11); ‘My justification, which I have begun to hold’ (Jb. 27:6). I answer that there are two ways of forsaking a beginning: one is according to evaluation, and in this way a man should always be a beginner tending to what is higher: ‘Not as though I had already attained or were already perfect; but I follow after, if I many by any means apprehend’ (Phil. 3:12). The other is according to progress toward perfection, and in this way a man should always strive to pass to the perfect state: ‘Forgetting the things that are behind, and stretching forth myself to those that are before’ (Phil. 3:13). For, as Bernard says, not to progress in the way of God is to fall behind.

278. – The other objection is concerned with the invitation, **let us go on to maturity** [things more perfect]. For perfection consists in the counsels: ‘If you would be perfect, go and sell what you have and give to the poor’ (Mt. 19:21). But not all are bound by the counsels. I answer that there are two kinds of perfection: one is external and consists in external acts, which are signs of what is internal, such as virginity and voluntary poverty. To this perfection not all are bound. The other is internal and consists in the love of God and neighbor: ‘Have charity which is the bond of perfection’ (Col. 3:14). Not all are bound to this perfection, but all are bound to tend toward it; because if a person no longer desired to love God more, he would not be doing what charity requires. But he says, **let us go on**, and this by following the impulse of the Holy Spirit: ‘Whoever are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God’ (Rom. 8:14). Or they are as though carried by God Who bears our infirmities: ‘Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, all the remnant of the house of Israel, who are carried by my bowels’ (Is. 46:3); or, as carried by one another: ‘Bear you one another’s burdens’ (Gal. 6:2).

279. – The when he says, **not laying again the foundation of penance**, he explains what he has said. Here he intends to show what the things for which make for the beginning of Christ’s doctrine. For this he uses a simile. For it is by faith that a soul is built into a spiritual edifice. Therefore, just as in a material building the foundation is laid first, so here the first rudiments of Christ’s doctrine are, as it were, the foundation.

But this seems to conflict with what he teaches below in chapter 11, where faith is set down as the foundation: for faith is one: ‘One Lord, one faith, one baptism’ (Eph. 4:5). But here he mentions six foundations. I answer that faith is the foundation of the virtues, but the things he mentions are the foundations of Christ’s doctrine.

He says, **not laying again the foundation of penance**, as though it were laid so firmly that there is not need to lay it again. Or, because you have just laid it and should not be laid again

280. – But the Apostle lists them quite clearly. For just as in the process of generation and of any motion there is first of all the departure so too here; because penance is a departure from sin and is, as it were, the foundation of that life. For, according to Augustine, no one who is master of his own will can begin a new life without repenting of the past. Hence, at the beginning of His preaching the Lord says: ‘Do penance’ (Mt. 4:17). Therefore, he says, **of penance from dead works**. For works are called dead either because they are dead in themselves, or because they become dead. A thing is said to be alive, when it functions on its own power, so that wherever it fails, it is said to be dead. For our works are ordained to happiness, which is man’s end; therefore, when they do not lead to happiness or cannot be ordained to happiness, they are said to be dead: and these are works performed in mortal sin: ‘The blood of Christ who by the Holy Spirit offered himself unspotted to God, will cleanse our conscience from dead works’ (Heb. 9:14). But works performed in charity are made dead by sin; hence, they do not have the power to merit eternal

life: ‘All the justices which he has done will not be remembered’ (Ez. 18:24). But penance makes them revive; hence they are then once more counted for eternal life.

281. – But in approaching the desired terminus, faith is first; hence, he says, **the foundation of faith toward God**. For it is proper to faith that man believe and assent to things unseen by him, on the authority of another. But this testimony is either from man alone, and then it does not pertain to the virtue of faith, because man can deceive and be deceived; or that testimony is from God’s judgement, and then it is most true and firm, because it comes from the Truth itself, which cannot deceive or be deceived. Hence, he says, towards God, i.e., the assent is made to what God says: ‘You believe in God; believe also in me’ (Jn. 14:1).

282. – The second thing in that process are the sacraments of faith. But these are two sacraments of those entering: for those are the only ones the Apostle is discussing here. The first is baptism, by which are reborn; the second is confirmation, by which we are strengthened.

283. – In regard to the first he says, of baptism.

But this seems contrary to what is stated in Ephesians (4:5): ‘One faith, one baptism.’ Therefore, there are not several baptisms. I answer that there are three kinds of baptism, namely, of water, of desire, and of blood. But the last two have no force, unless they are referred to the first, because the first one must be intended, if it cannot be actually received by a person with the use of freedom. Hence, there are not three sacraments, but one sacrament, by which we are reborn unto salvation: ‘Unless a man be born again of water and the Holy Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of heaven’ (Jn. 3:5). Of the other two, baptism of blood produces more of baptism’s effects, provided that the first is desired, or the opposite is not present in the mind, as is clear in the case of the Holy Innocents, who were not of an opposite mind. For baptism has its power from the merit of Christ’s Passion: ‘All we who are baptized in Christ Jesus are baptized in his blood’ (Rom. 6:3). Therefore, just as one who is baptized is conformed sacramentally to Christ’s death, so the martyr is conformed really. Therefore, the baptism of blood produces the total effect of baptism in the sense of washing away all guilt and punishment for sin; but it does not imprint a character. Therefore, if one who had undergone martyrdom without baptism of water were to rise, he would have to be baptized. Penance, however, does not produce as many of baptism’s effects, because it does not take away all punishment, although it takes away all guilt. But just as a martyr conforms himself to Christ’s Passion by external suffering, so a penitent by internal suffering: ‘They that are Christ’s have crucified their flesh with the vices and concupiscences’ (Gal. 5:24). Therefore, penance can be so great that it would remove all guilt and punishment, as happened to the good thief and to Magdalene. Hence, penance is called baptism, inasmuch as it performs the function of baptism. And because baptism cannot be repeated, penance was instituted. Therefore, the others are called baptisms, because they produce the effect of baptism; but there is only one baptism, because the others produce no effect, unless the first is intended.

284. – The second sacrament of those who are entering is imposed by the laying on of hands; hence, he says, and laying on of hands. But this is twofold: one is productive of miracles, as when Christ cured the sick by laying his hands on them: ‘He, laying his hands on everyone of them, cured them’ (Lk. 4:40). And this is not sacramental. But the other is sacramental and is found in two sacraments: first, in the sacrament of Orders: ‘Impose not hands lightly on anyone’ (1 Tim. 5:22); secondly, in the sacrament of confirmation unto renovation: ‘By the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit’ (Tit. 3:5). For in confirmation the Holy Spirit is given for strength to enable a man to boldly confess Christ’s name before men. For just as in the natural order a man is first born and then grows and becomes strong, so, too, in the order of grace.

285. – Thirdly, there follows the terminus of motion, at which the motion is terminated. This is twofold: the first is the resurrection of bodies, which is the foundation of faith, because without it our faith is in vain (1 Cor. 15:14). Therefore, he says, **of the resurrection of the dead**. Secondly, we expect a reward, which is conferred by the judge: ‘All things that are done, God will bring into judgement’ (Ec. 12:14); therefore, he says, **and of eternal judgement**: not that that judgement will last a thousand years, as Lactantius taught, because it will last but a moment. But it is called eternal, because the sentence passed then will last for ever: ‘These shall go into eternal punishment, but the just into eternal life’ (Mt. 15:46). It should be noted that all the things he says he desires to treat here are, as it were, the rudiments of the faith; hence he preaches them to newcomers, as is recorded in Ac (17:18) and in other places.

286. – Then (v. 3) he shows how difficult it is to carry out his intention. For it is difficult both in itself and in relation to his hearers. Hence he does three things: first, he suggests that in this he especially needs divine help; secondly, he mentions their weakness (v. 4); thirdly, he proposes a simile (v. 7).

287. – He says, therefore: Let us go on to things more perfect, **and this shall we do, if God permit**. He says less than he means, for it is not only necessary that God permit, but He must do all things: ‘In his hand are both we and our words’ (Wis. 7:16). Therefore, he must place all things under the confidence of divine help: ‘Without me you can do nothing’ (Jn. 16:5); ‘For you should say: If the Lord will, and if we shall live, we do this or that’ (Jas. 4:15).

288. – Then when he says, **it is impossible**, he shows their weakness. For they were weak in hearing. For just as in material things no state is so dangerous as that of a recidivus, so in spiritual things one who falls into sin after grace rises with more difficulty. In regard to this he does three things: first, he lists the good things they had received; secondly, the difficulty caused in them from being recidivi (v. 6); thirdly, he assigns the reason (v. 6b).

289. – Some of the goods are present and some future. But in the present they had spiritual rebirth; in regard to this he says **enlightened**, namely by baptism. And baptism is fittingly called an enlightenment, because it is the beginning of spiritual rebirth, in which the intellect is enlightened by faith: ‘You were heretofore darkness but now light in the Lord’ (Eph. 5:8). They are also partakers of God’s goods; hence he says, **who have tasted the heavenly gift**. That gift is grace and is called heavenly, because God gave it from heaven: ‘God gave gifts to men’ (Ps. 67:19); ‘Every best gift and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from Father of lights’ (Jas. 1:17). They are also partakers of the divine goodness: ‘For by whom he has given most great and precious promises’ (2 Pt. 1:4). Therefore, he says, **and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit**. For all gifts are given from love; therefore, he attributes that participation to the Holy Spirit. For to participate is to take a part. But Christ alone had the Holy Spirit in fulness: ‘God does not give the Spirit by measure’ (Jn. 3:24). For the other saints received of His fulness and were made partakers not of His substance, but of His distributions: ‘There are diversities of graces, but the same Spirit’ (1 Cor. 12:4). Also in the present day they had instruction of His doctrine; hence, he says, **and have tasted the goodness of the word of God**. That word is called good, because it is the word of eternal life: ‘Lord, to whom shall we go; you have the words of eternal life’ (Jn. 6:69); ‘How sweet are your words to my palate’ (Ps. 119:103). But he says, **tasted**, because it not only enlightens the intellect, but also refreshes the affections, in which there is a certain savoring: ‘Taste and see that the Lord is sweet’ (Ps. 33:8).

290. – ‘We are saved by hope’ (Rom. 8:24). Therefore, he says, **and the powers of the age to come**. But some of these they have not only in hope, by in an inchoate way, and these are the endowments of the soul, namely, vision, possession, and fruition, and these are possessed inchoatively inasmuch as faith, hope and charity, which correspond to them, are possessed in the present. But the others are goods possessed only in hope, as the endowments of the body, namely, subtilty, agility, impassability and clarity.

291. – Then when he says, **and then commit apostasy**, he shows the difficulty in rising, after one has fallen. Here it should be noted that he does not say, ‘fallen’, but ‘fallen away’, i.e. completely fallen, because if they had merely fallen, it should not be difficult to rise: ‘A just man shall fall seven times, and shall rise again’ (Pr. 24:16). But if the Apostle had said it is impossible for those who have fallen away to rise again, then it might be said that in this he was signifying how extremely difficult it is to rise, both because of sin and because of pride, as in the devils. But because he says that those who have once fallen away cannot be renewed unto penance, and there is no sin in this world that man cannot repent of, there must be another explanation.

Hence, it should be noted that a certain Novatian, who was a priest of the church in Rome, made this the occasion of his error. For he declared that no one could rise to penance after baptism. But this opinion is false, as Athanasius says in a letter to Serapion, because Paul himself received the incestuous Corinthians, as shown in 2 Cor (chap. 2); and likewise in Gal (4:19), because he says: ‘My little children,

of whom I am in labor again, until Christ be formed in you.’ Therefore, it must be understood, as Augustine says, that he does not say that it is impossible to repent, but that it is impossible to be renewed again, i.e., baptized: ‘By the laver of regeneration and renovation of the Holy Spirit’ (Tit 3:5). For a man could never repent in such a way that he could be baptized again. The Apostle says this because according to the Law, the Jews were baptized frequently, as is shown in Mark (chap. 7). Consequently, it was in order to remove that error that the Apostle says this.

292. – Then when he says, **since they crucify the Son of God on their own account**, he gives the reason why baptism cannot be repeated, namely because baptism is a configuration to Christ’s death, as is clear from Romans (6:13); ‘all we who are baptized in Christ, are baptized in his death.’ But this death is not repeated, because ‘Christ rising again from the dead, dies now no more’ (Rom. 6:9). Therefore, those who are repeatedly baptized crucify Christ again. Or, another way, it denotes that it is repugnant to Christ’s grace for people to sin frequently and then be baptized again. Then the emphasis is not on the repetition of baptism, but on the falling away of the sinner, who, as far as in him lies, crucifies Christ again: ‘Christ died once for our sins’ (1 Pt. 3:18). Therefore, when you sin after baptism, then as far as in you lies, you give occasion for Christ to be crucified again; and in this way hold him up to contempt and stain yourself, washed in His blood: ‘He loved us and washed us from our sins in his blood’ (Rev. 1:15).

6-2

Heb 6:6b-8

^{6b}since they crucify the Son of God on their own account and hold him up to contempt. ⁷For land which has drunk the rain that often falls upon it, and brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated, receives a blessing from God. ⁸But if it bears thorns and thistles, it is worthless and near to being cursed; its end is to be burned.

293. – Having showed the difficulty involved in pursuing his intention, a difficulty arising from their guilt, the Apostle now resorts to a simile to explain this: first, in regard to good earth; secondly, in regard to bad earth (v. 8).

294. – But it should be noted that according to one explanation the Apostle wished to show by the above that those who have been baptized once cannot be baptized again or be renewed again to penance in another life: ‘Whatsoever your hand is able to do, do it earnestly: for neither work nor reason nor wisdom nor knowledge shall be in hell, whither you are hastening’ (Ec. 9:10): ‘The night comes when no man can work’ (Jn. 9:4). Therefore, let it be explained once more, i.e., after this life, and there is a reason for this. For two things cause penance: one is that which gives it efficacy, namely, the merit of Christ’s Passion: ‘He is the propitiation for our sins’ (1 Jn. 2:2). The other is the example of penance, which we have in Christ by considering His austerity, poverty, and Passion: ‘Christ also suffered for us, leaving you an example that you should follow his steps’ (1 Pt. 2:21). Thus, therefore, is understood what he says, **crucifying again**, i.e., receiving the fruit of the cross of Christ, and this in regard to that which gives efficacy to penance; **and hold him up to contempt** as to the example of repenting.

295. – But the simile which is presented here about the earth can be connected to that which was stated above, let us go on to things more perfect, and then the sense will be: If we go on we will have a blessing like the good earth; or it can be connected with what was just said according to both explanations, either about baptism or about the other life. The one about baptism is more literal and then the sense is: Just as the cultivated earth, if it brings forth thorns again, is not cultivated but is burned, so a man who sins after baptism is not washed again.

296. – In regard to the good earth he mentions three things: first, the benefit bestowed; secondly, the fruit it brings (v. 7b); thirdly, the reward (v. 7c).

297. – This earth is the human heart: ‘But that on good ground are they who in a good and perfect heart, hearing the word, keep it and bring forth fruit in patience’ (Lk. 8:15). It is called earth, because just as earth needs rain, so a man needs God’s grace: ‘You have visited the earth and have plentifully watered it’

(Ps. 64:10). ‘And as the rain and the snow come down from heaven and return no more thither, but soak the earth and water it, and make it to spring, and give seed to the sower, and bread to the eater, so shall my word be which shall go forth from my mouth: it shall not return to me void, but it shall do whatsoever I please, and shall prosper in the things for which I sent it’ (Is. 55:10).

But the benefit it receives and the doctrine of faith is as rain which falls on the hearts of those who hear the words of preachers and teachers: ‘I will command the clouds to rain no more upon it’ (Is. 5:6); ‘He pours out showers like a flood, which flow from the clouds that cover all above’ (Jb. 36:27). He drinks this rain, when he understands what he hears and is drawn to it: ‘All you that thirst, come to the waters, and you that have no money, make haste, buy and eat’ (Is. 55:1). This doctrine is above it, because some doctrine is from the earth and inclines a person to cling to earthly things; another is from heaven, namely, which teaches heavenly things: ‘For this is not wisdom descending from above, but earthly, sensual, devilish’ (Jas. 3:15); and then he continues: ‘But the wisdom that is from above, first, indeed, is chaste, then peaceable, modest, easy to persuade, consenting to the good, without dissimulation’ (Jas. 3:17). Or above it, i.e., above the faculty of human reason: for the other sciences were founded according to human reason, but this is divinely inspired: ‘For many things are shown to you above the understanding of men’ (Sir. 3:25). But he does not say, ‘always’ or ‘rarely’, but **often**, because as Augustine says: ‘If always, then it becomes worthless; if rarely, then it is not enough and is neglected’; ‘I have often heard such things as these’ (Jb. 16:2).

298. – The fruit is that it brings forth vegetation useful to those for whose sake it is cultivated. These are good works, which a man performs by the doctrine received: ‘Let the earth bring forth the green herb, and such as may seed’ (Gen. 1:11). This earth is cultivated, first of all, by God: ‘My Father is the husbandman’ (Jn. 15:1); it is also cultivated by the prelate: ‘I have planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase’ (1 Cor. 3:6). It is also cultivated by the man himself: ‘Diligently till your ground’ (Pr. 24:27). It is suitable for God unto glory: ‘Do all for the glory of God’ (1 Cor. 10:31); for the one who acts, it is suitable unto eternal life: ‘You have your fruit unto sanctification, and the end life everlasting’ (Rom. 6:22).

299. – Then, when he says, **he receives a blessing from God**, he mentions the reward, namely, a divine blessing. But that blessing is no less than the production of goodness in us: in the present life it is imperfect, but in the future life it will be perfect: ‘Unto this you are called, to inherit a blessing’ (1 Pt. 3:9).

300. – Then when he says, **but that which brings forth thorns and briars is reprobate**, he deals with bad earth and does two things: first, he mentions the evil fruit; secondly, the punishment (v. 8b). The fruit, therefore, are the thorns, i.e., minor sins, and the briars, i.e., graver sins, which prick one’s own conscience and sometimes another’s, namely, sins against one’s neighbor: ‘Thorns and thistles shall it bring forth to you’ (Gen. 3:18).

In regard to the punishment he mentions three things: first, divine reprobation; secondly, the judge's condemnation (v. 8c), thirdly, the final punishment (v. 8d). In regard to the first he says, **is reprobate**. For just as predestination is the source of reward, so reprobation is the sign of condemnation. Therefore, the fact that a person is frequently watered with salutary precepts is a sign of reprobation, if he continues to sin' 'Call them reprobate silver, for the Lord has rejected them' (Jer. 6:30). The condemnation is that he is very near unto a curse: 'Depart, you accursed, into everlasting fire' (Mt. 25:41). The punishment is that his end is to be burnt: 'Every garment mingled with blood shall be burnt, and be fuel for the fire' (Is. 9:5).

6-3

Heb 6:9-12

⁹Though we speak thus, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰For God is not so unjust as to overlook your work and the love which you showed for his sake in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness in realizing the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹²so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.

301. – Because the Apostle had said many seemingly harsh things about their state, now to keep them from despair, he shows the intention he had in saying these things, namely, to snatch them from danger. Hence, he does two things: first, he shows the confidence he had in them; secondly, the reason for this confidence (v. 10).

302. – He says, therefore: I have stated that the earth which brought forth thorns and briars is reprobate, but lest you suppose that I consider you such, **we feel sure of better things for you and nearer to salvation** because of your faith and charity. Thus, he commends their state on two points, namely, on what they had been, because the fact that he says, **better things**, he supposes that they were in a good state; secondly, on what they awaited in the future, namely, **things nearer to salvation**: ‘Now our salvation is nearer than when we believed’ (Rom. 13:11). For the more one makes progress in the good, the nearer he gets to salvation. Then he continues, **though we speak thus**, i.e., even though we speak this way, it is in order to make you cautious: and this proceeds from charity: ‘The just man shall correct in mercy, and shall reprove me (Ps. 140:5).

303. – Then (v. 10) he gives the reasons for the confidence: one is based on their past good works; the other on God’s promise (v. 13). But because the Apostle had said two things, namely, that he had confidence in them and that he spoke harshly to them, he does two things: first, he gives reason for the first; secondly, the reason for the second (v. 11).

304. – The reason he has confidence in them is that he remembers the many good works they did; hence he says, **In your case we feel sure of better things**. And why? Because God is not so unjust as to overlook your works.

But on the other hand it says in Ez. (18:24): ‘If the just man turn himself away from his justice and do iniquity according to all the abominations which the wicked man does, shall he live?’ And a bit later he continues: ‘All his justices, which he has done, shall not be remembered’, and then: ‘The way of the Lord is not right.’ I answer that a man who falls after grace can react in two ways: he might persist in

evil, and then God forgets all his justices; or he might repent, and then He remembers his previous good works, because they are accounted as merit. Hence, a Gloss says that after dying, they revive.

305. – But another doubt arises, because it is obvious that justice regards merit. Therefore, if God’s justice requires that He not forget, if he repents, as the Gloss says, then his rising from sin falls under merit, so that he merits grace: which is impossible. I answer that there are two kinds of merit: one rests on justice and is called condign; the other rests entirely on mercy and is called congruous. It is of the latter that he says that it is just, i.e., congruous, i.e., that a man who performed many good deeds should merit. For that mercy is somehow annexed to justice more than in the case of one who never did anything. It is in this sense that God does not forget our work and our love; for eternal life is due to charity alone: ‘If anyone loves, me, he will keep my word’ (Jn. 14:23). For whatever does not proceed from charity is not meritorious: ‘If I have not charity, it profits me nothing’ (1 Cor. 13:3). Hence, he does not say merely, **of your work**, but adds, **and your love**, because, as Gregory says: ‘The love of God is not idle, for it performs great things, if it is present: if one refuses to act, there is no love’; ‘Let us not love in word nor in tongue, but in deed and in truth (1 Jn. 3:18). Therefore, he continues, **which you have showed for his sake**: ‘All whatsoever you do in word or in work, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ’ (Col. 3:17).

306. – What they have showed and in what, he shows when he says, ‘in serving the saints’, namely, by relieving their needs: ‘Whoever will be the greater among you, let him be your minister’ (Mt. 20:26). ‘Communicating to the necessities of the saints’ (Rom. 12:13). And because perseverance is necessary in all things, he continues, **as you still do**. Therefore, if you have sinned, He will grant pardon out of mercy annexed to justice.

307. – Then (v. 11) he assigns the reason why he spoke so sharply to them, namely, from a desire for their salvation. Hence, in regard to this he does three things: first, he shows his desire; secondly, he mentions the imminent danger (v. 12); thirdly, he explains by an example (v. 12b).

308. – He says, therefore, We have said these things not as though we despaired of you, but rather because **we desire that everyone**, i.e., each one of you: ‘God is my witness, how I long after you all in the bowels of Jesus Christ’ (Phil. 1:8). But what do we desire? **that you show the same carefulness**, i.e., that you be careful to show by your works this carefulness for doing good that you have always had. Hence, it is clear that carefulness is required for doing acts of godliness: ‘Martha, Martha, you are careful’ (Lk. 10:41) and for one’s own salvation: ‘Carefully study to present yourself approved unto God’ (2 Tim. 2:15). Any why? **To realize the full assurance of hope**, namely, that by fulfilling what you have begun, you may obtain what you hope: ‘Hope confounds not’ (Rom. 5:5). And this, **until the end**: ‘For he that shall persevere to the end, he shall be saved’ (Mt. 24:13).

309. – Then when he says, **so that you may not be sluggish**, he indicates the danger, which is laziness. For laziness is the fear of a future good action, because one fears that he may fail or not repent: ‘The slothful man says: There is a lion in the way’ (Pr. 26:13). Hence, slothful persons always allege obstacles as an excuse.

310. – Then (12b) he gives the example. As if to say: Be not slothful, but rather imitate the example of the prophets: ‘For an example of suffering evil, of labor and of patience, take the prophets’ (Jas. 5:10); and of other saints, namely the apostles: ‘Be you followers of me, as I also am of Christ’ (1 Cor. 4:16). Be you, therefore, **imitators of those who through faith**, without which it is impossible to please God (Heb. 11:6) **and patience** against adversity, **inherit the promises**. For by formed faith and patience the promised inheritance is obtained: ‘The saints by faith conquered kingdoms, wrought justice, obtained promises’ (Heb. 11:33).

Heb 6:13-20

¹³For when God made a promise to Abraham, since he had no one greater by whom to swear, he swore by himself, ¹⁴saying, “Surely I will bless you and multiply you.” ¹⁵And thus Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise. ¹⁶Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves, and in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation. ¹⁷So when God desired to show more convincingly to the heirs of the promise the unchangeable character of his purpose, he interposed with an oath, ¹⁸so that through two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should prove false, we who have fled for refuge might have strong encouragement to seize the hope set before us. ¹⁹We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine behind the curtain, ²⁰where Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

311. – Above, the Apostle showed why he had confidence in them, namely, because of the good they performed; here he shows the same because of the promise made to the Patriarchs. Hence, he does two things: first, he mentions the promise; secondly, he assigns the reason for what he says (v. 16). In regard to the first he does three things: first, he shows to whom the promise was made; secondly, he shows that the way the promise was given was suitable (v. 13b) thirdly, the effect of the promise (v. 15).

312. – **When God made a promise to Abraham:** ‘To Abraham were the promises made and to his seed’ (Gal. 3:16). The reason for this is that by faith we adhere to God; consequently, by faith we obtain the promise. For the first example of faith was found in Abraham, and this because he was the first to withdraw from associating with unbelievers: ‘Go forth out of your country, and from your kindred, and out of your father’s house’ (Gen. 12:1); secondly, because he was the first to believe something above nature: ‘Who against hope believed in hope’ (Rom. 4:18). Hence, Gen. (15:6): ‘Abraham believed God and it was reputed to him unto justice.’ For he was the first to receive the seal of faith, namely, circumcision (Rom. 4:11).

313. – The manner in which the promise was suitable for two reasons: first, because of the oath; secondly, by reason of the words of the promise (v. 14).

314. – He says, therefore: God, wishing to show that His promise is firm and stable, **since he had no one greater by whom to swear:** ‘The Lord is high above all nations’ (Ps. 112:4), **swore by himself:** ‘By my own self have I sworn, says that Lord’ (Gen. 22:16). In this you have an example that an oath is not of itself unlawful, because the Scripture does not attribute to God anything which of itself is a sin. For Scripture intends to direct and lead us to God: ‘Be you followers of God, as most dear children’ (Eph.

5:1). Nevertheless, frequent swearing is forbidden: ‘Let not your mouth be accustomed to swearing’ (Sir. 23:9), and so are oaths taken in vain: ‘You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain’ (Ex. 20:7).

315. – Then (v. 14) he shows the manner in which the promise was made. As if to say: Do not believe me, unless **I bless you**. A blessing refers to bestowing benefits: ‘The blessing of the Lord makes men rich’ (Pr. 10:22); **I will multiply you**, which pertains to numerous offspring. Both promises were made to Abraham, as is clear from Gen. (14 & 15). But he repeats the words, **blessing, I will bless**, in order to designate both temporal and spiritual goods, and the continuance of his blessing. Or, ‘blessing I will bless’ in the multitude of holy offspring, which is designated by the stars of heaven: ‘Look up to heaven and number the stars if you can. And he said unto him: So shall your seed be’ (Gen. 15:5). And **multiplying, I will multiply** in the number of evil and perverse children, which are designated by the sands of the seashore. Or I will bless you in the good things of grace and multiply you in the good things of glory: ‘How great is the multitude of your sweetness, O Lord’ (Ps. 30:20).

316. – The effect of the promise was that Abraham, ‘**having patiently endured, obtained the promise**. For patient endurance consists not only in doing something great, but also in waiting a long time. But Abraham had the promise, although he never possessed the pace of a foot of land, as it says in Ac (7:5); furthermore, even until his old age he possessed no offspring. But he still kept his hope: ‘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); ‘Look unto Abraham your father and to Sarah that bore you’ (Is. 51:2).

317. – Then when he says, **Men indeed swear by a greater than themselves**, he states the reason for the foregoing. In regard to this he does three things: first, he mentions a human custom; secondly, the reason behind the custom; thirdly, the fruit of the promise (v. 18).

318. – Two human customs are mentioned: one in regard to that by which one swears; the other in regard to the effect of an oath: **in all their disputes an oath is final for confirmation**. Now that by which one swears is greater, and reasonably so. For swearing is nothing more than settling a doubt. Therefore, just as in the sciences nothing is settled except by something more certain, so, because nothing is more certain with men than God, one swears by Him, as by something greater and more certain.

319. – But sometimes one swears by the Son, Who is less; as when one says, ‘by Christ’ or by the creature, as Joseph swore by the health of Pharaoh (Gen. 42:16). I answer that there are two ways of swearing by God: one is by a simple attestation, as when one says, ‘By God, it is so.’ As if to say: God is my witness that it is as I say: ‘For God is my witness, who I serve in spirit’ (Rom. 1:9). Another way is by execration, which occurs when something, such as the head of the soul or something of that sort, is offered unto God for vengeance, if it is not so. This is the way the Apostle swore in 2 Cor (1:23): ‘But I

call God to witness upon my soul.’ As if to say: I offer my soul as witness, for which I take God’s name. And this is very solemn. But one swears by a creature not as such, but inasmuch as some sign of God’s power is resplendent in it. For since all power is from God (Rom. 13:1), then, inasmuch as someone exercises power over a group, if he swears by it, he swears by God, Whose power is reflected in it. This is the way Joseph swore by the health of Pharaoh. This, therefore, is what he says, **Men swear by one greater than themselves.**

320. – But it should be noted that those who are otherwise known as perjurers must be kept from taking oaths, because the greatest reverence should be shown an oath, and from their past actions it is presumed that they will not show an oath proper reverence. Likewise, children should not be compelled to take an oath before the years of puberty, because they do not yet have perfect use of reason to know what reverence must be paid an oath. Also persons of high stations; because an oath is required of those about whose words or actions there is doubt. But it detracts from persons of high station, when one doubts the truth of what they say. Hence, in the *Decretals* (q. 2, ch. 4) it says that a priest should not take an oath for some slight cause. But the causes in which it is lawful to swear are the following: for strengthening peace, as Laban swore (Gen. 31:48); secondly, for preserving one’s good name; thirdly, for pledging fealty, as vassals swore to their lord; fourthly, for having obedience fulfilled, if something honorable is commanded by a superior; fifthly, for obtaining security; sixthly, for attesting to a truth, which is the way the Apostle swore: ‘God is my witness, whom I serve in my spirit’ (Rom. 1:9).

321. – Then when he says, **and an oath is final for confirmation**, he mentions the effect of an oath, which is to put an end to all controversy. For just as in the sciences one stops when he has reduced his proof to the first principles, so is the divine law, when one come to the first truth, he stops and this is the time, when the first truth is invoked as a witness: ‘The master of the house shall be brought to the gods and he shall swear’ (Ex. 22:8). Thus all questions and all controversies are settled.

322. – Then when he says, **So when God desired to show more abundantly to the heirs of the promise the immutability of his purpose, he interposed an oath**, he states the reason why God willed to swear, namely, to show the immutability of His promise. Hence, he says, **wherein**, i.e., by the fact that He interposed an oath, **desiring more abundantly to show**; for it was abundant that He promised, but more abundant that He swore, desiring, I say, **to show to the heirs of the promise**, i.e., of the thing promised: ‘They that are the children of the promise are accounted for the seed’ (Rom. 9:8), to show, I say, **the immutability of his purpose.**

It should be noted in regard to things which proceed from God that two things must be considered, namely, the coming-forth of things and God’s counsel by which such a coming-forth is caused. God’s counsel is absolutely unchangeable: ‘My counsel shall stand and all my will shall be done’ (Is. 46:10). But the disposition is quite changeable, for the Lord sometimes announces something according as the order and coming-forth of things requires, as in Is (38:1) ‘Take order with your house,

for you shall die and not live'; for the cause of his sickness was such that he should die from it. Also in Jonah (3:4): 'Yet forth days and Nineveh shall be destroyed', because it has deserved destruction: 'I will suddenly speak against a nation and a kingdom, to root out, 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' (Jer. 18:7). In this case the prophecy is a threat. But sometimes something is announced according to God's eternal counsel, and in that case God never repents or retracts it: 'But the triumpher in Israel will not spare, and will not be moved to repentance' (1 Sam. 15:29). Yet it should be noted that whenever God promises something under oath, it is a prophecy of predestination which reveals God's plan. Such a promise is absolutely unchangeable.

323. – Then (v.18) he shows the fruit of the promise: first, he shows that that fruit is; secondly, what follows upon it (v. 19).

324. – The fruit, of course, is that our hope is certain; hence, he says, **that we might have strong**, i.e., firm, **encouragement of hope, by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible that God should be false**, namely, by God who promises and does not lie: 'God is not a man that he should lie' (Num. 23:19) and by the oath in which there is a stronger confirmation of the truth. But it should be noted that just as sensual delight is a sense experience and memory of the past, so hope is of the future: 'None that trust in him shall fail in strength' (1 Mac 2:61); 'They that hope in the Lord shall renew their strength, and they shall take wings as eagles; they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint' (Is. 40:31). We may have, I say, **we who have fled for refuge** from the evils of the world and the onslaught of the enemy, **to seize the hope set before us**: 'Lord, you have been my refuge' (Ps. 89:11); 'The name of the Lord is a strong tower; the just runs to it and shall be exalted' (Pr. 18:10).

325. – Then when he says, **we have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul**, he shows that faith will obtain that promise; and he makes use of a simile. For he compares hope to an anchor, which just as it secures ship in the sea, so hope secures the soul in God in this work, which is, as it were, a kind of sea: 'So is this great sea, which stretches wide its arms' (Ps. 103:25); hence, it is made of iron: 'I know whom I have believed and I am certain' (2 Tim. 1:12). Also it should be firm, so that it is not easily removed from the ship; thus a man should be held fast to that hope as an anchor and hope is that the anchor is fixed to a low place, but hope is fixed in the highest, namely, to God. For nothing in the present life is so firm that the soul could be secure and at rest; hence, it says in Gen. (8:8) that the dove found no place where her foot might rest. And, therefore, he says that this hope should **enter into the inner shrine behind the veil**. For the Apostle understand the present condition of the Church by the holy things that were in the tabernacle; but by the holy of holies, which was separated from the saints by a veil, he understands the state of future glory. Therefore, he wills that the anchor of our hope be fixed in that which is now veiled from our eyes: 'The eye has not seen, O God, besides thee, what things you have prepared for them that wait for you' (Is. 64:4); 'How great is the multitude of your sweetness, O Lord, which you have hidden

for them that fear you!’ (Ps. 30:20). This, our **forerunner**, who has entered there, has fixed there; hence, it says in Jn (14:2): ‘I go to prepare a place for you.’ He shall go up that shall open the way before them’ (Mic. 2:13). Therefore, he says that **Jesus has gone as a forerunner on our behalf within the veil** and has fixed our hope there, as it says in the collect of vigil and of Ascension day. Yet because the high priest alone was permitted to enter within the veil (Lev 16), he says that Jesus has entered **on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek**. Notice how elegantly the Apostle returns to his main theme. For he had begun to speak of the priesthood and then digressed; but now he returns to it, as is obvious.