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**Eschatology of the Epistle
to the Hebrews**

Paul H. Andrews

RE: Short Title for S.T.M. thesis

**Full Title: Eschatology of the Epistle
to the Hebrews**

Short Title: Eschatology of Hebrews

Paul H. Andrews

ESCHATOLOGY OF THE EPISTLE
TO THE HEBREWS

A Thesis Presented to the Faculty
of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis,
Department of Exegetical Theology
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Sacred Theology

by

Paul H. Andrews

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Approved by: Paul M. Kutcher
Advisor

Martin A. Charlemagne
Reader

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

One of the fine English commentaries on the Epistle to the Hebrews states that the theme of the entire letter is "the world to come" (Heb. 2:5) and that the author develops his theme by an elaborate contrast with the present world.¹ Whether or not Hebrews is regarded as a discourse on eschatology, it is certain that eschatological convictions permeate every aspect of the author's presentation. For example, the christology of the epistle is incomprehensible without an understanding of the nature of the heavenly sanctuary which Jesus the great high priest entered after his death, taking his own sacrificial blood and "thus securing an eternal redemption" (Heb. 9:11-12). The response which the author seeks from his readers is that they strive to escape the destruction of this world and to maintain hope and confidence "until the end" (Heb. 6:11). In the prologue the author announces that "in the last of these days"² God

¹A. S. Peake, Hebrews, in The Century Bible (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), p. 16.

²In Heb. 1:2, instead of "in the last of these days," the R.S.V. reads "in these last days," perhaps on the basis of the textual variant ἐσχάτων; in Heb. 13:20, instead of the translation "brought up," the R.S.V. renders "brought again." Unless similarly indicated, all Biblical quotations in this paper are taken from the Revised Standard Version.

has spoken to his people in a Son (Heb. 1:2); in the closing benediction he invokes the blessing of "the God of peace, who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus" (Heb. 13:20). From the beginning of the epistle to its end, eschatological overtones are in evidence. It is indeed not far from the truth to say that in Hebrews all teaching is eschatology.

The approach adopted for this study was to select certain temporal references in the epistle and to examine them in the light of the events or periods of time to which they refer. The purpose of the approach was to gain an understanding, in so far as it is possible, of the concept of time which underlies the writing of Hebrews. Though some of the references seem casual or unclear, a rather distinct picture of the author's chronological framework emerges when the texts are examined more closely and related to one another.

Such an approach is suggested by the principle that chronology is the framework of history. The revelation of God in Christ with which the author of Hebrews deals was a historically conditioned revelation. As a canonical writing of the New Testament, Hebrews shares in some way with the other canonical writings the conviction that God's revelation in his Son took place at a definite moment in history. Jesus was a historical figure, and the author of Hebrews had to take, at least as his starting point, those historical

events centering in him.³ The meaning of history itself is therefore disclosed by properly assessing the significance of the moment when Christ appeared in it.⁴ Eschatology is concerned with a special aspect of the meaning of history-- that aspect which points to history's goal and therefore its end. The very term "last things" implies a chronological frame of reference as well as a historical judgment. Even when eschatology deals with those events and conditions which essentially lie outside the historical process, whether they are conceived to be after or above time and space, the language which it uses is derived from the vocabulary of time and space. Biblical eschatology has no other-worldly, non-temporal vocabulary. It is therefore possible also to say that chronology is the framework of eschatology,

³James Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in The International Critical Commentary (1st ed. reprinted; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 11: "The writer's starting-point is not to be sought in some semi-metaphysical idea like that of the eternal Son as a supernatural being who dipped into humanity for a brief interval in order to rise once more and resume his celestial glory; the mere fact that the eschatology is retained, though it does not always accord with the writer's characteristic view of Christ, shows that he was working from a primitive historical tradition about Jesus. . . ."

⁴As Karl Löwith, Meaning in History (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1949), p. 197, says: "The 'meaning' of the history of this world is fulfilled against itself because the story of salvation, as embodied in Jesus Christ, redeems and dismantles, as it were, the hopeless history of the world."

as well as of history.⁵

The material gathered by selecting from the epistle certain texts of a chronological nature suggested that the topic could be discussed under five major headings. The treatment of these headings forms the five main chapters of this paper. In chapter two, texts which utilize the word or idea of the Biblical αἰών are used to outline the over-all concept of time held by the writer of Hebrews and to place the eschaton within this broad setting. The next three chapters attempt to put together in a general chronological sequence the references in the epistle to times and events that belong to the eschaton itself. Since the writer considers himself and his readers to be living in the midst of the eschaton, references are found to past, present, and future eschatological matters. The life and death of Jesus, as well as the history of the early church which has already transpired, are part of the eschaton's past events, but the Second Coming and the final shaking of the heavens and the earth lie ahead in the future portion of the eschaton. The sixth chapter sets forth the principal images used by the epistle to describe that existence which lies beyond the eschaton. It deals with the author's teaching on the "rest"

⁵As does Alexander C. Purdy, "Introduction and Exegesis to the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), XI, 584.

of God, the eternal inheritance, the heavenly city, and the heavenly sanctuary. In the final chapter, some of the distinctive features of the eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews are summarized.

CHAPTER II

THE AEONS

In this chapter an attempt is made to place the concept of the eschaton in the Epistle to the Hebrews in the broad setting of the author's over-all scheme of time. Since the eschaton in the epistle is essentially a period within created time rather than a matter of timelessness,¹ it seems best to set forth first the indications in Hebrews which point toward the over-all scheme of time of which the eschaton is a part. For such a consideration an examination is made of several passages which deal with the most fundamental

¹The eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews is based on what Aelred Cody, Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960), pp. 124-25, describes as a Hebrew, rather than a Greek, concept of time: "The Hebrew concept of time, whether among the Prophets or among the sects which were flourishing in the wilderness on the eve of our Lord's arrival in history, is always on the level of past, present, and future. Creation is past; eschatology remains directed toward the future, even when the first phase of eschatological events is already a part of the present. Eternity is not the Greek eternity, outside of time, outside of movement, covering at once the whole sweep of time, containing perfectly the archetypes of things appearing in time even before they appear. Eternity is something coexistent with time and parallel with it, God's point of view as contrasted with earthly man's point of view The eschatological happenings and ultimate salvation come at the end of time and extend onward linearly beyond the history of the present order, but there is no incursion of eternity, understood in the Greek sense, in time. Such an incursion could not be conceived by the Semitic mentality, because the Semitic mentality did not know of eternity in the Greek sense."

of Biblical time divisions: the aeons.² The following ideas from the epistle are examined: the creation of the aeons (cf. ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας, Heb. 1:2), the preparation of the aeons (cf. κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας, Heb. 11:3), the coming aeon (cf. μέλλοντος αἰῶνος, Heb. 6:5), the consummation of the aeons (cf. συντελείαν τῶν αἰώνων, Heb. 9:26), and "these days" (cf. τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων, Heb. 1:2).

A. The Creation of the Aeons

In Heb. 1:2 the author asserts that God through the Son "created the aeons" (ἐποίησεν τοὺς αἰῶνας).³ In this passage the term τοὺς αἰῶνας appears to signify a number⁴ of ages,

²Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated from the German by Floyd V. Filson (revised ed.; London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 39, says: "The two ideas that most clearly elucidate the New Testament conception of time are those usually expressed by kairos (καῖρός, 'a point of time'), and aiōn (αἰών, 'age'). . . . The characteristic thing about kairos is that it has to do with a definite point of time which has a fixed content, while aiōn designates a duration of time, a defined or undefined extent of time." In Hebrews, καῖρός occurs only once (9:9) and is involved in the symbolic meaning of the arrangement of the Old Testament tabernacle. Consequently, the passages in Hebrews in which αἰών is found offer the best prospect of discovering the author's conception of time. Cf. also Joseph Henry Thayer, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (New York: American Book Company, 1889), pp. 13-20.

³It seems best throughout this paper to use a transliterated form of αἰών when referring to the word in Heb. 1:2; 6:5; 9:26; 11:3. If the word is translated "age," its spatial connotation is lost; if translated "world," its chronological connotation is obscured.

⁴Otto Michel, Der Brief an die Hebräer, in the Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament

the six days of creative activity. But perhaps the writer of Hebrews means something more and something slightly different from the Genesis account. But using the plural "the aeons" he may have in mind all such periods or existences, for the opening verses of Hebrews seem capable of the widest possible application.⁶ Genesis describes how the heavens and earth were created for this aeon, but the implication of Heb. 1:2 seems to be that there are also other aeons which God has created through the Son. God's creative activity not only brought into existence a number of aeons, each of which has its own order of things which occupy space, but has also provided and limited the time during which they are to continue to be.

B. The Preparation of the Aeons

A similar assertion is found in Heb. 11:3, where the writer says: "By faith we understand that the aeons were created by the word of God, so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear."⁷ It is noteworthy that

⁶Thomas Hewitt, The Epistle to the Hebrews, in The Tyn-dale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), p. 51, commenting on Heb. 1:2 in reference to the term "worlds," says: "The Greek, however, literally means 'ages' and signifies that Christ is the creative Mediator of the universe in all its successive phases, whether past, present or future."

⁷Instead of "the aeons were created," the R.S.V. has "the world was created."

in this passage the expression by which the author refers to the creation of the world is κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας. Whatever may be the precise meaning of the passage,⁸ the term αἰών here clearly seems to connote the substance of creation rather than its chronological duration,⁹ for the following clause, "so that what is seen was made out of things which do not appear," probably explains in part what the author means by the creation of the aeons. Since the term αἰών appears in this passage primarily as a designation of created substance, therefore, little additional light is shed by it on the author's chronological views.

⁸Platonic influence is seen by Peake, op. cit., p. 211: "This (Heb. 11:3) is not an assertion of creation out of nothing, but a denial of creation from the phenomenal. There may be a reference to the Platonic doctrine of ideas. Faith is the faculty which goes behind the phenomena and discerns their immaterial source (cf. Rom. 1:20)." but the author of Hebrews says that the creation took place ῥήματι θεοῦ, not διὰ τοῦ λόγου. This passage is reminiscent of John 1:3, which states that all things were made through the Logos (πάντα δι' αὐτοῦ ἐγένετο). But even in the Johannine passage the Greek idea is not dominant, as Rudolf Bultmann, Das Evangelium des Johannes, in the Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (13th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1953), p. 20, remarks: "Ausgeschlossen ist auch die griechische Anschauung, die die Welt aus der Korrelation von Form und Stoff begreifen will; die Schöpfung ist nicht die Ordnung einer chaotischen Materie, sondern die καταβολὴ κόσμου (17:24), creatio ex nihilo."

⁹O. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), p. 381: "The word αἰῶνας is used not (as some older commentators supposed) with a temporal but with a spatial sense."

The verb καταρτίζω, however, which is found three times in Hebrews, is of special interest in a study of the eschatology of the epistle. Basically the word seems to mean the act of putting something into working condition, perfectly fitted out for the use intended by the person who originally made it.¹⁰ An example of its basic meaning is found in Matt. 4:21 (and Mark 1:19), where it is used to describe James and John, the sons of Zebedee, in the boat with their father mending their fishing nets. Such a verb aptly describes God's creative activity in Heb. 11:3 in preparing the aeons for human habitation.¹¹ Perhaps the author has in mind the Septuagint account of Gen. 1:2-3, where the earth in the beginning is described as "invisible" and "unprepared" (ἀκατασκευάστος).¹² When Heb. 11:3 is understood as an allusion to the Septuagint version of creation, it is seen to

¹⁰Cf. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), pp. 418-19. Hewitt, op. cit., p. 216, says: "Its fundamental meaning is 'repairing what is broken' or 'restoring what is lost'." The idea of restoration, however, is not essential to the word.

¹¹Cf. Hermas Mandates 1. 1: "First of all, believe that God is one, 'who made (κτίσας) all things and perfected (καταρτίσας) them, and made (ποίησας) all things to be out of that which was not,' and contains all things, and is himself alone uncontained."

¹²Gen. 1:2 LXX: ἡ δὲ γῆ ἦν ἀόρατος καὶ ἀκατασκευάστος. In his commentary on Heb. 11:3, Hewitt, op. cit., p. 171, resists connecting καταρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας with Gen. 1:2, because he sees only chronological significance in the term αἰών as it is used in Hebrews.

be an appropriate introduction for the author's discussion of the heroes of faith. Abel, Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and the others were prepared by faith and so put into the condition which God requires for living in the future world; in preparation to receive them, the future world itself has been put in order (κατηρτίσθαι). In his closing benediction in Heb. 13:21 the author prays that God may "equip" (καταρτίσαι) his readers "with everything good"--an expression which also echoes the Genesis account--and thus render them also fit for the new life.¹³ Likewise, in Heb. 10:5 at his entrance into the world Christ speaks to God in the words of the Septuagint version of Ps. 40:6 (Ps. 39:7 LXX): ". . . a body hast thou prepared (κατηρτίσω) for me."¹⁴ Perfected

¹³Cf. II Tim. 3:17: ". . . that the man of God may be complete (ἄριστος), equipped (ἐξηρτισμένος) for every good work."

¹⁴The Hebrew text of Ps. 40:6 is different at this point: ". . . thou hast given me an open ear (or, ears thou has dug for me)." Alfred Kahle in his *Septuaginta* (5th ed.; Stuttgart: Privileg. Württ. Bibelanstalt, 1952), II, 41, prefers the reading of the Psalterium Gallicanum, which reflects the Hebrew text: ὠτία δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι. The three major manuscripts (Vaticanus, Sinaiticus, and Alexandrinus), however, agree with the quotation as it is found in the epistle: σῶμα δὲ κατηρτίσω μοι. Hewitt, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-57, explains the passage in terms of obedience: "Following his usual custom, the author prefers the LXX 'a body hast thou prepared me' to the Hebrew 'ears hast thou digged for me.' Exod. 21:6 and Deut. 15:17 refer to the boring of a slave's ear; if after seven years' service he preferred to remain permanently with his master, the bored ear was a symbol of his willing obedience. For this reason it has been suggested that those who translated the LXX from the Hebrew regarded 'a body hast thou prepared me' as equivalent to the Hebrew 'ears hast thou digged for me.' It appears, however,

man, just as Christ was perfected, living in a perfected world, is the state of affairs God has designed and prepared for the aeons.

C. The Coming Aeon

In Heb. 6:5 the term "the age to come" (μέλλον αἰών) is employed in a difficult passage which contains a warning against apostasy. "It is impossible," the author writes, "to restore again to repentance those who . . . have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:4-5). In the expression μέλλοντος αἰῶνος there is to be found an indication of the relative position of the author's own generation within the scheme of the aeons which God has created. The expression indicates that there is an aeon which will follow the aeon in which the author and his readers are living. Further, by speaking of apostates who have already had a partial experience (γευσάμενους) of the "powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5),¹⁵ the

to be a free interpretation of the original which stated that God has given the Psalmist ears to give heed to God's command. In the context of this verse death is associated with God's command, and since a human body was the only instrument that could truly meet the needs of the situation, a body was prepared for Christ."

¹⁵The meaning of γευσάμενους, and therefore its significance for the relation of the coming aeon to the present one, is disputed. Cf. Hewitt, *op. cit.*, p. 106: "Both Calvin and Owen reject the idea that tasted of the heavenly gift means 'experienced'; but in the light of 2:9 and taking into account Psalm 34:8-10 ('O taste and see that the Lord

writer of Hebrews shows that he also believes that in some sense the coming aeon is already in existence.¹⁶ That it does already exist was previously implied in Heb. 1:1-2 in the assertion that God created it. The implication is strengthened by the perfect tense of the verb in the expression κατηρτίσθαι τοὺς αἰῶνας in Heb. 11:3, where the author means that the aeons continue to exist in the state of preparedness in which the creative power of the word of God has placed them. The view held by the epistle seems to be that the present aeon and the coming one, indeed all future and past aeons, are in existence as a result of God's original creative activity.

The sense in which the coming age (μέλλων αἰών) is future is not that God has planned to create a world at some future moment when the present one comes to an end, but that he already has created it and that it lies in mankind's future.¹⁷ It is true that not all mankind will participate in

is good'), which was most probably in the mind of the writer, it seems that the persons so described had an actual experience of the heavenly gift."

¹⁶Peake, *op. cit.*, p. 16: "The world to come does not bear its name because it has yet to come into being. It already exists, and has existed from eternity. It is regarded as still to come, because it has not been realized in time."

¹⁷Cf. above, footnote 16. John Marsh, The Fulness of Time (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), pp. 31-32, thinks that the idea of futurity in the term "the coming age" is a Jewish notion connected originally with the term, but which was altered in Christian usage. He says: "About the same time that the Christian era was beginning, Judaism

the life of the coming aeon--it is only for those who in this world have become "imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb. 6:12).¹⁸ The

seems to have arrived at a conception of an age to come which would follow the end of the present age. Christianity shared the language which differentiated between the two ages, but made an important and characteristic distinction, viz. that the two ages were not consecutive, but that in Jesus Christ the age to come had already appeared in and alongside the present age. This teaching originated with Jesus himself, according to our records." Marsh insists that "these two worlds are not related by temporal succession." If, however, the term αἰών as it is used in Hebrews signifies both the duration and the substance of an order of existence, Marsh's view must be rejected. The nature of the eschaton would thereby be misrepresented. For neither in Heb. 6:5, nor elsewhere in the epistle, does the author seem to state or imply that from a chronological point of view the coming aeon has begun; what has happened is that the powers of the coming aeon have already been at work. Thus Marsh seems to blur the distinction between the chronological and the substantial aspects of αἰών when he says: "The Christian dispensation is that in which this age and the age to come overlap. The overlapping began at the birth of Jesus; it will cease when history finds its ultimate consummation in him" (p. 32). On the contrary, it seems better to agree with Oscar Cullmann, op. cit., p. 76, who says: "Thus the thing in question is not a sharing by the believer in the Lordship of God over time; it is not as though he (the believer) were competent to leap over the periods of time." Realized eschatology should not be understood to mean that time has been suspended for the people of God living in the eschaton, but that God's purposes are being fulfilled within historical time.

¹⁸Barrett, op. cit., p. 382, speaks about the advantage of the imitators, who are the Christians, over their Old Testament counterparts with respect to the coming aeon: "It is true that, on this side of the catastrophe and consummation in which heaven and earth are to be shaken and every transient thing removed, all men must live by faith. But, as we have seen, faith is directed not simply towards the future (which is the same for Abraham as for Christians), but also towards the unseen truth which already exists though it will not be manifested till the consummation. This too is of course the same for Christians as for the

transition between the two aeons has begun and is evidenced in what has happened to the Christian readers of the epistle: they have been enlightened,¹⁹ they have tasted the heavenly gift,²⁰ they have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come (Heb. 6:4-5).²¹ The creative activity of

O.T. believers, but at this point the advantage of the Christians over their predecessors becomes for the first time clearly visible. For them the unseen truth which God will one day enact is no longer entirely unseen; it has been manifested in Jesus."

¹⁹Käsemann, *op. cit.*, p. 119, thinks that the reference here is to baptism: "Indem nun aber zu dem Partizip φωτισθέντες in 6:4 das Adverb ἅπαξ tritt, wird die Erleuchtung auf einen konkreten Akt bezogen, der nur die Taufe sein kann: φωτίζεσθαι ist prägnanter Ausdruck der Taufeterminologie in der jungen Kirche."

²⁰Michel, *op. cit.*, pp. 147-48, discusses the possible bases for understanding the expression "the heavenly gift"; he suggests that perhaps it is a reference to the Lord's Supper: "Die himmlische Gabe' könnte das in Christus angebotene Heil (Rom. 5:15; II Cor. 9:15) bzw. der Heilige Geist (Acts 2:38; 10:45; 11:17) sein. Nach johanneischem Denken kann sogar der Christus selbst gemeint sein (John 3:16; 4:10; 6:32 f.). Im Rabbinat ist die Thora schlechthin die 'Gabe' Gottes. Wir haben es offenbar mit einer feierlich liturgischen Ausdrucksweise zu tun, deren Sinn nicht eindeutig ist. Das Adjektiv 'himmlisch' ist im Hb beliebt, es bezeichnet das, was vom Himmel kommt, himmlischer Art ist. Die Kommentare legen gewöhnlich kein Gewicht auf das Nebeneinander der beiden Bilder: erleuchtet werden und schmecken; aber ausgeschlossen ist auch nicht der verhüllt Hinweis auf das Herrenmahl."

²¹Commenting on this passage, Peake, *op. cit.*, p. 144, says: "The writer is thinking of 'the age to come,' which, while future to us, yet exists in heaven simultaneously with this age and has now begun to send forth powers into it, which those feel who ideally belong to the age to come, and in this age confess themselves to be strangers and pilgrims."

God, analogous to his creative activity at the beginning of the present age, is at work in the Christian church to bring new order out of chaos. That new order will include perfected life in the coming aeon.

D. The Consummation of the Aeons

The epistle declares that the most significant event to take place within the aeons has already occurred: The appearance of Christ. In Heb. 9:26 the author says that Christ "has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself." What does the phrase ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων in this verse mean? The Revised Standard Version translates it "at the end of the age," thus implying that the author of Hebrews has in mind only the terminal point or period of the present aeon. But the verse clearly indicates that the συντέλεια was a point in past time, or at least began at some point in the past, for it says that Christ has already made his appearance, though the present aeon still continues.²² Further, if the plural τῶν αἰώνων is to be taken seriously, the verse cannot mean that Christ's appearance came at the termination of all the aeons, because it is clear from the author's mention of

²²R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p. 322, notes that this verse speaks of Christ's appearance, and therefore of the συντέλεια, as a past event.

a coming aeon in Heb. 6:5 that there is yet another age to follow the present one. Three matters need to be decided before the significance of this verse for the author's view of time can be properly assessed: the nature of the event referred to by the verb *πεφανέρωται*, the meaning of the noun *συντέλεια* in the verse, and the significance of the plural of *τῶν αἰώνων*.

First, what does the author mean when he states in Heb. 9:26 that Christ has appeared (*πεφανέρωται*)? The verb *φανερῶ* basically means to make visible or known something that has been hidden or unknown.²³ Before the incarnation the pre-existent Son was unseen and unknown by men and subsequently entered into human life. It seems then that the event which the verse describes as the appearance of Christ is the moment of his incarnation.²⁴ After this event, the Son became visible and known. The act of the Son becoming man is the event which the passage says took place at the end of the age, and the perfect tense of the verb indicates that he continues to be incarnate. Elsewhere the author

²³Thayer, *op. cit.*, p. 648.

²⁴Michel, *op. cit.*, p. 216, indentifies the event as his appearance before the world: "Feierlich wirkt sowohl das Perfekt wie auch die Auswahl des Verbums (*πεφανέρωται*). Gemeint ist die öffentliche Manifestation, die Erscheinung vor der Welt; in diesem Sinn kehrt das feierliche Verbum als Beschreibung der Geschichte Jesu öfter wieder (I John 3:5,8; I Pet. 1:20)." Perhaps Michel thinks of it as the beginning of Christ's public ministry, rather than as the moment of his conception or birth.

refers to the same event in terms of God bringing his first-born into the world (Heb. 1:6), Jesus partaking of human nature (Heb. 2:14), and Christ coming into the world (Heb. 10:5). Thus when the passage says that the purpose of Christ's appearing was to put away sin through his sacrifice, it is entirely consistent with the message of the epistle to say that the central purpose in the incarnation was to enable him to die.²⁵ Death for him was not an end in itself, however, but an essential part of a priesthood which culminated in a unique (ἄκλι) sacrificial act, the sacrifice in which he himself was both priest and victim.

If the event referred to in Heb. 9:26 as Christ's appearance is the moment of his incarnation, then ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων can be explained as the time when that event took place. The noun συντέλεια is found only here in the Epistle to the Hebrews and only five other times in the entire New Testament, all of which are in Matthew.²⁶ It is always used with the genitive of αἰών, but only in Hebrews does it occur with the genitive plural. In the interpretation of the parable of the weeds in Matt. 13:39 Jesus

²⁵Hewitt, *op. cit.*, p. 157, reaches the same conclusion about the incarnation in his interpretation of Heb. 10:5. Cf. above, p. 13, footnote 14: ". . . (Christ's) death is associated with God's command, and since a human body was the only instrument that could truly meet the needs of the situation, a body was prepared for Christ."

²⁶Cf. Matt. 13:39, 40, 49; 24:3; 28:20.

explains that "the harvest is the close of the age" (συντελεία αἰῶνος). It is a time of judgment and destruction of the wicked (Matt. 13:40), a time of separation of the good from the bad, as in the parable of the dragnet (Matt. 13:49). In Matt. 24:3 the disciples privately ask Jesus to tell them the sign of his coming and "the close of the age" (συντελείας τοῦ αἰῶνος). Finally, the expression occurs at the end of Matthew's Gospel in Jesus' promise to the eleven after his resurrection to be with them always, "to the close of the age" (Matt. 28:20). The phrase "the close of the age" seems to be a technical term from apocalyptic vocabulary designating the terminal point or final period of the aeon.²⁷

Does the fact that the expression συντέλεια τῶν αἰώνων occurs in Hebrews with the genitive plural indicate a significant difference in meaning from the similar expression συντέλεια (τοῦ) αἰῶνος in the Matthaean passages, in which it appears only with the genitive singular? On the one hand, an examination of the Semitism "for ever (and ever)," which appears in nine passages in the epistle, tends to show that the author uses the singular and plural of αἰών interchangeably, without any difference in meaning. The phrase

²⁷Michel, *op. cit.*, p. 215, n. 3, points to parallels in the Qumran War Scroll (א'נזין א'ז, l. 5) and in the Septuagint version of Daniel (συντέλεια καιρῶν, 9:27; συντέλεια ἡμερῶν, 12:13; καιρὸς συντελείας, 12:4).

εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα is found with the singular six times in the epistle (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17,21,24,28), but so also is εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας found once with the plural (Heb. 13:8). Likewise, εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος is used with the double singular one time (Heb. 1:8), but so is the double plural εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων (Heb. 13:21). But on the other hand, all instances where the author has the expression with the singular are clearly quotations from or allusions to the Septuagint and do not seem to reflect independent use of the term.²⁸ Such is also the case with the usage in Heb. 13:21, where the expression appears with the genitive plural in a formal benediction of praise similar to usage in many other passages in the New Testament.²⁹ Finally, in the only other passage in which the Semitism occurs in Hebrews, it appears with the plural in Heb. 13:8: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας), a futuristic usage³⁰ which is paralleled many times also.³¹ It

²⁸Heb. 1:8 quotes from Ps. 44:7 LXX; Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17,21,24,28 from Ps. 109:4 LXX.

²⁹Cf. Rom. 16:27; Gal. 1:5; Phil. 4:20; I Tim. 1:17; II Tim. 4:18; I Pet. 4:11; 5:11; Rev. 1:6; 7:12.

³⁰Cody, *op. cit.*, p. 125: "The αἰῶνα of the Old Testament points backward along the line of time far beyond any definite length of time conceivable, and αἰώνιζ points forward in the same way." Cf. Hermann Sasse, "αἰών," Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament, edited by Gerhard Kittel (Stuttgart: W. Kohlhammer, 1933), I, 198-200.

³¹Cf. Rev. 1:18; 4:9,10; 10:6; 11:15; 14:11; 19:3; 20:10; 22:5. Heb. 13:8 is also discussed below, pp. 47-52.

probably should be concluded that the use of αἰών in the Semitism does not disclose much additional information about the author's use of the term as a chronological designation.

On the basis of the previously examined passages, therefore, the plural of αἰών in the expression ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων in Heb. 9:26 should probably be interpreted in the same way as the plurals in Heb. 1:2 and 11:3. Fundamentally, it is the same apocalyptic phrase as that which Matthew uses, but the author of Hebrews means something slightly different by it.³² In Matthew the συντέλεια is entirely in the future, while in Hebrews it is a past event. Again, in Matthew the συντέλεια refers only to the present aeon, as the genitive singular (τοῦ) αἰῶνος implies, and therefore signifies the terminal point of this period. According to Matt. 24:3, the second coming of Christ, not the incarnation, is closely associated with the συντέλεια of the present world order. The translation "the close of the age" seems to be sound in the Matthaean passages. But in Heb. 9:26, where the plural τῶν αἰώνων is used, the reference is to the συντέλεια of all the aeons created and therefore means their climax or consummation, rather than their

³²H. A. Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things' (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), pp. 132-33. It is widely held that the passages in Matthew which contain the phrase are later additions to the words of Jesus by the early church. Cf. ibid., pp. 48-49. The contrast here, however, is between the meaning of the term in Hebrews and in Matthew, not between Hebrews and Jesus.

terminus. What is said in the passage is that the pre-existent Son became incarnate at the climax of all created time; he appeared as the Christ, the focal point of all created existence.

E. These Days

The term ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος, the familiar designation for the present age found a number of times in the Gospels and in Paul's writings, does not appear in the Epistle to the Hebrews. It may be, however, that in the epistle the phrase "these days" is equivalent to that term.³³ In Heb. 1:1-2 the author writes: "In many and various ways God spoke of old (πάλαι) to our fathers by the prophets; but in the last of these days (ἐπ' ἐσχάτου τῶν ἡμερῶν τούτων) he has spoken to us by a Son"³⁴ The opening lines of the epistle show that the author has in view two periods: that in which the prophets lived and that which followed the incarnation of Christ. These two times are differentiated from each other by the manner in which God "spoke" or revealed himself

³³Peake, *op. cit.*, p. 73: "The Jews entitled the pre-Messianic and the Messianic time 'this age' and 'the age to come.' The actual days of the Messiah were regarded by some as belonging to this age, by others to the age to come, while others again placed them between the two as distinct from both. Here by changing the formula from 'at the end of the days' to 'at the end of these days,' the author identifies the days of the Messiah with the close of 'this age.'"

³⁴Cf. above, p. 1, footnote 2.

to men. The former, which is indicated by the adverb *πάλαι*, was a period in which the divinely appointed means of revelation was the prophets, while in the latter period, which is called the *ἔσχατον*, the means of revelation has been a Son.³⁵ "These days" probably embraces both periods, the prophetic era and the eschaton, and thereby approximates the time span elsewhere known as "this age" or "the present age."³⁶

The word *ἔσχατον* is found only here in the entire epistle, but its use is very significant in describing the eschatology of Hebrews. The writer believes himself to be living in the final portion of "these days," confidently hoping to share in the life of the coming age, a new world

³⁵C. Spicq, *L'Épître aux Hébreux* (3rd ed.; Paris: J. Gabalda and Co., 1952), II, 3-4: "Il (the word *πάλαι*) unit les deux significations du latin *antiquus* et *vetus* (II Cor. 3:14), et s'oppose à l'annonce actuelle, *ἐπὶ ἔσχατου τῶν ἡμερῶν*, locution courante dans les LXX pour désigner les temps messianiques *אֵתְּ הַיָּמִים הַלְלוֹתָיִם*, Num. 24:14; Jer. 23:20; Dan. 10:14; cf. les Targums de Jérusalem et d'Onqelos, dans Strack-Bil.). L'apparition du Fils marque la fin d'une période de l'histoire, celle de l'enfance religieuse du monde (cf. Mark 12:2-6; II Pet. 1:19) sous le régime de la Loi, et le début d'une ère caractérisée par la plénitude de la révélation divine, celle de l'Évangile. Cet âge messianique tant attendu (*אֵתְּ הַיָּמִים הַלְלוֹתָיִם*), le dernier (*ἐπὶ συντελείᾳ τῶν αἰώνων*, 9:26; cf. Acts 2:17; II Pet. 3:3; Jude 18) est déjà commencé, c'est celui de la génération présente, d'où son identification par l'adjonction du pronom *τούτων* (*אֵתְּ יָמֵינוּ הַלְלוֹתָיִם*): En cette période finale où nous sommes. Si donc Dieu parle aujourd'hui, c'est pour la dernière fois."

³⁶Cf. *ὁ αἰὼν οὗτος*, Matt. 12:32; Luke 16:8; Rom. 12:2; I Cor. 1:20; 2:6 bis, 8; 3:16; 4:4; Eph. 1:21; *ὁ νῦν αἰὼν*, I Tim. 6:17; II Tim. 4:10; Titus 2:12; *ὁ αἰὼν ὁ ἐνεσθηκὼς πονηρός*, Gal. 1:4; and *ὁ αἰὼν τοῦ κόσμου τούτου*, Eph. 2:2.

to which those who escape the destruction of the present one will accede.³⁷ This aeon began with the foundation of the world (cf. Heb. 9:26) and will end with a fury of fire (Heb. 10:27) and the shaking of the earth and the heaven (Heb. 12:26). But to men living in the midst of an aeon that is growing old like a garment (Heb. 1:11), God has spoken by a Son. The appearance of Christ came within the present aeon and is its central event.³⁸ His coming signaled the end of the aeon, for now a way of escape from the impending destruction has been revealed. His incarnation ushered in the eschaton, marking it off from that portion of the age which preceded it. The eschaton, therefore, is a period within "these days," not their terminal point; it began with the moment when God brought his first-born into the world (Heb. 1:6); it will end when the aeon ends.

³⁷Guy, *op. cit.*, p. 132: "The writer (of Hebrews) shares and indeed emphasizes the belief, which we have found in other parts of the New Testament, that the coming of Jesus inaugurated the new 'age.' The messianic era, looked forward to by prophets of old, is a present reality. His opening paragraph reminds his readers that God has spoken 'in these last days' (1:2)--that is, the age inaugurated by the Messiah, in which he and his readers were living."

³⁸C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (9th impression; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1960), p. 82: "In the eschaton is concentrated the whole meaning (of God's revelation) which, if history were to go on, might be diffused throughout a long process."

CHAPTER III

THE ESCHATON: PAST EVENTS

For the author of Hebrews the eschaton began with the appearance of Christ and its beginning is a matter of past history.¹ He addresses his readers with an awareness that he and they are living in the last days, which began with Jesus. It is true that in Heb. 1:1-2 he does not distinguish the period of Jesus' earthly ministry from the time when he himself is writing the epistle; in these verses the past and the present are gathered together in one assertion: ". . . at the end of these days² he (God) has spoken to us by a Son." The justification for disregarding the distinction between the two events seems to be that the eschaton as a whole is under consideration and that there is no difference between the time each took place with respect to God's

¹Aelred Cody, Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960), pp. 123-24, cites the eschatological outlook of the sectaries of Qumran as the first occasion in Judaism when some of the 'last things' were believed to have taken place already: "The Prophets of the Old Testament had foretold eschatological events in direct relation to the end of history, but the documents from Qumran and the Damascus Document speak of such events as already having arrived, and yet the end of time with its own series of eschatological events still lies in the future." Following J. Daniélou, Les Manuscrits de la Mer Morte (Paris, 1957), pp. 111-25, Cody cites the Zadokite Document (7. 16-19; 19. 7-11) examples of this Qumran belief.

²Cf. above, p. 1, footnote 2.

chosen means of revealing himself. God spoke by the Son at a definite historical moment in the past and continues to speak by him in the present. The writing of the epistle and the revelation through the Son both took place within the eschaton. But it is true that within the eschaton itself there are certain past historical events mentioned or alluded to in the epistle. The aim of this chapter is to set forth the eschatological events which took place previous to the writing of the epistle. They deal with the earthly life of Jesus, his death, and the primitive church.

A. The Days of His Flesh

There is no attempt in the Epistle to the Hebrews to present systematically any portion of the life of Jesus. That no fresh biographical information emerges is not surprising in view of the fact that the author implies that neither he nor his readers were eyewitnesses of the Lord's ministry, but that the message of salvation "was attested to us by those who heard him" (Heb. 2:3).³ What he writes

³A. S. Peake, Hebrews, in The Century Bible (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), p. 9, wishes to point out that it is not correct to interpret Heb. 2:3 as evidence that the readers of the epistle form a "second generation" of Christians. On the contrary, Peake holds that the community to which Hebrews was addressed "consisted for the most part of its original members, for those addressed are they who received the gospel from the ear-witnesses of Jesus, and had lived through the experiences described in 10:32-34 They have lost their earlier leaders who had proclaimed the gospel to them (13:7) and are bidden remember these, but no

appears to assume that his readers are familiar with the story of Jesus' career as it is found in the Gospels.⁴ In fact, he urges them to "leave the elementary doctrines of Christ" and to go on to the mature theological affirmations that are based on them.

A number of passages refer to the things that took place during the "little while" that Jesus was made lower than the angels (Heb. 2:9), or, as the writer also designates the period of Jesus' earthly life, "in the days of his flesh" (ἐν ταῖς ἡμέραις τῆς σαρκὸς αὐτοῦ, Heb. 5:7). While these allusions do not convey the feeling of an intimate acquaintance with the events, they nonetheless present the principal features of Jesus' career.⁵ There is an allusion

reference is made to an earlier generation, which had passed away."

⁴Alexander C. Purdy, "Introduction and Exegesis to the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), XI, 583, lists a large number of primitive Christian ideas which the author of Hebrews shares with other New Testament writers. Purdy concludes that the list "shows the author working with primitive Christian tradition." E. F. Scott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922), p. 38, similarly writes that, although the message of Hebrews "is confessedly novel and unfamiliar, it is in no sense contradictory to the accepted tradition. The writer is careful to lead up to it by insisting on the cardinal beliefs on which all Christians are agreed, and makes it clear that his own contribution is meant to be nothing more than a fuller development of those beliefs. His object is not to change the gospel into something different, but to interpret it."

⁵James Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in The International Critical

to his birth in Heb. 2:14, where the author states that Jesus partook of flesh and blood, or shared the same nature as that of the children whom God gave him. In Heb. 7:14 the writer of the epistle shows that he is acquainted with the tradition that "our Lord was descended from Judah." Jesus' preaching ministry is certainly in view in Heb. 2:3, where reference is made to the fact that the message of salvation "was declared at first by the Lord" and was heard by those who later attested it to him and his readers. In the same passage when the author adds that "God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles," he probably has in mind those things which took place both in the healing ministry of Jesus and in the early church.

Special emphasis is found in the epistle on the suffering and temptation of Jesus. He did not have to suffer repeatedly from the foundation of the world (Heb. 9:26), but he did endure suffering.⁶ Usually his suffering is set

Commentary (1st ed. reprinted: Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), pp. li-lii: "The allusions to the historical Jesus are not numerous, but they are too detailed and direct to be explained away But they are bound up with an interpretation of the meaning of Jesus which is not a mere deduction from messianic mythology or OT prophecies, and it is unreal, in view of a passage like 5:7 f., e.g., to imagine that the writer was doing little more than painting in a human face among the messianic speculations about a divine Son."

⁶Ibid., p. liii. Moffatt makes the observation that the author of Hebrews never proves the necessity of the suffering of Jesus from Old Testament prophecy, as do other New Testament writers. The ἔδει of Heb. 9:26, however, implies

forth as part of his redemptive activity. He "suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood" (Heb. 13:12).⁷ He was "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" (Heb. 2:9). It was through suffering that God made perfect Jesus, the pioneer of man's salvation (Heb. 2:10). In Heb. 2:18 the temptation of Jesus is closely connected with his suffering: "For because he himself has suffered and been tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted." A similar thought is found in Heb. 4:15, where Jesus is described as a high priest who is able to sympathize with human weaknesses and "who in every respect has been tempted as we are." The temptation of Jesus may also be implicit in Heb. 5:7-10, where the agonizing experience in Gethsemane appears to be the incident which the author is describing.⁸ In this experience Jesus learned obedience through what he suffered,

that the author recognized an element of necessity in Jesus' suffering, whatever may have been the grounds on which he thought that necessity to have been based. On the whole, however, the author's approach to Jesus' suffering is not that it was necessary (δεῖ), but that it was fitting (πρέπει). Cf. Heb. 2:10.

⁷The reference to Jesus' suffering "outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12) makes explicit that the author of Hebrews knew the site of Jesus' crucifixion, undoubtedly from the gospel tradition he had received. Cf. Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

⁸Paul M. Bretscher, "Faith Triumphant--Echoes from the Epistle to the Hebrews," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXI (December 1960), 733. Also Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. 66.

was made perfect, and received from God his high priestly appointment.⁹ Sometimes the author connects Jesus' suffering with the suffering of men. In Heb. 12:2-3 he puts Jesus before the eyes of his readers as an example to inspire courage in the face of opposition: "Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself,¹⁰ so that you may not grow weary or faint-hearted." The author urges his readers to be encouraged by Jesus' redemptive suffering and to "go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him" (Heb. 13:13).

B. Death of Jesus

The most prominent past event of all is the death of Jesus, which is mentioned or alluded to at least sixteen times in the epistle. In a sense, the entire epistle is merely an interpretation of his death. Jesus "endured the

⁹Cody, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-99, discusses at length the question of when Jesus received his priestly appointment. He argues on dogmatic or christological grounds that Christ became high priest at the moment of his incarnation--a view which he says has been unanimously held by Roman Catholic scholars: "At the moment of His Incarnation He is already a priest because He already has the radical principle of sanctity which enables Him to be a perfect mediator, representative of His fellow men, and perfectly acceptable to God" (p. 97). But cf. below, p. 47, footnote 4.

¹⁰Bretscher, *op. cit.*, p. 733, sees in the reference in Heb. 5:7-8 to the hostility against Jesus a historical allusion to his trials: "Here the author takes his readers to the courts of Caiaphas, Pilate, and Herod and to the altar of the cross."

cross, despising the shame" (Heb. 12:2). Those who commit apostasy crucify the Son of God again (Heb. 6:6).¹¹ Besides representing it directly as a death (Heb. 2:9,14; 5:7; 9:15), the author also assumes the historical fact that Christ died when he speaks of his sacrifice (θυσία, Heb. 9:26; 10:12) or offering (προσφορά, Heb. 10:10,14), of his blood (Heb. 9:12,14; 10:19; 12:24; 13:12), and of raising him from the dead (Heb. 13:20). The historical details surrounding the death of Jesus, however, are of only incidental importance to the author of Hebrews. He does not seem interested in the historical reasons that Jesus was put to death,¹² nor does he attempt to fix guilt or responsibility on the Jews or Romans in the matter.¹³ He passes over the secondary causes without notice and points to God's

¹¹The evidence of the Greek fathers favors understanding the present participle ἀνασταυρούντας in the sense of "re-crucify," though the verb is used in classical Greek to mean simply "crucify." Moffatt, *op. cit.*, pp. 79-80, discusses the evidence and favors interpreting the participle in the light of the classical idiom. So also Thomas Hewitt, The Epistle to the Hebrews, in The Tyndale New Testament Commentaries (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1960), pp. 108-109.

¹²In Heb. 6:6 the guilt for the crucifixion of Jesus is placed on the apostates, but such an attribution of guilt is a theological, rather than a historical, assertion.

¹³Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. lxi, contrasts the author of Hebrews with Stephen on this point (cf. Acts 7:51-53): ". . . the latter (Hebrews) never dwells on the crime of the Jews in putting Jesus to death (12:3 is merely a general, passing allusion), whereas Stephen makes that crime part and parcel of the age-long obstinacy and externalism which had characterized Israel."

purpose; Jesus was born and died "that through death he might destroy him who has the power of death, that is, the devil, and deliver all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong bondage" (Heb. 2:15).¹⁴

The only direct reference in the epistle to the resurrection of Christ seems to be found in Heb. 13:20-21: "Now may the God of peace who brought up from the dead our Lord Jesus, the great shepherd of the sheep, by the blood of the eternal covenant, equip you with everything good" ¹⁵ The word ἀνάστασις is used three times in the epistle to designate the resurrection of the dead, but not in connection with Jesus' resurrection.¹⁶ In Heb. 6:2, the resurrection of the dead is part of the foundation that the author hopes that he will not have to lay again for his readers.¹⁷

¹⁴The statement of the purpose of Jesus' death in Heb. 2:15 in terms of destroying the devil is part of the primitive Christian tradition which the author shares with other New Testament writers. Cf. Purdy, op. cit., XI, 583.

¹⁵Purdy regards the integrity of Hebrews 13 as "an open question." Cf. ibid., XI, 577. Acceptance of the view that the last chapter of the epistle was written by someone other than the author of chapters 1-12 would result in the observation that the chief author of the epistle does not make a single reference to Jesus' resurrection, since Heb. 13:20 would then be regarded as part of the work of the second writer.

¹⁶E. F. Scott, op. cit., p. 153, refers to the near absence of any reference to Christ's resurrection as "one of the strangest omissions in the Epistle."

¹⁷Peake, op. cit., p. 142, generalizes that the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead had "come to be a common article of Jewish belief. But it was not a foundation

The raising of the son of the widow of Zarephath by Elijah (I Kings 17) and the raising of the Shunammite woman's son by Elisha (II Kings 4) may be the basis for saying in Heb. 11:35 that "women received their dead by resurrection."¹⁸ In the same verse the author speaks of heroic men of faith who looked forward to obtaining "a better resurrection."¹⁹

A hint of what the author conceives the idea of resurrection to be is seen in the use of ἀνάστασις in Heb. 11:35. He lists in his catalogue of heroes of faith the unnamed martyrs who "were tortured, refusing to accept release, that they might obtain a better resurrection" (ἵνα κρείττονος ἀναστάσεως τύχωσιν). The Revised Standard Version, by translating the passage with "that they might rise again to

doctrine, was not held universally, and, so far as it was believed, was accepted on far less solid grounds than in Christianity." Luke writes that "the Sadducees say that there is no resurrection, nor angel, nor spirit; but the Pharisees acknowledge (ὁμολογοῦσιν) them all" (Acts 23:8; cf. Mark 12:18). If Hebrews was written by a former Jewish priest or addressed to former Jewish priests, the lack of emphasis on resurrection teaching would be understandable on the part of Christians who had been Sadducean in their thinking.

¹⁸Hewitt, op. cit., p. 186. Cf. also I Kings 17 and II Kings 4.

¹⁹It is generally held that these heroes are the martyrs of II Maccabees 7, the mother and her seven sons who died during the persecution under Antiochus Epiphanes. Cf. R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life (2nd ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), p. 419; Hewitt, op. cit., p. 186.

a better life," seems to have sought to avoid the bluntness of the phrase "a better resurrection." Such a rendering is unfortunate, because it obscures the fact that the resurrection belongs to the epistle's long list of comparisons between the things of this aeon and the things of the coming aeon as they are found in the eschaton. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author thinks of ἀνάστασις ἐκ νεκρῶν primarily as an Old Testament matter, that is, part of the divine order of things belonging to the portion of this age preceding the eschaton. He has included it in his list of elementary doctrines that seem to have come from the Old Testament: ". . . instruction about ablutions, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment" (Heb. 6:2). The examples of resurrection to which he alludes seem to be the Old Testament miracles of Elijah and Elisha raising the dead (Heb. 11:35). The "better resurrection," therefore, belongs to the new divine order of the coming age,²⁰ just as do the "better things that belong to salvation" (Heb. 6:9), the "better hope" that is introduced (Heb. 7:19), the "better covenant" of which Jesus is

²⁰C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), p. 386, says: "Jesus after his death on earth enters at once into the heavenly temple to appear before God and sit down at his right hand. In due course he will return, but in the meantime his self-offering and his intercession with God effect the beginning of the new age."

the surety (Heb. 7:22) and mediator (Heb. 8:16), the "better promises" on which that covenant is enacted (Heb. 8:6), the "better sacrifices" with which the heavenly sanctuary is purified (Heb. 9:23), the "better and abiding" possession which those who have suffered the confiscation of their property know they have (Heb. 10:34), the "better country" which the strangers and exiles on the earth desire (Heb. 11:16), the "something better" which God has foreseen for us (Heb. 11:40), and the sprinkled blood that speaks better than the blood of Abel (Heb. 12:24).

Although the author does not use the word ἀνάστασις in referring to Jesus' resurrection, it is clear that Jesus has already experienced the "better resurrection" in which the tortured martyrs of Heb. 11:35 had put their hope. The construction used of Jesus' resurrection is ἀνάγειν ἐκ νεκρῶν (cf. Heb. 13:20). Only one other time in the New Testament does the construction occur; Paul uses it in Rom. 10:6-7:

But the righteousness based on faith says, Do not say in your heart, "who will ascend into heaven?" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "who will descend into the abyss?" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead) (Χριστὸν ἐκ νεκρῶν ἀναγαγεῖν).

In Paul's epistles, the resurrection of Christ is at the heart of his teaching, but in Hebrews very little attention is paid to it as such.²¹ In the Gospels and Acts there are

²¹A possible explanation for the scant regard paid to the resurrection of Christ may be found in the warning of E. F. Scott, op. cit., pp. 39-40: "Perhaps there is nothing

bodily appearances of the risen Lord and his ascension into the clouds. But in Hebrews there is no mention of resurrection appearances on earth; after his death Christ went into "the inner shrine behind the curtain," the heavenly sanctuary (cf. Heb. 6:19-20; 9:24).²² To be raised from the dead for further life in this world is to be restored to an order of existence that is soon to be destroyed. Such a resurrection is as inferior to the better resurrection as the first covenant is to the new one. For the author to use the verb ἀνάγειν to describe God's act of raising Christ from the dead, therefore, is in keeping with his eschatological point

that has so obscured and complicated the teaching of the Epistle as the common assumption that it contains a whole system of theology, complete in itself. When it is so construed, it presents gaps and oversights which are quite inexplicable, and cannot be brought into intelligible relation to the known development of early Christian thought. We must not try to extract from it more than it professes to offer. The author is at pains to impress on us that he acquiesces in the ordinary teaching, and takes his departure at the point where it leaves off. It forms the necessary foundation for his thought and must everywhere be taken into account, but he does not try to deal with it more than incidentally."

²²Ibid., p. 154: "For the church at large the Resurrection signified that Jesus, by a miraculous act of God, had been raised to a second life, different in all its conditions from the first. There had been a mysterious interval which had divided the sojourn on earth from the state of glory, and the Christian imagination had begun already to busy itself with this dark space in the career of Jesus, when he had died but had not yet ascended to his Father. But for our writer, whatever may have been his theory of the Resurrection, there was no such interval. He seems to conceive of Jesus as passing immediately from his earthly to his heavenly ministry."

of view. The word literally means to lead or bring up from a lower to a higher point, and according to the Arndt-Gingrich lexicon it signifies bringing Christ up from the realm of the dead, which is represented as a subterranean sphere.²³ In the Gospels and Acts the idea of resurrection seems to have a distinct reference to Jesus' appearances on earth after his death and is a matter of historical fact to which eyewitnesses testify. But in Hebrews it is his departure from the present world into the world to come, where he "sat down at the right hand of God . . . to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet" (cf. Heb. 2:5-9; 10:12-13). It almost seems that the idea of a bodily resurrection of Christ is unessential in the theology of the author of Hebrews, for the "better resurrection" of which he speaks amounts to departing from life in this aeon and arriving in the coming one.²⁴ As such, it is not a historical event at all.

²³William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 52.

²⁴Moffatt, op. cit., pp. xxxviii-xxxix, points out that one of the drawbacks of the liturgical symbolism which Hebrews employs is that it "has prevented the author from making use of the Resurrection The heavenly sphere of Jesus is so closely linked with his previous existence on earth, under the category of the sacrifice, that the author could not suggest an experience like the resurrection, which would not have tallied with this idea of continuity." On the same lines Peake, op. cit., p. 242, cites the dominance of the typology of the Day of Atonement as the reason that

C. The Early Church

A few events in the life of the early church are alluded to in the epistle, especially events which are part of the history of those to whom the epistle is addressed.²⁵

the author leaves the doctrine of the resurrection of Jesus in eclipse: ". . . the writer has to blend the double experience of the victim in Jewish sacrifice--slaughter within the camp and burning of the carcass outside of it--into a single experience in the case of Jesus, that of suffering 'without the gate.' The burning of the victim was not intended to sublimate but to get rid of it. The body plays no part in the atoning act, and has in fact no significance after the blood has been drained from it. The life, and therefore the atoning energy, resides in the blood and in the blood alone. On the writer's scheme, then, no function is left for the body of Jesus. It is 'through his own blood' that he must 'sanctify the people.' It is thus inevitable that, while the writer fully recognizes the fact of the resurrection of Christ (verse 20), he can assign no place to it in his argument or attach to it any theological significance."

²⁵The identity of the readers of the epistle, the author, date of writing, origin, and destination of the Epistle to the Hebrews have all been matters of conjecture since ancient time. Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. xxi, says: "Beyond the fact that the writer and his readers had been evangelized by some of the disciples of Jesus (2:3-4), we know nothing more about them." The internal data offered by Hebrews have been variously constructed into hypotheses about those to whom the epistle was addressed. One of the interesting suggestions is that of E. F. Scott, who thinks that the letter was sent to Rome to a homogeneous group within the Christian community there; he concludes: "Much in the argument that would be otherwise inexplicable takes on a new meaning when we think of the writer as addressing not so much an ordinary congregation as an inner circle of men who aspired to be teachers, and were aiming at deeper insight into their Christian faith" (Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 14). A recent suggestion concerning the identity of the addressees of the epistle has been made by Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews," Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, edited by Chaim Rabin and Yigael Yadin (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1958), pp. 36-55. Yadin thinks

Pentecost may be the reference in Heb. 2:4: ". . . God also bore witness by signs and wonders and various miracles and by gifts of the Holy Spirit distributed according to his own will" (cf. I Cor. 12:11). The first preaching of the gospel which his readers heard came from eyewitnesses of the Lord's earthly ministry, and the author reminds them of that occasion in Heb. 2:3. The period between the first proclamation of the gospel to the Hebrews and the time the epistle was written is designated simply as "the time" (τοῦ χρόνου) in Heb. 5:12. Apparently "the time" was of sufficient length, in the opinion of the writer, to expect from them the kind of spiritual maturity which would fit them to be teachers.²⁶

that the diversity of scholarly opinion about the addressees has been caused by lack of thorough knowledge about the Judaism of the first century and that the beliefs against which Hebrews is directed are those of the Dead Sea sect. "Furthermore," Yadin says, "if this contention is accepted, then the 'addressees' themselves must have been a group of Jews, originally belonging to the DSS Sect who were converted to Christianity, carrying with them some of their previous beliefs" (Yadin, op. cit., p. 38).

²⁶"The time," of course, cannot be determined with any degree of chronological accuracy, since it involves the questions of the purpose of the epistle and the date of its composition. On the one hand, there is opinion like that of Peake, op. cit., p. 9: "The community had been founded for a considerable period (5:12) and still consisted for the most part of its original members, for those addressed are they who received the gospel from the ear-witnesses of Jesus, and had lived through the experiences described in 10:32-34. The readers do not therefore form a second generation of the community." Moffatt, op. cit., p. xxi, holds a similar view: "The words in 2:3-4 do not mean that they belonged to the second generation, of course, in a chronological sense, for such words would have applied to the converts of any mission during the first thirty years or so after the

They, however, had become dull of hearing and were in the second childhood of faith.

A period of persecution, which the epistle calls "the former days" (τὰς πρότερον ἡμέρας), is part of the past history of the circle to which the readers of the letter belong (Heb. 10:32). The manner in which the author introduces the subject of their past trials seems to indicate that the vividness of "the former days" was slipping from the memory of his readers.²⁷ But it can only be conjectured how many years previous to the writing of the epistle "the former days" were.²⁸ The fact that the author mentions that the

crucifixion" On the other hand, Scott, *op. cit.*, p. 24, thinks that "the time" was much longer: "As we read between the lines of the Epistle we become aware of spiritual conditions which must have caused anxiety to many earnest minds in the last quarter of the first century."

²⁷John Marsh, The Fulness of Time (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 124, describes the eschatological interpretation of persecution which was characteristic of the early church: "Now it is perfectly clear that in the early Church there was an expectation that before the Parousia there would be a time of tribulation." The manner in which Hebrews deals with persecution is not typical of the early church or of the New Testament writings in this respect; in the epistle persecution is not regarded as a sign that the end is drawing near. The explanation for the absence of this element in the author's eschatological teaching may lie in the supposition that the persecutions themselves have subsided.

²⁸Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. xxii, maintains that the persecution of the Hebrews cannot be identified with any other-wise known event in the history of the early church: "Unless an illegitimate amount of imagination is applied to the internal data, they cannot be identified with what is known of any community in the primitive church, so scanty is our information. Least of all is it feasible to connect

struggle came after their conversion to the Christian faith may indicate that the persecution occurred shortly after the beginning of "the time" (Heb. 5:12), i.e., shortly after they first heard the proclamation of the gospel. The sufferings which the readers underwent included "sometimes being publicly exposed to abuse and affliction, and sometimes being partners with those so treated" (Heb. 10:33). Perhaps some of their early leaders were martyred during this period, for the author asks his readers to remember them and "to consider the outcome of their life" (Heb. 13:7). As for the present state of those to whom the epistle is addressed, though they are experiencing hostility from sinners as Jesus did, they have not yet been called upon to shed their blood in the cause (Heb. 12:3-4). The persecution of "the former days" apparently has abated, for nothing is said about the present leaders being in danger (cf. Heb. 13:17); some persons in the fellowship, however, seem to have been in prison at the time Hebrews was written (cf. Heb. 13:3).

The mention of apostasy found several times in Hebrews is difficult to assess. The fact that the author finds it necessary to warn his readers sternly against it seems to reflect a specific condition in the church, or at least in that portion of the church represented by his readers. The

them with the supposed effects of the Jewish rebellion which culminated in A.D. 70."

emphasis is on the danger, rather than upon the nature, of the peril. Perhaps the apostasy itself is laxity or loss of vitality in their profession of faith, rather than a turning away from Christianity for another religion. The only clear evidence in the epistle that attraction to another religion may be involved is found in Heb. 13:9, where the author issues the warning: "Do not be led away by diverse and strange teachings; for it is well that the heart be strengthened by grace, not by foods, which have not benefited their adherents." Perhaps the reference is to a relapse into Judaism, but it is difficult to imagine what teachings of Judaism promoted the idea that certain foods benefited its adherents. That the danger which the writer sees for his readers is the loss of spiritual vigor seems to be reflected in his urging to "pay closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it" (Heb. 2:1) and to "stir up one another to love and good works, not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some" (Heb. 10:24-25). From the writer's point of view, spiritual apathy is de facto apostasy. His stern words about the impossibility of renewing to repentance those who fall away after having once been enlightened (Heb. 6:4-6) and about the unavailability of any atoning sacrifice for those who "sin deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth" (Heb. 10:26) should probably be understood in this light. At any rate, the discussion about apostasy does not provide much clarification

of the author's view of the times. Though he immediately thinks of the terrible judgment which awaits apostates (Heb. 2:2-3; 6:7-8; 10:25-31), he does not see in apostasy a sign that the judgment and the end of the aeon are necessarily near, as do the synoptics and Paul.²⁹

²⁹The eschatology of Hebrews is lacking what Marsh, *op. cit.*, p. 124, calls "the second meaning of 'last time'": "The second meaning of 'last time', then, might better be defined as the period between Incarnation and Parousia regarded in the light of the oppositions which the Incarnation and the continued Lordship of Christ set up in history."

CHAPTER IV

THE PRESENT

The Epistle to the Hebrews was addressed to people living in the midst of the eschaton. Its ancient readers, as well as its modern ones, feel the powers of the coming world order at work already in the present age. This chapter is intended to deal with expressions that point, or seem to point, to the present, i.e., to the writer's own day. Three expressions are examined: "today" (σήμερον), "yesterday and today and for ever" (ἐχθὲς καὶ σήμερον . . . καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας), and "the present age" (ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐνεστηκώς).

A. Today (Ps. 95:7)

One of the prominent expressions in the epistle is the word "today" (σήμερον), an adverb that is also found in two psalms in the Septuagint. The word σήμερον occurs seven times in Hebrews and in six of the passages it is found in a quotation either of Ps. 2:7 (Heb. 1:5; 5:5) or Ps. 95:7 (Heb. 3:7,13,15; 4:7). In Heb. 3:13 the word is intentionally used with double meaning; it refers to David's day as well as to the writer's own generation:¹ "But exhort one

¹A. S. Peake, Hebrews, in The Century Bible (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), p. 120. Peake also suggests that the words "today, when you hear his voice" probably designate the days of the Messiah.

another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin." What is seen in the "today" of Ps. 95:7 is the divinely provided opportunity available every day during the eschaton to resist the sinful stubbornness that Israel failed to resist in the wilderness. Any moment when God's voice is heard becomes a "today" in this sense; the word of God is capable of making each day in the age a σήμερον.²

B. Today (Ps. 2:7)

On the other hand, the "today" of Ps. 2:7 is the moment when God begot the Son (Heb. 1:5; 5:5), whom, as his first-born, he brought into the world (Heb. 1:6). The moment of the Son's begetting apparently was a moment before the creation of the aeons, for the Son was already in existence and participated in that creative activity (Heb. 1:2).³ Although there seems to be a certain connection between the begetting

²Paul M. Bretscher, "Faith Triumphant--Echoes from the Epistle to the Hebrews," Concordia Theological Monthly, XXXI (December 1960), p. 735, speaks of the "today" of Heb. 3:13 in terms of the contemporary proclamation of the gospel in the on-going life of the church.

³Peake, op. cit., pp. 81-82, in his commentary on Heb. 1:5, discusses suggestions that have been made for understanding "today" as a reference to Jesus' resurrection (cf. Acts 13:33), baptism, exaltation (cf. Rom. 1:4), or incarnation. Peake himself is of the opinion that the "today" of Heb. 1:5 refers to the begetting of the Son in eternity. He says: "And although such an application of 'today' may seem to us artificial, it is found in Philo, and was therefore probably familiar to the author" (p. 82).

of the Son and the appointment of Christ as high priest in Heb. 5:5-6, the author does not represent these two events as having happened to Christ at the same time. His appointment as high priest seems to be a historically datable occurrence at the time of his experience in Gethsemane.⁴

C. Yesterday and Today and For Ever

Only in Heb. 13:8 does σήμερον appear in the epistle apart from an Old Testament quotation: "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and for ever" (ἐχθὲς καὶ σήμερον . . . καὶ εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας). The expression may be part of a credal or hymnic formula, but the question of its meaning is not answered by such a supposition.⁵ Taken as a whole, the verse seems to make an affirmation about Jesus' immutability⁶

⁴Ibid., p. 137: ". . . when did he (Jesus) become high priest? At the close of the Agony, when he had learnt his sorrest lesson of obedience and had achieved moral perfection." Cf. also Aelred Cody, Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960), pp. 92-99. Cody, who argues that Christ became high priest at the incarnation, reviews the opinions of past scholarship on the question. Cf. above, p. 31, footnote 9.

⁵C. Spicq, L'Épître aux Hébreux (3rd ed.; Paris: J. Gabalda and Co., 1953), II, 422, compares the expression in Heb. 13:8 with the Shema of Deut. 6:4: ". . . l'absence de verbe donne un accent liturgique." Further, Spicq says: "Cette formule . . . devrait seulement s'entendre de Dieu lui-même (cf. Ps. 102:13,28), et elle implique par conséquent la divinité de Jésus-Christ."

⁶Ibid. Spicq mentions as worthy of consideration the interpretation of Heb. 13:8 which takes Ἰησοῦς as subject and Χριστός as predicate nominative: "Jesus is truly

with respect to the time process. Perhaps each of the three time designations has a specific reference. If so, the "yesterday" to which the author refers is not the endless eternity which preceded the writing of the epistle, nor is this "yesterday" the designation of the sum of all the aeons which came before the present one. It further does not refer to the interval which has elapsed between the moment when God begot the Son and the present moment. None of these explanations suits the writer's declaration that Jesus is "the same," for his incarnation and death are taken most seriously. It is not consistent with the christology of the epistle to imply that nothing happened to the Son in the incarnation to alter his identity. On the contrary, the writer asserts that he "was made lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9), partook of human nature (Heb. 2:14), was "made like his brethren in every respect" (Heb. 2:17), was appointed the great high priest (Heb. 5:5), and most significantly of all, died (Heb. 2:9 et passim). The "yesterday" which marks the beginning of Jesus' sameness, as the obvious meaning of the word ἐχθές implies, is a recent moment from the author's point of view. The "yesterday" of Heb. 13:8 came immediately after the days of Jesus' flesh; if the moment can be more precisely indicated, it was when he was

(αὐτός, vraiment) the Messiah." Such an interpretation, if accepted, would not essentially alter the discussion of the verse as it is presented in these pages.

"crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death" (Heb. 2:9). The sameness of Jesus which continues "today and for ever" began at that moment which the author describes in Heb. 10:12-13: "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet." More than any other specific time, "yesterday" denotes the moment of Jesus' exaltation.⁷

⁷Ibid.: "Mais le contexte et les mots eux-mêmes (cf. ἐχθὲς καὶ σήμερον, Exod. 5:14; II Sam. 15:20; Ecclus. 38:22; I Macc. 9:44) invitent à rapporter cette affirmation d'immutabilité à un passé récent, celui où Jésus vivait en Palestine, et surtout, hier, lorsque ressuscité, il inspirait et fortifiait les chefs qui transmettaient sa parole (13:7; 2:3)." James Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in The International Critical Commentary (1st ed. reprinted; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. 232, agrees with this view: "Ἐχθὲς refers to his life on earth (2:3; 5:7) and includes the service of the original ἡγούμενοι; it does not necessarily imply a long retrospect." But William Manson, The Epistle to the Hebrews (London: Hodder and Stoughton, 1951), p. 187, claims that there is a fuller range of truth in the author's use of ἐχθὲς: "In the context, where the writer is speaking of the memorable record and noble end of the earlier leaders of the Roman-Christian community, the word 'yesterday' admits certainly of direct application to the first age of the Church, to which these leaders belonged and of which they were the products. But his pre-occupation with the larger aspects of the Christology of Scripture gives the declaration that 'Jesus Christ is the same' a vaster range of meaning. Look back on the entire history of the people of God, he seems to say to us, and you will find no past, no yesterday, in which the Christ of God has not been present and active; look forward to the future, and again there will be no period when He will not be there--an entirely Christological interpretation of history!" The difficulty with Manson's view is that Heb. 13:8 seems to be making an assertion about Jesus' immutability, not simply his continued existence.

The meaning of σήμερον in Heb. 13:8 may be quite simply that it is a reference to the writer's contemporary situation and nothing more. The passage as a whole then would merely refer to Jesus' unchangeableness in the "past, present, and future," with σήμερον designating the present.⁸ Since, however, the word is used in two distinct ways in the epistle which are unusual and full of theological significance, it is also likely that "today" in this passage should not be taken so lightly either. If what has been said above about ἐχθές is basically what the author had in mind, then it would be reasonable to assume that "today" begins where "yesterday" left off, i.e., "today" followed Jesus' death and exaltation and continues at least until the author's own day. "Today" thus is not a single day or point in time at all, but an unbroken series of days which began immediately after Jesus' all-sufficient sacrifice for sins. Such an understanding of σήμερον is in keeping with his use of the word in Heb. 3:13, where he says: "But exhort one another every day, as long as it is called 'today,' that none of you may be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin."⁹ The question

⁸Thus Brooke Foss Wescott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (reprint ed.; Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1951), p. 435, on the basis of Ecclus. 38:22 understands the expression ἐχθές καὶ σήμερον to refer generally to the past and the present.

⁹Moffatt, op. cit., p. 232, links the meaning of σήμερον in Heb. 13:8 with its meaning in Heb. 3:13.

naturally arises, How long will it be called "today"? The answer is that the series of "todays" continues until the end of this age, after which repentance is no longer possible. Since the end of the age coincides with the end of the eschaton, it can be seen that in the expressions "yesterday and today" the author embraces almost all of the time allotted to the eschaton. "Yesterday" and "today" are specific eschatological terms in the Epistle to the Hebrews.

The third term in Heb. 13:8 which points to the duration of Jesus' sameness is εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας. Similar phrases appear frequently in the epistle, but only here does αἰὼν occur in just this form. In Heb. 13:21 a fuller expression, εἰς τοὺς αἰῶνας τῶν αἰώνων, appears in the concluding doxology of the epistle. In other phrases only the singular is used: εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα τοῦ αἰῶνος (Heb. 1:8); εἰς τὸν αἰῶνα (Heb. 5:6; 6:20; 7:17,21,24,28). The meaning seems to be that Jesus remains unchanged into all future aeons. The seeming indifference on the part of the author to any distinction between the singular and plural of αἰὼν in the expression merely shows that the "coming aeon" (Heb. 6:5) will in no relevant way be different from the aeons which will follow it. By linking all future aeons with "yesterday" and "today" Heb. 13:8 points out the great affinity between the eschaton and the coming age. But such affinity is affirmed primarily only of Jesus, not of all men and things in the eschaton. In Jesus the coming aeon has dawned; the eschaton

is the dawn of the coming age.

D. The Present Age

A symbolic representation of an aspect of the author's view of time is found in Heb. 9:8-9: "By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age)." The grammatical matter of the antecedent of ἥτις and ἣν is interesting and necessary for drawing out the full implication of the author's parenthesis. He may mean that the "tent" or Holy Place of the Israelite tabernacle is a parable for the present age, or he may mean that the "standing" or "division" (στάσις) of the sanctuary is a lesson for the present age.¹⁰ However this problem may be settled, there remains a distinct implication that there will be a time when "the outer tent" will no longer be standing. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the author is speaking symbolically of the destruction of the present aeon. If the historical destruction of the temple in A.D. 70 is also alluded to, the reference is all the more pointed. In the destruction of Jerusalem,

¹⁰Peake, *op. cit.*, p. 179, in his interpretation of Heb. 9:8-9 seems to conclude that the antecedent of ἥτις is στάσις: "The words 'while the first tabernacle is yet standing' scarcely bring out the full force of the Greek. The meaning is that while the Holy Place holds the position assigned to it, the Spirit teaches us that real access to God is not secured."

especially in the destruction of the temple cultus, a foreshadowing of the destruction of the age may be seen.

The expression ὁ καιρὸς ὁ ἐνεσθηκώς in Heb. 9:8 has reference first of all to the author's times.¹¹ Further, in the arrangement of the Old Testament tabernacle and especially in the ritual of the Day of Atonement, the author asserts, there is a divinely revealed program of time in symbolic form.¹² The "outer tent" is the Holy Place (Heb. 9:2) and it prevented the worshipers from drawing near to the place where God's presence was. It was a place where only priests could be. Since the author seems to liken the Holy Place to his own day, perhaps he means to say that the present age, like the Holy Place, is a time when priestly

¹¹C. Spicq, *op. cit.*, II, 254: "D'jà Wettstein, Bleek, Westcott avaient prouvé que καιρὸς ὁ ἐνεσθηκώς est une expression technique de la chronologie, s'opposant au passé et au futur"

¹²*Ibid.*: "Le rituel mosaïque était une parabole en acte . . . soit du culte chrétien et des temps messianiques (Oecuménius, Estius, Kiggenback, Moffatt, Robertson, Len-ski): La distribution du sanctuaire en deux compartiments et les prescriptions du cérémonial relatives à l'un et à l'autre, figurant l'entrée du grand prêtre Jésus dans le ciel pour y exercer son ministère de propitiation pour les péchés; soit encore: leçon permanente pour (εἰς) les contemporains et les participants de la liturgie mosaïque."
C. A. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," *The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology*, edited by K. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), p. 392, referring to παραβολή in Heb. 9:9, says: ". . . it (the earthly tabernacle) was a parable not in the sense of being merely an imperfect image of the eternal, but a parable for the present time (9:9)--a pointer to the manifestation of the eternal in time."

mediation is the divinely appointed way of approaching God.

The fact that the author believes in a chronological significance to the Old Testament ritual arrangements is confirmed by Heb. 13:12-14:

So Jesus also suffered outside the gate in order to sanctify the people through his own blood. Therefore let us go forth to him outside the camp, bearing abuse for him. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come.

Jesus' suffering and death were historical events which came at the beginning of the eschaton.¹³ "Outside the gate" seems to be symbolic language for "at the beginning of the eschaton," just as the "outer tent" or Holy Place seems to signify the writer's own generation. The program of ritual for sacrifice seems to be symbolic of the eschaton and the coming aeon.

¹³The expression "outside the gate," which contains the historical allusion to the fact that Jesus' crucifixion took place outside the city walls of Jerusalem, is to be understood as part of the symbolism by which the coming aeon is represented as a city. Cf. below, pp. 81-84. Otto Michel, Der Brief an die Hebräer, in the Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (11th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1960), p. 345, n. 1, points out that in Heb. 13:12 the Syriac version reads "outside the city" instead of "outside the gate."

CHAPTER V

THE FUTURE

As long as the eschaton continues the events which take place will belong to the history of this age. This chapter seeks to take note of how the Epistle to the Hebrews looks forward to the future, the time remaining until the end of the eschaton and the events associated with the end itself. To carry out this aim, the passages containing the following temporal expressions are examined: "yet a little while" (ἔτι . . . μικρόν, Heb. 10:37), "the end" (τὸ τέλος, Heb. 3:14; 6:11), "the Day" (ἡ ἡμέρα, Heb. 10:25), "a second time" (ἐκ δευτέρου, Heb. 9:28), and "once more" (ἔτι ἅπαξ, Heb. 12:26,27).

A. Yet a Little While

The portion of the eschaton which remains ahead for the writer and his readers is described in the phrase taken from Isa. 26:20: "For yet a little while (ἔτι γὰρ μικρόν ὅσον ὅσον), and the coming one shall come and shall not tarry" (Heb. 10:37; cf. Hab. 2:3).¹ It is to be noticed that the

¹The phrase μικρόν ὅσον ὅσον seems to have been taken from Isa. 26:20, not from Hab. 2:3-4. A. S. Peake, Hebrews, in The Century Bible (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), pp. 208-209: "The passage is quoted from Hab. 2:3-4, the introductory words 'yet a little while' being taken from Isa. 20:26. The words of Habakkuk are very faultily

duration of the eschaton is determined by the act of God in coming for the deliverance of his "righteous one" and for the destruction of "those who shrink back." The epistle does not seem to give much attention to fixing the time when "the coming one" shall come by pointing out signs of the approaching end.² Nor does the author identify "the coming one" in this passage as Christ or God, although in Heb. 9:28 it is Christ who "will appear a second time."³ The calm concern about the return of Christ and the end of the world suggests that a sufficient interval has elapsed for the belief that Jesus would return within the lifetimes of his early followers to have died out. Belief in his return is still alive, but the hot confidence that it would soon take place has been transformed into eager waiting.

rendered by the LXX, and further adapted by the author. Clauses are transposed, and the Messianic reference ('he that cometh') is introduced."

²As H. A. Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things' (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 134, says: "The writer is probably thinking again of the Parousia in his quotation from Heb. 2:3-4. . . . The phrases used are indefinite; there is no attempt at detailed description of the Parousia, and it certainly does not occupy the center of the picture in Hebrews."

³Otto Michel, Der Brief an die Hebräer, in the Kritisch-exegetischer Kommentar über das Neue Testament (11th ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1900), p. 241: "Es passt zum Stil des Hb, dass im Zitat der Christus durch die Messiasbezeichnung ὁ ἐρχόμενος ungeschrieben wird." It is not appropriate, however, for the author of Hebrews to ascribe the function of judgment and destruction to Christ and the context of the quotation in Hebrews is that of a warning about the coming judgment.

B. The End

The terminal point of the eschaton, as well as of the whole present aeon, is designated simply as "the end" (τὸ τέλος).⁴ The expression occurs in four passages in the epistle.⁵ In two of these the word is employed in exhortations to the readers to persevere in confidence or hope "until the end" (μέχρι τέλους, Heb. 3:14; ἄχρι τέλους, Heb. 6:11). The τέλος of these passages clearly lies in the future, in contrast with the eschaton of Heb. 1:2, which has already begun. It is not only the point when the present order of things will be destroyed,⁶ as the author's parable of the thorns and thistles implies (Heb. 6:8), but it is also the goal toward which the readers are to strive.⁷

⁴As in Mark 13:7 (parallels Matt. 24:6; Luke 21:9) and Matt. 24:14. The τέλος in Hebrews probably should not be understood solely as the terminus of the cosmos; in terms of the individual believer it probably also designates death. Peake, *op. cit.*, p. 120: "The 'end' may be of life or of the age, or till confident faith gives place to realization."

⁵Heb. 3:6,14; 6:8,11; 7:3. The text is doubtful in 3:6 and probably should be rejected.

⁶The τέλος in this sense is succinctly described as "the final act in the cosmic drama" by William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 819.

⁷R. C. H. Lenski, The Interpretation of the Epistle to the Hebrews and of the Epistle of James (Columbus, Ohio: Lutheran Book Concern, 1938), p. 194, commenting on ἄχρι τέλους in Heb. 6:11, says: "'Up to the end' the writer desires this diligence to be displayed, i.e., until the end of the life of each one of his readers."

The entire eschaton is telically oriented; its present moments receive their ultimate meaning from the end toward which the aeon is moving.

C. The Day

Another passage which shows the significance of the τέλος for the present time is Heb. 10:23-25, where the end is referred to as "the day" (τὴν ἡμέραν).⁸ In this instance the imminence of the Day is recommended as a motive for the readers to encourage one another in "love and good works" and in "the meeting together" (τὴν ἐπισυναγωγὴν).⁹

⁸Cf. C. Spicq, L'Épître aux Hébreux (3rd ed.; Paris: J. Gabalda and Co., 1953), II, 320. As in I Thess. 5:4; I Cor. 3:13, the "day" without further qualifiers signifies "the day of the Lord." William Barclay, The Letter to the Hebrews, in The Daily Study Bible (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1960), p. 2, indicates the significance of the term in Jewish belief: "The Jews divided all time into two ages--the present age and the age to come. In between they set The Day of the Lord. . . . The Day of the Lord, in between, was to be like the birth-pangs of a new age."

⁹The close connection in Heb. 10:23-25 between "the meeting together" and "the Day (of the Lord)" suggests that the author may have had in mind a symbolical interpretation of the early church's observance of Sunday as the day of worship. As John Marsh, The Fulness of Time (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 104, explains: "One of the distinctive practices of Christianity is its observance of the Lord's Day instead of the Sabbath. The Jew keeps Saturday sacred because on that day, he is taught, God completed his creation, and rested. The Christian keeps Sunday holy because on that day, he is taught, Jesus Christ rose from the dead, a conqueror over sin and death. Within the bounds of the New Testament the day is called the Lord's Day, or day of the Lord (Rev. 1:10; cf. Acts 20:7; I Cor. 16:2). Sunday thus comes to express in its new name

Here is evidence of the traditional belief that the end of the world is at hand.¹⁰ Interestingly, the idea of the end is not employed to urge repentance for wrongdoing, or to inculcate fear, but to urge zeal for the concern of one's

its fulfilment of that 'day of the Lord' of which the Old Testament prophets had spoken, when God would once more and finally call, covenant with and commission his people." But since Hebrews develops the idea of the coming aeon as the "rest" of God, it probably would have been confusing to use the analogy of the seven days in Gen. 1:1-2:3 also in connection with Sunday. An attempt to apply the creation analogy both to the sabbath and to Sunday was made in the Epistle of Barnabas 15. 4-8, where the writer awkwardly speaks of "an eighth day" in order to preserve the proper sequence. The difficulty lies in the fact that Sunday follows the sabbath day of the week, while the Day of the Lord with which the present aeon ends precedes the divine rest of the age to come. Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated from the German by Floyd V. Filson (revised ed.; London: SCM Press, 1962), pp. 74-75, thinks that the many allusions to early Christian worship in the book of Revelation may be based on the idea that Sunday prefigures the great Day of the Lord: "In the worship of God there now takes place each time that which only at the end of the times forms the conclusion of the redemptive history. Thus also the Christian day of worship, the day of the resurrection of Christ, is called the 'Lord's Day,' and here also the thought may be not only of the day of resurrection but likewise of the day of the Lord, Yom Yahweh, which is expected in the future."

¹⁰C. H. Dodd, The Apostolic Preaching and Its Development (9th impression; New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1960), pp. 79-80, holds that the concept of the "day of the Lord" was one of the most primitive eschatological ideas in Hebrew thought. Dodd describes it as follows: "But while recorded history is the field within which the divine purpose is being worked out, it can never be said, in the prophetic view, that recorded history fully reveals the purpose of God. This revelation will not be given until the last term in the historical series has come into view--the Day of the Lord."

fellow believers.¹¹

D. A Second Time

The central event of the τέλος will be the second coming of Christ. Hebrews describes Jesus' incarnation with various verbs: Christ "appeared as a high priest" (παραγενόμενος ἄρχιερέως, Heb. 9:11; "appeared" (πεφανέρωται, Heb. 9:26; "came into the world" (εἰσερχόμενος εἰς τὸν κόσμον, Heb. 10:5; "has come" (ἦκω, Heb. 10:9). Similarly, his second coming is described as an appearance in Heb. 9:28: ". . . so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear (ὀφθήσεται) a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him." The second time (ἐκ δευτέρου) stands in contrast to the first time or the incarnation. The eschaton begins and ends with the appearances of Christ.¹²

¹¹Spicq, *op. cit.*, II, 320: "Le suprême motif d'être fervent dans l'approche de Dieu, la confession de l'espérance, etc., c'est que la parousie est proche . . . il importe de pouvoir comparaître avec de bonnes oeuvres et une charité vraie."

¹²It has been argued that the concept of the Second Coming of Christ is logically inconsistent with the main lines of the author's thought. For example, H. A. Guy, *op. cit.*, p. 138, says: "The thought of the Parousia is with difficulty brought into line with the writer's conception. According to the main argument of the book Jesus has completed his work, in living and dying, as a High Priest, and has taken his permanent place in the heavenly sphere; he has 'sat down at the right hand' of God (1:3; 10:12) . . . Christ ministers on behalf of his people in the true sanctuary, sympathizing with men and giving them grace and mercy

E. Yet Once More

In general, however, the τέλος will be a time of judgment and destruction. God, not Christ, will judge all men, as Heb. 12:22-24 indicates.¹³ Judgment comes after death for men (Heb. 9:27). "The Lord will judge his people" (Heb. 10:30).¹⁴ Men will "fall into the hands of the living God" for judgment (Heb. 10:31). This judgment will be

(4:15 f.). From this heavenly 'intercession' (7:25) and his spiritual fellowship with his disciples on earth, a physical return to earth would be a descent from the 'real' to the earthly 'copy' and an anticlimax to the argument of the book." Such is also the estimate of E. F. Scott, The Epistle to the Hebrews (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1922), p. 111: "In the writer's essential thought there is no room for the hope of the Parousia." The ritual acts of the Day of Atonement, however, which the author of Hebrews sees as a foreshadowing of the acts of Christ, do not call for the high priest to remain permanently in the Holy of Holies. The thought is absurd, for he naturally returns to the congregation. It is consistent, indeed compelling, to maintain that the Parousia has its place in the author's concept of Christ as the great high priest. Just as the Levitical high priest after entering the Holy of Holies, returned to the assembly of the people, so Christ, who now is in the heavenly sanctuary, shall return to "those who are eagerly waiting for him" (Heb. 9:28). Cf. Leviticus 16.

¹³R. H. Charles, A Critical History of the Doctrine of a Future Life (2nd ed.; London: Adam and Charles Black, 1913), p. 418: "Though Christ judges not, His second coming is coincident with this judgment (9:27-28; 10:37)."

¹⁴Guy, op. cit., p. 137, thinks that Heb. 10:30-31 has reference only to God's judgment upon the apostates in the previous verses: "The writer is not thinking of pagans, but of Christians who have become reprobate. For such there is apparently no hope; it is against them that the divine vengeance is invoked (10:30). It is 'his own people' whom God is to judge. They seem to be the same people as 'those who shrink back to perdition' (10:39)."

eternal (αἰωνίου), according to Heb. 6:2; the adjective in this connection may derive its meaning from the present aeon or the future ones. The point is that judgment at the end of this aeon will be final and decisive.

The sequel to the judgment is the fiery end of the aeon, in which everything which belongs to the aeon passes away as the divinely allotted time for its existence runs out.¹⁵ The whole creation will be shaken--yet once more (ἔτι ἄραξ, Heb. 12:26,27), God says: "I will shake not only the earth but also the heaven." God is a consuming fire (Heb. 12:29). As the writer of Hebrews says in the words of Ps. 102:25-27:

Thou, Lord, didst found the earth in the beginning, and the heavens are the work of thy hands; they will perish, but thou remainest; they will all grow old like a garment, like a mantle thou wilt roll them up, and they will be changed (Heb. 1:10-12).

The two ideas of judgment and destruction are combined in Heb. 10:27: ". . . a fearful prospect of judgment and a fury of fire which will consume the adversaries."¹⁶

¹⁵Cf. *ibid.*, p. 135, where Guy shows that in describing judgment in terms of fire Hebrews shares traditional Christian belief: "The phrases used recall the description of the 'Gehenna of fire' (Mark 9:48), the 'flaming fire' with which Paul once associates the Parousia (II Thess. 1:8) and the 'lake of fire' in the Apocalypse (Rev. 19:20). Fire is here apparently thought of as annihilating, as it is in the reference in 6:8 to the burning of 'thorns and thistles'."

¹⁶Charles, *op. cit.*, p. 419: "Annihilation seems to be the destiny of the wicked."

On the other hand, those who share in Christ will "escape" the destruction of the aeon (ἐκφεύγω, Heb. 2:3; 12:25). The term "escape" seems to be borrowed from apocalyptic vocabulary and is reminiscent of Jesus' advice to "flee to the mountains" (cf. Mark 13:14-16; Matt. 24:16-18; Luke 21:21). Jesus warned his disciples to "watch at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that will take place" (Luke 21:36). Paul speaks of escaping the judgment of God (Rom. 2:3) and seems to have in mind the same thought as that in Hebrews when he says: "When people say, 'There is peace and security,' then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape" (I Thess. 5:3). The author of Hebrews gives the apocalyptic idea his distinctive liturgical touch in Heb. 6:18, where he calls himself and his readers people "who have fled for refuge" (οἱ καταφυγόντες). In this passage he uses a self-designation that seems to reflect the ancient custom of seeking safety and asylum in a sanctuary--in this case, in the heavenly sanctuary.

CHAPTER VI

THE SEVENTH DAY

The people of God will survive the destruction of this aeon at the τέλος. That which follows for them is variously described in the epistle: they will enter God's rest, they will receive the promised eternal inheritance under the new covenant, they will live in the heavenly city, they will enter the sanctuary. This chapter takes up the major images which the author of Hebrews employs to describe existence for the people of God in the coming aeon. The title for the chapter, "the seventh day," is obtained from the discussion about a "sabbath rest" remaining for the people of God (Heb. 4:9-10; cf. Heb. 4:4), and preserves the chronological nature of the chapter titles.

A. Entering God's Rest

The author's description of salvation in terms of "rest" is based on an interpretation of Ps. 95:11 in the light of Gen. 2:2. That such is the case is shown by the juxtaposition of the two passages in Heb. 4:4-5:

For he has somewhere spoken of the seventh day in this way, "And God rested (κατέπαυσεν) on the seventh day from all his works." And again in this place (καὶ ἐν τούτῳ) he said, "They shall never enter my rest (κατάπαυσιν)."

The appearance of the cognates κατέπαυσεν and κατάπαυσιν in

the two verses of the Septuagint lends hermeneutical justification for the essential relationship which the author sees in the two passages. That he holds that these two Old Testament passages are speaking of the same "rest" is made explicit by the expression which joins them, *καὶ ἐν τούτῳ*, which should probably be rendered "and on this matter also," not as the Revised Standard Version does: "and again in this place."

The rest of God for the people of God is a future experience, according to Heb. 4:9: "So then, there remains a sabbath rest for the people of God." In this verse the author is not speaking of the future entrance of the individual believer into that rest, but of the whole people.¹ It is especially meaningful that he uses the noun *σαββατισμός* to designate the rest, for there is clearly an analogy to the seven days of the Genesis creation account. The "rest" of God is that realm of existence into which God withdrew after creating the heavens and the earth. It seems likely

¹The "rest" is not only future, however, for the author also speaks of it as a present experience in Heb. 4:4: "For we who have believed enter that rest." As G. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), p. 372, says: "The 'rest' is and remains a promise, which some of the readers of the Epistle may fail through disobedience to achieve (4:1) and all are exhorted to strive to enter. The 'rest,' precisely because it is God's, is both present and future; men enter it, and must strive to enter it. This is paradoxical, but it is a paradox which Hebrews shares with all primitive Christian eschatology."

that ἀπὸ τῶν ἔργων αὐτοῦ in some sense implies a withdrawal from his creation, a departure into a realm other than this aeon. That the seventh day is a realm of existence as well as a time is indicated by the way in which the author can speak of "entering" (εἰσέρχασθαι) it.

Such considerations lead us to conclude that the seventh day, or more properly, the σαββατισμός of Heb. 4:9, is synonymous with the "coming aeon."² The author never uses the term κατάπαυσις to designate what belongs to man; it is always "God's rest" or "my rest" or "his rest" into which man is to enter. Man does not have a κατάπαυσις but a σαββατισμός.

The analogy with the creation account does not extend to the other six days of creative activity, but applies only to the seventh. The author's interest in the seventh day is not an allegorically derived ethic, as in Philo, but eschatology. The seventh day is the time when God rested, and by

²Ibid., pp. 370-71. Barrett points out that the equation of the sabbath with the age to come was Jewish. Ernst Käsemann, Das wandernde Gottesvolk (3rd ed.; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1959), pp. 41-42, cites Rabbi Nathan's comment on the expression "the day of the sabbath" in Ps. 92:1: "Das ist der Tag, der ganz Sabbath (Ruhe) ist, an dem es kein Essen und Trinken gibt, kein Kaufen und Verkaufen, sondern die Gerechten werden dasitzen mit Kronen auf ihren Häuptern und sich laben an dem Glanz der Schekchina." And the saying of Rabbi Eliezer: "Sieben Aeonen hat Gott geschaffen, und von ihnen allen hat er sich nur den siebenten Aeon erkoren. Sechs sind da zum Gehen und Kommen (der Menschen), und einer (der siebente) ist ganz Sabbath und Ruhe im ewigen Leben."

analogy it is the time when God's people will rest. The Jewish sabbath is a constant reminder of both God's cessation from labor and the future cessation by his people from theirs (Heb. 4:10). In the Epistle of Barnabas, however, there is a fuller application of the analogy and a polemic against Judaism's sabbath observance.³

The author also employs the analogy of creation in Heb. 2:5, where the perfected human beings who will exercise rule in the coming aeon are described as "the (inhabited) world to come" (τὴν οἰκουμένην τὴν μέλλουσαν). He goes on to cite Ps. 8:4-6 to show that in the coming aeon God has planned an existence for the human race in which man himself will exercise mastery over the universe (τὰ πάντα, Heb. 2:6),

³Cf. Epistle of Barnabas 15. 1-9. In Ps. 90:4 ("For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday") Barnabas sees the key idea for interpreting the significance of the days of creation: "Notice, children, what is the meaning of 'He made an end in six days'? He means this: that the Lord will make an end of everything in six thousand years, for a day with him means a thousand years. . . . 'And he rested on the seventh day.' This means, when his Son comes he will destroy the time of the wicked one, and will judge the godless, and will change the sun and the moon and the stars, and then he will truly rest on the seventh day. . . . The present sabbaths are not acceptable to me, but that which I have made, in which I will give rest to all things and make the beginning of an eighth day, that is, the beginning of another world (15. 4,5,8)." Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 373, after a detailed comparison of the idea of "rest" in Philo, Barnabas, and Hebrews concludes: "The notion of the messianic Sabbath, which in several parts of the N.T. is a living conception, is stultified by Barnabas, who, failing to see that the Sabbath had dawned, forced the Christian view of history into the form of a time-table, thereby destroying its essential and characteristic paradox."

instead of the existence in this aeon in which man is subjected to angelic power or rule. The eschaton for the human race is the period characterized by the "not yet" of Heb. 2:8: "Now in putting everything in subjection to man, he left nothing outside his control. As it is, we do not yet (οὐπω) see everything in subjection to him." The dominion of man over creation had been God's intention at the beginning of this world, but man's sin thwarted the realization of the plan and God placed man's original place of habitation under the jurisdiction of angelic beings (Gen. 1:28; 3:24). In the eschaton, however, the creation of a new human race which will inhabit the coming aeon has begun in Jesus, the new Adam, who was perfected through suffering (Heb. 2:10). In the sense, therefore, that Jesus is the first man of the new human race, the perfected human race, he is called the "pioneer" (ἀρχηγόν, Heb. 2:10).⁴ It would be consistent with such a train of thought to refer to the eschaton as the sixth day of the new creation, since it is the period in which mankind is created anew, but the Epistle to the Hebrews nowhere carries the analogy of Genesis 1 to this extent.

⁴Alfred Cody, Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960), p. 135, explains the term well: "Christ is depicted as the leader of a procession of the faithful moving into glory."

Perfection, therefore, is the condition of man required by God for existence or life in the coming aeon. God made Christ perfect through suffering (Heb. 2:10). It was through suffering that Jesus learned obedience (Heb. 5:8). Perfection is, among other things, obedience. Christ's perfection made him the "source" of eternal salvation (αἴτιος σωτηρίας αἰωνίου) to all who obey him (Heb. 5:9). Just as the designation "pioneer" (ἀρχηγός) has reference to Jesus as the first new man, so also the designation of Jesus as "source" (αἴτιος) has reference to him as the one from whom man's perfection springs.⁵ The close connection between these two terms is illustrated by the fact that in Heb. 12:2 the author brings the two ideas together in calling Jesus "the pioneer and perfecter of our faith" (τὸν τῆς πίστεως ἀρχηγὸν καὶ τελειωτήν).

Apart from the unique instance of Jesus, no human being has been or will be perfected during this aeon. The Israelites under the leadership of Moses and Joshua did not enter God's rest (Hebrews 3 and 4). The heroes of faith in the pre-eschaton portion of the present aeon have not been perfected (Heb. 11:39-40). God's rest remains to be entered

⁵Cf. *ibid.*, p. 136, where Cody distinguishes "pioneer" and "source" in terms of the author's dual background: "When in 2:10 He is called the leader (ἀρχηγός) of salvation, leading many sons into glory, the perspective is one of movement and eschatology, but when here in 5:9 He is called the cause (αἴτιος) of salvation the perspective is the vertical one of the author's Alexandrian heritage."

and is a goal toward which the author urges his readers to strive (Heb. 4:9-11). He sets forth the goal vividly in the figure of the heavenly city, in which the readers are to see their future as "the spirits of just men made perfect" (Heb. 12:23). Even those who live in the eschaton have had only a taste of "the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come" (Heb. 6:5). Perfection for man lies in the future, beyond the present aeon, beyond the eschaton.⁶

In Heb. 9:10 the time when mankind will be perfected is called "the time of reformation" (καιροῦ διορθώσεως). The context indicates that the reformation which the author has in mind is that righting of sinful human nature with which the law also deals:

According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation (Heb. 9:9-10).

The same thought is involved when the author speaks of "the good things to come" in Heb. 10:1:

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come (τῶν μελλόντων ἀγαθῶν) instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near.

⁶Perfection for man belongs to what William Manson, "Eschatology in the New Testament," Eschatology, No. 2 of Scottish Journal of Theology Occasional Papers (Edinburgh: Cliver and Boyd, n.d.), p. 7, calls "an eschatology of the unrealised."

In using the adjective "good" to describe those things which will come about at the time of reformation, the author seems to be making further use of the creation account in Genesis. Just as the Genesis author says that after God had created everything including man, he "saw everything that he had made, and behold, it was very good," so also the writer of Hebrews speaks of those things which belong to the coming aeon as "good." In the case of Christ, however, the perfected nature of man is an accomplished fact already in the eschaton. Thus the author can speak in Heb. 9:11 of that perfection, which for man lies in the future, as "the good things that have come" (τῶν γενομένων ἀγαθῶν), because as far as Christ is concerned perfection is a past event.⁷

B. Receiving the Eternal Inheritance

The idea that in the coming aeon an inheritance is to be received by the people of God is expressed in the language of the covenant concept. The teaching on the covenant is one of the fundamental themes in the epistle and receives more attention in Hebrews than in any other New Testament

⁷A. S. Peake, Hebrews, in The Century Bible (Edinburgh: T. C. & E. C. Jack, n.d.), p. 181, discusses the textual problem in Heb. 9:11, preferring the reading of P⁴⁶ B D (γενομένων) to that of S A (μελλόντων). He adds: "The author speaks, then, from the standpoint not of this age but of the age to come, already realized."

writing.⁸ The frequency of the appearance of the word διαθήκη indicates the prominence of the covenant idea in the letter. Of the thirty-three times διαθήκη occurs in the New Testament, seventeen are found in Hebrews. The author uses the term in two related senses: twice in its current Hellenistic Greek sense of "last will and testament" (Heb. 9:16,17) and all other times in its Septuagintal sense of the divine יְהוָה. In brief, the covenant is the expression of the special relationship which God has established between himself and his people. The author of Hebrews speaks of two covenants; he shows that the one--the "new" covenant mediated by Christ (Heb. 8:8,13; 9:15; 12:24)--is superior to and supercedes the other--the "first" or Sinaitic covenant (Heb. 8:7,9,13; 9:1,15,18; 10:9).

The new covenant is derived from the prophecy of Jeremiah, who foresaw its establishment by God in messianic

⁸Goerhardus Vos, The Teaching of the Epistle to the Hebrews, edited by Johannes G. Vos (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1956), p. 27, compares the frequency of the word διαθήκη in Hebrews with its frequency in the rest of the New Testament: "The Epistle to the Hebrews is the only New Testament epistle giving prominence to the term Diatheke. In Jesus' own discourses the word occurs only once (Matt. 26:28; Mark 14:24; Luke 22:20), in the formula 'This cup is the new Diatheke.' Paul uses it only in Gal. 3:4; II Corinthians 3; Ephesians 2; Romans 9 and 11--nine times in all. In Luke's writings, outside the above passages, it is found only three times: once in the Gospel (1:72), and twice in Acts (3:25 and 7:8). Only once more does it occur in the New Testament outside of the Epistle to the Hebrews. And in Hebrews alone it occurs 17 times.

times: "The days will come (ἡμέραι ἔρχονται), says the Lord, when I will establish a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah" (Heb. 8:8; cf. also Jer. 31:31). "This is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days (μετὰ τὰς ἡμέρας ἐκεῖνας), says the Lord" (Heb. 8:10; cf. also Jer. 31:33). The inauguration of the new covenant of which Jeremiah spoke takes place at the death of Jesus; his blood ratified it and therefore is known as "the blood of the covenant" (Heb. 10:29; cf. 9:18). The period which Jeremiah anticipated commences with what the author thinks of as the beginning of the eschaton; the coming days (Heb. 8:8) and "those days" (Heb. 8:10) are the eschaton and the coming aeon as viewed from the standpoint of the Old Testament writer. Since Jesus' blood makes him the mediator of a new covenant relationship that begins in the eschaton and extends into the coming aeon, the author can also call it "the blood of the eternal (αἰωνίου) covenant" (Heb. 13:20).

The motif of "promise" is embraced under the covenant concept and closely connected with the idea of inheritance. The author of Hebrews uses the noun ἐπαγγελία fourteen times⁹ and the verb ἐπαγγελίζομαι four times¹⁰ in his presentation,

⁹Heb. 4:1; 6:12,15,17; 7:6; 8:6; 9:15; 10:36; 11:9 bis, 13,17,33,39.

¹⁰Heb. 6:13; 10:23; 11:11; 12:26.

so it may be concluded that the idea is important for the unfolding of his thought. God, in order to initiate and sustain the covenant relationship, made promises to those whom he chose to be his people. The initiative in establishing the first covenant was God's promise and oath to Abraham: "Surely I will bless you and multiply you" (Heb. 6:13-14; cf. Gen. 22:16-17). To Isaac and Jacob "the same promise" was repeated (Heb. 11:9). Many persons under the first covenant received promises from God for the same purpose--to sustain the covenant relationship (Heb. 11:9). The new covenant, however, was enacted on "better promises" (Heb. 8:6) and on "the word of the oath" addressed to Jesus (Heb. 7:26; cf. 7:20-22). What the author considers to be the nature of the better promises and oath which initiate the new covenant carries him over into two other images which he also uses in the epistle and which need only to be mentioned at this point. The better promises seem to have been contained in the first preaching of the gospel that he and his readers heard. In Heb. 4:1-2 he says that the "promise of entering his (God's) rest" still remains, because "the good news came to us" (ἔσμεν εὐηγγελισμένοι). The promises of the new covenant, therefore, are "the things which have been heard" (τοῖς ἀκουσθεῖσιν, Heb. 2:1) from the first evangelists, perhaps the primitive apostles. The better oath which confirms the promises of the new covenant, however, is identical with the oath by which Jesus was

confirmed in his priestly office of the Melchizedekian order (Heb. 7:20-22). Thus the imagery of the covenant theme overlaps into the ideas of the divine rest and the heavenly sanctuary.

The idea that God will grant an inheritance to his people in the coming aeon is intimately associated with the thought that he has initiated a new covenant with them by making the excellent promises they heard in the early proclamation of the gospel in the church. The content of the promises of the new covenant is described in the language of inheritance. The author uses the terms "inherit" (κληρονομέω, Heb. 1:4,14; 6:12; 12:17), "heir" (κληρονόμος, Heb. 1:2; 6:17; 11:7), "inheritance" (κληρονομία, Heb. 9:15; 11:8), and "co-heir" (συγκληρονόμος, Heb. 11:9), to develop the concept. The Hellenistic Greek meaning of διαθήκη as last will and testament is also pressed into service in Heb. 9:16,17--a passage which is filled with the legal terminology of inheritance.¹¹ Of course, inheritance is an Old Testament idea, but in Hebrews it receives the author's

¹¹Vos, op. cit., p. 39: ". . . it will be observed here (at Heb. 9:16,17) the word must mean testament, because of the reference to the death of the testator. The Diatheke does not avail so long as the testator liveth. An additional reason for this rendering, although it is not sufficient in itself, is found in the idea of inheritance. Third, we have here also the legal terminology: pheroo, to bring something to the proper notice; bebaios, of force; ischuoo, to have validity; diathemenos, testator. We think it impossible that any competent exegete should translate Diatheke in this context otherwise than as testament."

distinctive eschatological stamp.

The epistle's treatment of Abraham's promised inheritance discloses the eschatological dimension in the concept. On the one hand, in Heb. 6:15 the author can say that "Abraham, having patiently endured, obtained the promise" (ἐπέτυχεν τῆς ἐπαγγελίας). The "promise" in this verse clearly signifies the thing promised, not simply the utterance of a pledge. On the other hand, in Heb. 11:13 the writer also clearly states that Abraham was among those who "died in faith, not having received what was promised (μὴ κομισάμενοι τὰς ἐπαγγελίας), but having seen it and greeted it from afar." This seeming contradiction is dissolved when it is discovered that in the first instance the writer means that Abraham did receive the promised blessing of descendants, and that in the other verse Abraham, though a great example of faith, did not receive the promised perfection needed for life in the coming aeon.¹² As the author tells his readers after cataloguing the heroes of the past,

All these, though well attested by their faith, did not receive what was promised, since God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be made perfect (Heb. 11:39-40).

¹²Cf. Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 378. The suggestion is made that this apparent disagreement is resolved by understanding "promise" in Heb. 6:15 as the substance of what was promised, and in Heb. 11:39 as the words or pledge of the promise itself. The contexts in both cases, however, make it probable that the distinction is between promised descendants and promised perfection, not between God's pledge and his fulfillment of it.

The eschatological dimension in the inheritance concept is perfection--covenant perfection--which is concerned not only with ethics but with the whole life of the community of God.¹³

God and his people in the coming aeon will abide in the relationship characterized as the new covenant, which was mediated by Jesus at the beginning of the eschaton. The new covenant was enacted on the promises in the gospel that man is to be perfected for his life in the world to come. Future perfection is the inheritance he will receive. Therefore the epistle calls it "the promised eternal (αἰώνιον) inheritance" (Heb. 9:15) and designates men as "heirs of the promise" (Heb. 6:17). Before the incarnation God's people qualified as heirs in virtue of their faith, as Noah did: ". . . . by this (faith) he condemned the world and became an heir of the righteousness which comes by faith" (Heb. 11:7). Faith is the response of the people of God to the unseen inheritance,¹⁴ the perfection for which there was God's

¹³Vos, *op. cit.*, p. 41: ". . . the Diatheke appears as an institution with a view to a further end, not as an end in itself. This, of course, does not exclude the idea of covenant. Still, as it is concretely put, the end is stated, in which case the idea of covenant is not satisfactory. The end is usually stated as teleiosis. The Diatheke is a means to bring on perfection, not moral perfection, but the perfection of consummation, of bringing a person to his goal, to the ideal state."

¹⁴On the one hand, the concept of faith in Hebrews is to be understood in the light of the covenant idea in the

promise but no visible evidence. But under the new covenant the inheritance has already been received by one man; in Jesus the promised perfection is no longer unseen. He has inherited a nature vastly superior to the angels (κεκληρονόμηκεν ὄνομα, Heb. 1:4); he is "the heir of all things" (κληρονόμον πάντων, Heb. 1:2). The proper response for the people of God during the eschaton is hope (ἐλπίς), for hope has to do with that which has been set before Christians to seize (Heb. 6:18). Unlike faith, which has to do with "things not seen" (Heb. 11:1), hope is "a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul" (Heb. 6:19). Faith is no longer the adequate term for designating the eschatological response of the covenant people that it was during the days preceding the incarnation. The "better hope" has already been introduced (Heb. 7:18). Hope is a historical person, Jesus the Christ.

A postscript should be added to the discussion of the eschatological inheritance concept in the Epistle to the

epistle. As such it is predominantly an Old Testament matter. On the other hand, in the epistle faith is dominated by the author's view of the nature of reality. In his commentary on the great examples of faith in Israel's past who are mentioned in Hebrews 11, Alexander C. Purdy, "Introduction and Exegesis to the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), XI, 579, says: "It is perhaps a mistake to regard these notables as 'heroes' of faith; they are rather 'witnesses' to the true quality of faith as reliance on the unseen and immaterial reality over against all apparent and tangible goods."

Hebrews. The figure of the kingdom, perhaps because of the influence of the gospel tradition, is treated as an inheritance idea. This figure, which is so prominent in the Gospel writings as "the kingdom of God" or "the kingdom of heaven," does not receive the same kind of attention from the author of Hebrews. Indeed, expressions based on the kingdom idea are not lacking in the epistle: God says of the Son, "Thy throne (θρόνος), O God, is for ever and ever, the righteous scepter is the scepter of thy kingdom (βασιλείας) (Heb. 1:8). The Son was told, "Sit at my right hand, till I make thy enemies a stool for thy feet" (Heb. 1:13). Jesus was "crowned (ἐστεφανωμένον) with glory and honor because of the suffering of death" (Heb. 2:9). The readers of the epistle are urged, "Let us then with confidence draw near to the throne (θρόνω) of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:16). As the great high priest, Jesus "is seated at the right hand of the throne (θρόνου) of Majesty in heaven" (Heb. 8:1). Jesus as the pioneer and perfecter of our faith "for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne (θρόνου) of God" (Heb. 12:2). The exaltation of Christ, which came after his death, is described as an enthronement; but at the same time that the author thinks of him as king, he is dominated by the notion that he is also a priest: "But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat

down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet" (Heb. 10:12-13).¹⁵ As in the treatment of Melchizedek, of whom Christ is the antitype, the priestly motif dominates the idea of kingship.¹⁶ Melchizedek is "king of Salem," but he "continues a priest for ever." (cf. Heb. 7:1-3).

Only in Heb. 12:28 is there mention of a "kingdom" (βασιλεία) for those who survive until the coming aeon: "Therefore let us be grateful for receiving a kingdom that cannot be shaken" The context is that of the terrible shaking of heaven and earth in the final judgment at the end of the present aeon. Heaven and earth seem to be

¹⁵James Moffatt, A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on the Epistle to the Hebrews, in The International Critical Commentary (1st ed. reprinted; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1957), p. xxxiii, sees this passage as an incongruous, but impressive "combination of the sacerdotal and royal metaphors."

¹⁶Cf. Yigael Yadin, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Epistle to the Hebrews," Aspects of the Dead Sea Scrolls, edited by Chaim Kabin and Yigael Yadin (Jerusalem: The Hebrew University, 1958), pp. 43-45. Yadin, who holds that Hebrews is addressed to former members of the Dead Sea sect, estimates that "by over-emphasizing different parts of the Scriptures relating to Melchizedek, and by applying 'Mid-rashic' interpretations to some of the words and names thereof, he (the author of Hebrews) tried to present to his readers Jesus the Messiah--king and priest--in such manner and terminology as must have been intended to coincide both with their ideas of the Messianic priest and the Messianic King and at the same time to repudiate other beliefs which they might have held and which did not suit his concept. . . . Moreover, the very necessity for the writer to ascribe to Jesus priestly qualities implies that, according to the belief of the addressees, the priestly Messiah was to be superior to the royal (i.e., lay) Messiah" (p. 44).

distinguished from this kingdom in that they are created things which perish, but the kingdom does not. Only here in Hebrews is the kingdom represented as an inheritance, as something which Christians "receive" (παραλαμβάνοντες, Heb. 12:28). The author does not develop the idea of a heavenly kingdom which is inherited (cf. Matt. 25:34), but immediately returns to the liturgical thought: ". . . and thus let us offer to God acceptable worship, with reverence and awe; for our God is a consuming fire" (Heb. 12:28-29).¹⁷

C. Coming to the Heavenly City

One of the most poignant images used by the author of Hebrews is the description of future salvation as a city. In Heb. 12:22 he writes: "You have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem (προσ-εληλύθατε . . . πόλει θεοῦ ζῶντος, Ἱερουσαλὴμ ἐπουρανίῳ)." The heavenly city is not without parallel in Jewish and

¹⁷Hoffatt, *op. cit.*, p. xxiii, thinks that the author of Hebrews throughout the epistle "endeavors repeatedly to preserve something of the primitive view of Jesus as messianic king, particularly because the idea of the divine βασιλεία plays next to no part in his scheme of thought." Purdy, *op. cit.*, XI, 750-51, on the other hand, contrasts the "unshakable kingdom" of Heb. 12:28 with the "kingdom of God" in the Gospels: "This kingdom . . . is not the Synoptic idea of God's rule on a restored earth; it is, as vs. 28 shows, the heavenly realm of acceptable worship, with reverence and awe which is to displace all temporal and shadowy things."

Christian thought.¹⁸ Paul, for example, speaks of "the Jerusalem above" which is the mother of all believers (Gal. 4:26). The writer of Revelation says that he saw "the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God" (Rev. 21:2; cf. 21:10-27). Though Hebrews does not conceive of the heavenly city descending to earth, like the book of Revelation it does draw attention to the city's foundations (Heb. 11:10; cf. Rev. 21:14,19-20).

The portrayal of the heavenly city in the epistle is drawn primarily against the background of Abraham. It is the city which God has prepared for all those who, like Abraham, saw it from afar but died in faith without dwelling in it (Heb. 11:13). The thought of the wandering patriarch also leads easily to the reference to the city as a "homeland" (πατρίδα, Heb. 11:14) and to those who seek the heavenly homeland as earth's "strangers and exiles" (Heb. 11:14-16). The allusion is to Abraham as a homeless foreigner and to Canaan as the future possession of his descendants.

¹⁸The city as an eschatological image has its origin in Jewish apocalyptic, according to Barrett, *op. cit.*, pp. 375-76: ". . . we may without hesitation conclude that, according to Jewish thought, there exists a heavenly city, of which the present earthly Jerusalem is an inferior copy; and that in the future this heavenly city will in some way be manifested as the Jerusalem of the age to come. This complex dualism is characteristic of apocalyptic; and it is precisely this dualism (and not a platonic dualism) which appears in Hebrews."

place In Heb. 13:11-14, however, the idea of the heavenly city is brought into close connection with the place of Israel's encampment during their wilderness wanderings and the city of Jerusalem at the time of Christ's crucifixion.¹⁹ The historical fact that Jesus "suffered outside the gate" of Jerusalem has special significance in the light of the Old Testament ordinance that required the bodies of the animals slain for the sin offering on the Day of Atonement to be burned outside the Israelite encampment (Heb. 13:11-12; cf. Lev. 16:27). The place of the burning of the carcasses of the sacrificial animals outside the wilderness encampment, the suffering and ignominy of Jesus' crucifixion outside the gates of the Jewish holy city, and the persecution of the readers of the epistle during the eschaton--these ideas contribute to the significance of the writer's words of encouragement in Heb. 13:13-14: "Therefore let us go forth to him (Jesus) outside the camp, bearing abuse for him. For here we have no lasting city, but we seek the city which is to come (τὴν μέλλουσαν)." During the eschaton God's people are to expect to endure the afflictions of exiles and the perils of strangers living in a foreign land. They are earth's wanderers until the age to come. At the end of the eschaton they will find their permanent dwelling

¹⁹Yadin, *op. cit.*, p. 55, points out that the Qumran literature, especially the War Scroll, makes much of the arrangement of the Israelite camp and the tabernacle.

place; they will enter the heavenly city.

D. Entering the Heavenly Sanctuary

Finally, the salvation which awaits men in the coming aeon is also described as the "sanctuary" or the "Holy Place" (τὰ ἅγια).²⁰ The basis for this language is clearly the liturgical appointments for the Old Testament tabernacle of Israel. It seems that Christ as high priest entered the Holy Place, but the Epistle to the Hebrews does not always retain the distinction between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies (cf. Heb. 9:3). That the sanctuary, i.e., the Holy Place, is symbolic of heaven is made explicit by the author in Heb. 9:24: "For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf." Since the sanctuary is the symbolic term for heaven, the somewhat enigmatic passage in Heb. 9:11 is more readily explained:

²⁰Cody, *op. cit.*, p. 115, n. 65, observes that in Hebrews and Revelation, heaven is at times portrayed as a city and at other times as a temple: "The shift of imagery between temple and city need cause no great difficulty, if we remember that both books are using symbols in their exposition. We are pilgrims on the way to Zion. When the sacred authors wish to allude to the presence of God and our meeting with God, they tend to use the figure of the temple. When they wish to allude to the goal of our pilgrimage in its social significance (the fellowship of the elect and the angels), they tend to use the symbol of the city."

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption.

His entrance "through the greater and more perfect tent" (διὰ τῆς μείζονος καὶ τελειότερας σκηνῆς, Heb. 9:11) means the same thing as the remark in Heb. 4:14 that Christ "has passed through the heavens." The sanctuary is being interpreted as a microcosm of the heavens and Christ has passed through its outer court.

It is important to observe that when the author speaks of the sanctuary, he has in mind the twofold division of the tabernacle of Old Testament times. He calls that structure "an earthly sanctuary" (τό τε ἅγιον κοσμικόν) in Heb. 9:1. On the one hand, there was the outer tent or Holy Place (Heb. 9:2), which had a curtain that barred entrance to all but the priests. They performed their ritual duties here (Heb. 9:6), which consisted of gifts and sacrifices (Heb. 9:9), that "deal only with food and drink and various ablutions" (Heb. 9:10). On the other hand, there is the Holy of Holies, the entrance to which was barred by the second curtain (Heb. 9:3); it too is called a "tent" by the author of the epistle (Heb. 9:3). Into the Holy of Holies or "second (tent)" only the high priest went--once a year with the blood of atonement (Heb. 9:7).

On Mount Sinai, when Moses was given the law, he was also shown the "pattern" (τύπον) for the construction of the sanctuary (Heb. 8:5). What the author seems to imply is that Moses saw the construction of the heavenly sanctuary and patterned the Israelite tabernacle after it. Thus the tabernacle became a microcosm of heaven in the sense that it is a "copy and shadow" (cf. ὑποδείγματι καὶ σκιᾷ, Heb. 8:5) of existence in heaven in so far as the worship life of the people there is concerned. The tabernacle thus is a microcosm of what exists in the coming aeon.

To be as precise as the Epistle to the Hebrews will allow, it seems that existence in the coming aeon for man is analogous to the activity of the Old Testament priests in the Holy Place. The author speaks of "the heavenly sanctuary," but what he seems also to be saying is that for man heaven is a sanctuary.²¹ In heaven, therefore, there is a twofold division corresponding to the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies:²² men will live in the Holy Place as priests and Christ as high priest will intercede for them in

²¹Moffatt, *op. cit.*, p. xxxiv, likewise remarks that for the author of Hebrews the higher world "is a σκηνή, a sanctuary, the real Presence of God."

²²Some prefer to think that in the heavenly sanctuary there is no curtain between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. For example, Peake, *op. cit.*, p. 138: "By the removal of the veil the Holy Place has become part of the Holy of Holies." But Hebrews does not speak of the curtain as having been removed; the Gospels speak of it as having been torn (cf. Mark 15:38; Matt. 27:51).

the Holy of Holies, which is where he alone has gone. He is already in the heavenly Holy of Holies, as the author indicates in Heb. 6:19-20:

We have this as a sure and steadfast anchor of the soul, a hope that enters into the inner shrine (εἰς τὸ ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος) behind the curtain, where Jesus has gone as a forerunner (πρόδρομος) on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

This passage does not mean that the author is telling his readers that they should expect in the coming aeon to enter the heavenly Holy of Holies--only Jesus does this. The expression πρόδρομος rather means that Jesus is already there, so to speak, ahead of us in the heavenly sanctuary, waiting at his heavenly post as high priest for us to take our places in that location designated for us, i.e., the heavenly Holy Place.²³ In the heavenly sanctuary only one enters the Holy of Holies, but many enter the Holy Place.

During the eschaton man is, as it were, living outside the first curtain; indeed, during the entire length of this aeon man is living outside the outer tent. The construction of the tabernacle indicates that such is the case.²⁴ Thus

²³Vos, *op. cit.*, p. 43, identifies the term πρόδρομος as "specifically liturgical language."

²⁴Cf. above, p. 53, footnote 12. Lev. 16:17 states that on the Day of Atonement, while the high priest is in the Holy of Holies, the tent of meeting is to be empty: "There shall be no man in the tent of meeting when he enters to make atonement in the holy place until he comes out and has made atonement for himself and for his house and for all the assembly of Israel." Similarly, while Jesus is in the

the author says: "By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age)" (Heb. 9:8-9). He has not entered the heavenly Holy Place yet. He will enter when the present aeon has ended or when he as an individual dies before the present aeon ends. The first curtain, that is, the curtain which bars his entrance into the Holy Place of the tabernacle, is symbolic of the end of this aeon, and similarly the end of the eschaton. Man makes his way through this curtain only at his death or the arrival of the end of the eschaton. The forerunner Jesus shows him the way. Jesus' own suffering preceded his death; it took place before the eschaton. Symbolically, therefore, it is possible for the author to say that "Jesus . . . suffered outside the gate" (Heb. 13:12). His body remained in this world, so that it is also possible to compare it with "the bodies of those animals whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest as a sacrifice for sin" and to say that these bodies "are burned outside the camp" (Heb. 13:11). Jesus' death was a passage through the first curtain into the Holy Place (the curtain is called "his flesh" in Heb. 10:20). Since he had been appointed high priest, he not only entered the heavenly Holy

heavenly Holy of Holies, none of his people have yet entered the heavenly sanctuary.

Place, but even went into the heavenly Holy of Holies
itself. There he makes intercession for his people.

It is not only the Father who sends the Holy Spirit
but also the Son who sends the Holy Spirit. In the
beginning of the Gospel, when Jesus was baptized, the
Holy Spirit came down upon him in the form of a dove.
His commission was to preach the Gospel to all nations.
The Holy Spirit is the source of all grace and
the power of all gifts. He is the one who leads us
into all truth and who dwells in our hearts.

The Holy Spirit is the one who gives us the power
to resist temptation and to live in holiness. He is
the one who gives us the power to love one another
as we love ourselves and as we love God. He is
the one who gives us the power to bear witness to
the Gospel in our lives. He is the one who gives us
the power to overcome all our sins and to live in
the joy of the Lord. He is the one who gives us
the power to be faithful to the end of our lives.
He is the one who gives us the power to be
witnesses to the world of the love of God.

St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, Chapter 8, Verse 26
The Spirit itself intercedes for us with groanings which cannot be uttered.

CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

It is hoped that the findings of the preceding pages have demonstrated that the chronological references in the Epistle to the Hebrews serve as a meaningful framework for an exposition of the author's eschatological teaching. His conception of time emerges rather clearly in spite of the fact that it is not expressed in terms of a timetable of events. This concluding chapter recapitulates the principal features of the study and offers some observations on their significance.

In the first place, an attempt was made to grasp the author's over-all scheme of time on the basis of his treatment of the concept of αἰών in certain passages. It was shown that the starting point for his chronological notions is the Biblical teaching that God has created a certain number of aeons or orders of existence with dimensions of time and space (Heb. 1:2). The additional idea was found that the creation of the aeons was a purposeful act on God's part; it was a preparation of the aeons with a view to habitation by perfected man (Heb. 11:3). Attention was drawn to the coming aeon, the transition to which has already begun¹

¹H. A. Guy, The New Testament Doctrine of the 'Last Things' (London: Oxford University Press, 1948), p. 134,

in the instance of Jesus and the early church (Heb. 6:5). The author indicates that he sees the incarnation of Christ as the climax of all created time and all created substance (Heb. 9:26). The present aeon, which in the epistle seems to be designated "these days," is therefore drawing to a close; its terminal period, the ἔσχατον, has already begun with Christ (Heb. 1:2). On the whole, the conception of time on which the eschatology of Hebrews is framed is not especially different from that in the other New Testament writings.²

The eschaton is a historical matter; as was pointed out on the basis of passages examined in the three subsequent chapters in this paper, it embraces past, present, and

uses the term "realized eschatology" to describe the teaching in Hebrews: "The Messianic community, to be founded at the close of the age according to Jewish eschatology, is already in existence. It is 'the general assembly and Church of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven' (12:23). 'The Kingdom that cannot be shaken' is not the subject of a future hope, but something which is already 'received' (12:28). The conflict of the last times between the powers of evil and the might of God has indeed already taken place; the one 'who has the power of death, the devil', has already been 'brought to nought' (ἵνα καταργήσῃ) by the incarnation (2:14). A prominent characteristic of this book is certainly 'realized eschatology'."

²C. K. Barrett, "The Eschatology of the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Background of the New Testament and Its Eschatology, edited by W. D. Davies and D. Daube (Cambridge: University Press, 1956), p. 391: "The common pattern of N.T. eschatology is in Hebrews made uncommonly clear. God has begun to fulfil his ancient promises; the dawn of the new age has broken, though the full day has not yet come. The Church lives in the last days, but before the last day."

future events. As far as the past is concerned, the author gives a few indications of his knowledge of the early Christian tradition about the life of Jesus, though the allusions to it are indeed scanty. In contrast, the death of Jesus occupies a central place in the epistle, not as a historical fact, but as an event of cardinal theological importance. The resurrection of Christ is mentioned only in a closing passage and in such a manner that it is doubtful whether the author understood it in the traditional fashion (Heb. 13:20).³ As a historical event, Christ's resurrection does not integrate well with the author's eschatological ideas unless he conceived it to be the initial stage of his exaltation to God's right hand. Some of the history of the early church is reflected in Hebrews. The references to the early preaching of the gospel, the persecution of Christians, and the danger of apostasy, however, are so general and typical of the first century church that they do not

³Guy, *op. cit.*, p. 138 thinks that the author's treatment of the resurrection is part of the evidence that points to a departure from traditional Christian eschatology: "The Epistle to the Hebrews shows that in some quarters the conventional Jewish-Christian eschatological scheme was being modified or discarded; possibly it had never taken serious hold. There is no apostasy or manifestation of the Antichrist, no general resurrection, no great Judgment portrayed, no dramatic representation of the Parousia. The dependence on eschatological considerations for practical purposes is also not nearly so pronounced as with many New Testament writers." Guy's conclusion is that Hebrews "is an attempt at a Christian philosophy apart from the traditional eschatological background of the earliest disciples" (p. 139).

enable modern scholars to identify the exact date of the writing of the letter or to answer other basic isogogical questions with any degree of finality.

Those expressions in Hebrews which seem to point to the author's contemporary situation disclose nothing of a historical nature, but they reveal the tremendous eschatological import of the concept of the present time. The idea of "today" as it is found in Heb. 3:13 (from Ps. 95:7) contains all the urgency of the lifesaving act of preaching and obeying the word of God. The combination "yesterday and today and for ever" affirms the unchanging efficacy of the intercession of Jesus as the great high priest (Heb. 13:8). The readers of the epistle are reminded of their contemporary situation in the liturgical symbolism of the tabernacle in a passage where the author seemingly refers to the limitations which "the present age" places on access to God (Heb. 9:9). There are also other indications of the author's use of "ritual chronology," i.e., use of ritual or liturgical terms with chronological significance. In such symbolism the physical arrangement of the Old Testament tabernacle and the ritual of its priests are seen to be a shadow of heavenly realities;⁴ they give meaning to the acts of Jesus in

⁴Aelred Cody, Heavenly Sanctuary and Liturgy in the Epistle to the Hebrews (St. Meinrad, Indiana: Grail Publications, 1960), p. 150: "In the historical dimension the first and second tents are spatially divided. In the parabolic dimension they are divided temporally (the old and the

securing eternal salvation for men both in his work on earth in history and in the sanctuary in the age to come.

As for the historical future and the end of history, the author retains the viewpoint of traditional Christian eschatology with little modification.⁵ The terminal point of the present aeon, the τέλος, will come after "a little while" (Heb. 10:37). The end will be a cosmic event, for God will shake the heavens and the earth (Heb. 12:26). In the face of the present threat of apostasy, the end is portrayed as the time of God's final judgment of his people

new) and axiologically (the earthly, temporary; the heavenly, eternal). In the figurative language of the Epistle's author, borrowed from the Jewish liturgical arrangements and acts, the New Covenant established in Christ has brought with it a new, definitive, and better order of salvation, accomplished by the activity of Christ, the celestial High Priest."

⁵Cf. above, p. 92, footnote 3. Guy's opinion that Hebrews discloses an abandonment of the traditional Jewish-Christian eschatology is largely an argument from silence. In dealing with the tradition he has received, the author of Hebrews has modified the eschatological element least of all. The fact that he has allowed traditional eschatological ideas to remain in his thinking is one of the striking characteristics of the epistle, and has led Alexander C. Purdy, "Introduction and Exegesis to the Epistle to the Hebrews," The Interpreter's Bible, edited by George Arthur Buttrick, et al. (New York: Abingdon Press, 1955), XI, 585, to observe: "Only the author's eschatology seems conspicuously to lie outside the logic of his thought. If he is really convinced that all earthly things are copies and shadows of the heavenly, and that faith 'is the power of apprehension of that which lies beyond the senses,' should not the time process itself, and eschatology as depending on it, have been discarded as with Philo or spiritualized after the fashion of the Gospel of John? Actually, eschatological ideas are clear and sharp in his thinking even if they do not hold the central place."

(Heb. 10:30-31), hence the repeated exhortations to the readers to remain strong in confidence and hope so that they will escape the coming destruction (cf. Heb. 2:3; 12:25). Of supreme moment for those who hold fast is that Christ will appear a second time for the salvation of his brethren (Heb. 9:26). Though some scholars hold the opinion that the Second Coming of Christ in the epistle is merely a formal retention of traditional Christian teaching, there is also reason to say that the author thought of it as a symbolic implication of the high priest's return from the Holy of Holies on the Day of Atonement.

As they are usually described, chronology and history cease with the end of this world. Chronological language is used in Hebrews to indicate symbolically what follows the destruction of the present aeon, but there is no hint of a chronological sequence of events involving man in the coming aeon itself. Instead, four major images are developed to illustrate the nature of man's new existence: (1) the "rest" of God, (2) the eternal inheritance, (3) the heavenly city, and (4) the heavenly sanctuary.

It is difficult to determine the precise relationship that exists between the four major figures. The "rest" corresponds to the land of Canaan which the rebellious people of Israel failed to enter because of their disobedience in the wilderness (Heb. 3:7-19; cf. 4:8). But Canaan is also the place which Abraham was to receive as an inheritance and

is involved in the figure of the eternal inheritance (Heb. 11:8-9; 9:15-17). The two images of "rest" and "inheritance" become tangent in the epistle only in one passage, where the author mixes figures and speaks of "the promise of entering his (God's) rest" (Heb. 4:1). The fact that he does not connect the image of divine rest with the figure of the sanctuary indicates that his eschatological ideas are dominated by the Jewish-Christian tradition and not by some form of Greek mysticism. The entrance into the rest of God is not the final stage in a sequence of events whereby man achieves a union with God after entering the heavenly sanctuary of his Presence, but remains firmly rooted in the Genesis account and its Old Testament application in Psalm 95. The concept of rest in Hebrews is indeed cessation from labor, but it is also the taking up of a ceaseless activity of worship, the eternal sabbath, the "festal gathering" and "assembly" (Heb. 12:22-23), not the immobile rapture of mysticism whereby one loses his identity by absorption with divinity.⁶

⁶Oscar Cullmann, Christ and Time, translated from the German by Floyd V. Filson (revised ed.; London: SCM Press, 1962), p. 54: "Because time in Hellenism is not conceived in a rectilinear manner, the scene of the working of providence (πρόνοια) can never be history as such but only the fate of the individual. History is not under the control of a telos or end goal. From this standpoint, in so far as the need of man for revelation and redemption is to be satisfied, it can take place only in the direction of timeless mysticism, which thinks in spatial concepts."

A close connection between the images of the heavenly city and the heavenly sanctuary is established in the epistle. Both are familiar ideas in Jewish and Christian writings.⁷ The city is Jerusalem and the sanctuary is the Old Testament tabernacle, which, when Israel became permanently established in the land, was replaced as center of worship by the temple. In Hebrews the relationship is explicit; the readers are impressively told that they have "come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem" (Heb. 12:22). The heavenly sanctuary is located in the heavenly city, just as the temple was the heart of the capital city of the Jews. Here Hebrews clearly discloses its debt to Jewish apocalyptic.

The significance of the blood of Jesus may be pointed out as an illustration of the relationship between the images of the sanctuary and the inheritance. On the one hand, in the imagery of the sanctuary the blood of Jesus is sacrificial blood, blood which purifies the furnishings of the heavenly Holy of Holies and the consciences of the faithful (Heb. 9:11-14, 23-26). On the other hand, Jesus' blood is also the blood with which the new covenant was ratified,

⁷Purdy, *op. cit.*, XI, 585: "Our epistle does not extend the two-world idea to include everything, although this may be implied, but fastens attention on two super-sensual realities, the heavenly sanctuary (8:2,5; 9:11-12,23-24) and the heavenly city (11:10,16; 12:22; 13:14), both of which could have been derived directly from Judaism."

through which covenant the eternal inheritance is received (Heb. 9:15-22; cf. 10:29; 12:24; 13:20). A further mingling of the two ideas is found in the mention of the oath. The oath that God swore to Jesus was both a confirmation of a covenant promise, like that which he swore to Abraham (Heb. 6:13-18), and an oath for establishing Jesus in the high priestly office of the Melchizedekian order (Heb. 7:20, 21, 28).

A comparison of the four principal images employed in Hebrews to describe the coming aeon leads to the observation that the dominant figure among them is that of the heavenly sanctuary. Other figurative expressions are found in the epistle, such as that of the house (Heb. 3:2-6), the kingdom (Heb. 12:28), and the shepherd (Heb. 13:20),⁸ which

⁸The figure of the shepherd is certainly capable of expressing a variety of eschatological ideas. In the Gospel of John, for example, Jesus identifies himself as the good shepherd, the living way of access to the sheepfold: "I am the door; if any one enters by me, he will be saved, and will go in and out and find pasture" (John 10:9). Matthew describes the final judgment in the language of shepherding: "Before him (the Son of Man) will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left" (Matt. 25:32-33). With his liturgical bent, the author of Hebrews might have applied the imagery of the shepherd to Aaron, as is done in Ps. 77:20: "Thou didst lead thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron." Such an application would have been especially meaningful to Jewish readers, as John Marsh, The Fulness of Time (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952), p. 85, points out: "The metaphor doubtless had its immediate pastoral reference, but to a Jewish boy, brought up to know the great literature of his people, it would almost certainly recall

might have been developed into themes with eschatological significance, but the author chose to deal chiefly with these four ideas to express his eschatological beliefs. The dominance of the heavenly sanctuary over the other images is illustrated by the fact that the death of Jesus, the chief historical event in the epistle, receives its fullest eschatological explanation in the work of the great high priest and his sacrifice.⁹

just as naturally the passages of Scripture where Moses and Aaron are regarded as the shepherds of the Israelites whom they care for in the Exodus."

⁹Barrett, *op. cit.*, p. 391, rightly estimates that the importance of the eschatology of Hebrews is to be found precisely in this fact, i.e., that it is liturgically portrayed: "The most significant contribution of Hebrews to the growing problem of N.T. eschatology lies in the author's use of philosophical and liturgical language." But at the same time, it must also be observed that the author's use of philosophical language does not make him a philosopher; as Purdy, *op. cit.*, XI, 584, says: "The conclusion to be drawn from this strong eschatological emphasis in a framework of alien ideas is obvious: our author was not a philosophical idealist. He was a Christian committed to the historic revelation of God in Christ and he writes with a thoroughly practical purpose: to arouse his readers to a positive Christian stand."

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